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The Paradox of the Financial Empowerment of Non-Western Artisan Women and their Dependency on Western Funding:

A Case Study of Fondation Orient Occident, Au Grain de Sésame, and Association Darna

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Independent Study Project
SIT Morocco: Migration and Transnational Identity
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Spring 2018
Abstract

My research aims to shed light on a paradox impacting the work of organizations in Morocco which give migrant and Moroccan women the opportunity to gain financial independence through opportunities in sewing and embroider and how the organizations’ financial dependence on the “West” leads to the perpetuation of narratives of women confined to traditional gender roles and in need of “empowerment.” Fondation Orient Occident’s atelier, Au Grain de Sésame’s art gallery, and Association Darna’s workshop seek to empower women in Morocco through artisan trainings and the ability to sell products through the organizations, which rely on funding from Western organizations and the buying power of Westerners to remain sustainable. Thus, while women are encouraged to become leaders within the organizations, their products are sold along with a narrative that depicts them as powerless. My research is comprised of interviews and observations from Fondation Orient Occident’s atelier; an interview with the founder and director of Au Grain de Sésame and observations from the gallery and a training session; and an interview with the founder and director of Association Darna and observation from its headquarters, atelier, and shop. My research illustrates how the different initiatives empower women to become financially independent and become leaders within the organization, but the directors of the organizations take initiative to reach Western organizations, governments, and consumers to ensure the sustainability of the organization using narratives of “empowerment” and “cultural exchange” that undermine the artisans themselves. The directors are not at fault for this and they help women in ways beyond providing them a financial opportunity, but there are larger global inequalities that impact the women who receive services from the organizations and affect how the organizations operate.
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To my mother who sews and embroiders for herself and for her family and to my grandmothers who taught their daughters to sew and embroider to show love to themselves and their families, thank you for all that you have taught me. To my aunts, cousins, nieces, and friends who lift other women up and break down through cultural and gender barriers everyday, thank you for being my inspiration.

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Introduction

Morocco has long been a land of asylum and long-term settlement for immigrants from Syria, Algeria, and various African and European nationalities and since the first wave of World War I, there has been significant emigration from Morocco. As migration increases in and through Morocco, the movement of people is accompanied by the movement of capital, practices, and goods. We understand these practices and goods, which include food, literature, visual and performance arts, and ideas, as “culture.” Some consider this migration as a challenge to the nation-state as an organizing unit and hope to prevent this migration or force migrants to assimilate and adopt the “culture” of the new territory they have moved to.

An approach to integrating migrants is to “sew” an ever-changing “multi-cultural fabric” that can either challenge or reinforce power dynamics between Western and non-Western nations. The word “culture” was once literally equated with white European civilization; “first in the abstract sense of a general process of becoming ‘civilized’ or ‘cultivated’; second, in the sense which had already been established for civilization by historians of the Enlightenment …a description of the secular process of human development.” ¹ This standard is no longer explicit, but is often upheld by discourses where individuals are viewed through a limited conception of a homogenous “culture.” As migration increases and acts of “border control” strengthen, it is essential to consider the impacts of the ways that Moroccan and migrant “culture” is presented in narratives that may sustain harmful power dynamics.

¹ Raymond Williams, “Culture,” in Keywords (Croom Helm, 1976), 89.
As the European Union pressures Morocco with increasing financial incentive to tighten its borders, there is a devastating impact on migrants and refugees. Recent acts of control of borders in Morocco include a 2003 law on entry and residency of foreigners to reduce undocumented emigration and immigrations and a 2007 policy of control of undocumented emigration that was enacted with support from the European Union and resulted in operations encouraging more identity checks and a large number of arrests in urban centers and the forests surrounding enclaves of Sebta and Mellilia.² In 2007, the government also signed an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees delegating the review and granting of asylum applications. After the enactment of the 2007 law, Morocco received statements of satisfaction from various European countries, despite the consequent increase in the violations of rights of migrants of irregular situations including: arrests of refugees, violence and mistreatment, and resident and asylum applications rejected without referral to the justice system, adding to the violence of offenders, human traffickers and violations suffered by migrants on route and even before entry into national territory.³

The are many organizations that seek to help migrants, and specifically migrant women and disadvantaged Moroccan women through “empowerment,” which is often used in development discourses to refer to a means to becoming financially independent or having greater economic decision-making power. These same organizations also tend to “preserve culture” by providing women with opportunities fitting traditional gender roles including cooking and baking, and most commonly, sewing and embroidery. My research aims to shed light on a paradox

³ Ibid.
impacting the work of organizations in Morocco which give migrant and Moroccan women the opportunity to gain financial independence through opportunities in sewing and embroider and how the organizations’ financial dependence on the “West” leads to the perpetuation of narratives of women confined to traditional gender roles and in need of “empowerment.”

Fondation Orient Occident’s atelier, Au Grain de Sésame’s art gallery, and Association Darna’s workshop seek to empower women in Morocco through artisan trainings and the ability to sell products through the organizations, which rely on funding from Western organizations and the buying power of Westerners to remain sustainable. Thus, while women are encouraged to become leaders within the organizations, their products are sold along with a narrative that often depicts them as powerless. My research is comprised of interviews and observations from Fondation Orient Occident’s atelier; an interview with the founder and director of Au Grain de Sésame and observations from the gallery and a training session; and an interview with the founder and director of Association Darna and observation from its headquarters, atelier, and shop. My research illustrates how the different initiatives empower women to become financially independent and become leaders within the organization, but the directors of the organizations take initiative to reach Western organizations, governments, and consumers to ensure the sustainability of the organization using narratives of “empowerment” and “cultural exchange” that undermine the artisans themselves. The directors are not at fault for this and they help women in ways beyond providing them a financial opportunity, but there are larger global inequalities that impact the women who receive services from the organizations and affect how the organizations operate.
Literature Review

My research was guided by the power dynamics between “women’s empowerment” initiatives in non-Western countries that are said to promote female empowerment and are dependent on funding from Western companies, organizations, and governments. Western governments and organizations often use “salvation rhetoric” to describe non-Western women and justify their intrusion or critique of non-Western governments, organizations, and people and this rhetoric persists when Westerners fund “empowerment” in non-Western communities. This power dynamic, especially between white Western women and non-Western women can be traced back to imperial/colonial relations. For example, the British justified their presence in South Asia by arguing that they were protecting women from the brutality of South Asian men vis-à-vis ending practices like sati (undermining movements and actions led by Hindu women to challenge the practice) and feminist movements in the West played a large role in developing discourses that sustained this racial power dynamic.

This “culture of global moralism” continues to exist in international political and economic relations.4 Lila Abu-Lughod’s essay “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” addresses how salvation rhetoric was used to justify American intervention in Afghanistan in terms of liberating, or saving, Afghan women.5 She draws attention to the resonance of contemporary discourses on equality, freedom, and rights with earlier colonial and missionary rhetoric on Muslim women - both imply racial superiority and entail violence. Abu-Lughod questions the very use of

antropological discourse in international relations discussions and argues that the justification used of liberating or saving Afghan women “worked to artificially divide the world into separate spheres—recreating an imaginative geography of West versus East, us versus Muslims, cultures in which First Ladies give speeches versus others where women shuffle around silently in burqas.”

The salvation rhetoric used to justify the War on Terrorism appeals to anthropological discourses and justifies itself using cultural differences in place of history and political relations; thus, it justifies itself on the conception of a racial power dynamic between the East and West, by which Western perceptions of individual rights are imposed on Afghan women without incorporating the context of veiling in Afghanistan and a different form of violence is enacted through the discourse which removes the agency of Afghan women. Interactions between the Western and non-Western populations are inevitable, but must be guided by cultural context and an understanding that interactions that seek to “save” others create more than harm than good.

Over the past two decades, a new term has been used by white feminist interventions in non-Western societies – empowerment. Anne-Emmanuèle Calvès’ 2009 article, “‘Empowerment’: Généalogie D’un Concept Clé Du Discours Contemporain Sur Le Développement,” traces how the meaning of them has shifted drastically from the way it was originally used by activists. The term “empowerment” emerged in development discourses in the 1970s to allude to a vision that prioritizes the viewpoints of the oppressed; it was popularized by feminists of the Global South and radical activists in the 1980s who define empowerment as a multi-faceted process of transformation that starts from bottom up that allows “women and the poor” to become aware of the power dynamics that marginalize them and develop the power and agency to challenge

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6 Ibid.; 784.
inequitable social, economic, and political structures. However, in the 1990s, international development institutions started to use the term and in the 2000s, it entered the predominant discourse on poverty reduction such that “empowerment” no longer stood for the values of those who introduced the term; it stands for individual and economic decision-making instead of power, which de-politicizes collective power and justifies top-down policies and programs. Thus, the way that “empowerment” is used by organizations around the world today has shifted significantly from its origin and has come to mean a financial opportunity that fails to challenge the circumstances of the individual being empowered.

A 2017 study by Kate Cronin-Furman, Nimmi Gowrinathan, & Rafia Zakaria, “Emissaries of Empowerment,” documents the ways that the term “empowerment” is used in donor organizations in the Global South that service women and continues to sustain a power dynamic between non-Western producers and Western consumers. The term “empowerment” is now used in various mission statements from initiatives to expand access to technology to gender equivalence in government representation, but it serves as a key term that is a “proven fundraisings powerhouse, with billions of dollars raised in the name of ‘women’s empowerment.’” The researches give examples of various organizations with the mission of “women’s empowerment” where women in the Global South create products using local materials for the consumption of white Western consumers. Moreover, often these organizations fail to address the specific needs of the women they aim to help and instead, “distributes cows and chickens to rape victims, enrolls former combatants in beauty school, and imposes sewing machines on anyone lucky enough to be

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8 Ibid.
9 Kate Cronin-Furman, Nimmi Gowrinathan, and Rafia Zakaria, “Emissaries of Empowerment..,” (The City College of New York, September 2017); 3.
female and in need.” This approach only addresses the women as victims rather than subjects and provides them with materials limiting them to the circumstances of their identity as poor women. Thus the goal of “empowerment” alludes to each worker’s financial independence, which is dependent on Western consumers such that a power dynamic persists between the non-Western producer and the Western buyer. This approach also fails to address the broader power dynamics that marginalize the women in the first place. Abu-Lughod argued in her article that rather than seeking to “save” others, we ought to work with them and consider our own responsibilities to address the global injustices that shape the world they find themselves in. Instead of “saving” and “empowering” non-Western women, it is important to work with them and raise awareness of the broader power dynamics that contribute to their marginalization.

Methodology

Assumptions:

My research project originally intended to explore why so many organizations “empower” women through “sewing and embroidery” and so, I sought to understand how the organizations defined terms like “empowerment” and “culture” and why the women working at the different organizations were described (online) as they were. I have researched women working in garment-related work and rhetoric of “empowerment” used to describe workers facing unfair labor conditions. Given my past research, I assumed that the organizations chose to offer opportunities in sewing and embroidery because many women are already skilled in sewing and embroidery or

10 Ibid.; 7.
because their families are less likely to object to their work and I assumed that their work was not profitable given the amount of labor required of them.

I was particularly interested in Fondation Orient Occident because in my research prior to interviews and site visits, I noticed that the website emphasized how Migrants du Monde empowered migrant women and preserved their culture. However, the collections are designed by a French designer (only in part, as I learned through the interviews), the clothing items are relatively expensive, and the clothes are sold in hotels across Morocco and pop-up shops in Europe. During my interviews and observations, I wanted to clarify all of my research from online and understand why the organization has chosen to operate as it has and describe the workers as it does. My interviewees gave me more information than I asked for, compelling me to become more interested in funding and partnerships with international and Western organizations and European consumers and volunteers or staff. Therefore, I also assumed that Western organizations and consumers had a large impact on operations at both Au Grain de Sésame and Association Darna, as they did at Fondation Orient Occident.

Methodology:

The data for this research is compromised of both workshop observations and synthesized interview responses. My research is focused on learning about how the organizations operate (mission, programming, and funding) and to understand why it is organized as it is and to gain insight on the experiences of artisans at these different organizations, and the best way to receive this (inevitably limited) insight, I conducted interviews at the organizations themselves and noted observations during my visits. At Fondation Orient Occident, all my interviews were anonymous.
Prior to interviews, I listed the following general interview questions for interviewees and asked questions that would be appropriate for each interviewee:

- What is your role at this organization?
- How did you come to learn about this organization?
- How long have you worked here?
- How has the organization changed over the course of your time here?
- What changes would you like to see in the organization going forward?
- How is the organization funded?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the organization?

All interviews were conducted with verbal and written signed consent prior to interviews and conducted casually in order to allow interviewees to speak comfortably in conversation and not feel limited to answering interview questions. I did not record any answers, but I took notes during all interviews. In my findings section, I synthesized my interview responses and attempted to use some of the same language and convey the tone of the interviewees as much as possible. Since, interviews were taken in the form of a casual conversation, after women introduced themselves, I would ask the most natural follow-up question of the questions above or ask a follow-up question for further clarification based on answers given (i.e. why did you leave the organization? or what inspired you to start this initiative?).

**Fondation Orient Occident – Migrants du Monde**

I visited Fondation Orient Occident on Thursday, April 12, 2018 to meet with Fatima-Azzahra Bennadi, who is the receptionist, Orientation Administrator, and Education Project Assistant at Fondation Orient-Occident. I went to the Fondation with Yousra Doukkhali, a native Moroccan who is currently a student at Mohammed V University and is fluent in Moroccan Arabic.
and French and proficient in English, to translate as needed. After describing the goals of my research to Ms. Bennadi, she connected me to a staff member at the workshop for my first interview. Upon meeting her and describing my research, I asked for her consent to ask questions about the atelier and her experience working at the atelier. This interview was entirely in English and she signed a consent form in English. After the first interview, I visited the workshop and noted observations. Then I interviewed three women at the atelier by way of translation. Yousra introduced me as a student researching organizations that empower women and all women verbally consented and signed written consent forms describing the research in more detail. The first interviewee spoke Moroccan Arabic and signed a form of consent in Modern Standard Arabic, the second spoke French and signed a form of consent in French, and the final interviewee also spoke Moroccan Arabic and signed a form of consent in Modern Standard Arabic.

**Au Grain De Sésame:**

My interview with the founder and director of the initiative, Asmaa Benachir, took place on Tuesday, April 17 around 3:30-4PM. The interview was not scheduled; I walked into the organization to work in their study space and met Asmaa. She asked if I would like to learn more about the organization. I asked for her consent to record her answers (in writing) to use for my research and she read and signed a written consent form (in French). I was not aware of her role at the gallery at the beginning of the interview.

The following day on Wednesday, April 16, I met with Asmaa Benachir at 2pm at the gallery to help her prepare a presentation for a workshop with students at the Rhode Island School of Design the week of April 23, 2018. I helped proofread her presentation notes for grammar mistakes and made suggestions for ways to make her presentation more engaging by describing
her experience founding and directing Au Grain de Sésame. This also gave me the opportunity to correct any mistakes in translation and further understand the services of the organization and she showed me a demo of one of her trainings on design.

The following day on Thursday, April 17, I visited the gallery at 2pm to participate in the Thursday weekly workshops for artisans. I participated in the training not only as an observer but as a participant. There were 11 artisans present and divided into three groups – I joined a group of three and helped correctly measure out ingredients and churned the mixture before it was poured into a mold. Due to the language barrier, I was not able to communicate with them beyond very basic conversation.

Association Darna

I visited Association Darna at 10am on Thursday, April 26 for a scheduled visit with Mounira El-Alami, founder and president of Darna. Mounira explained that she would not be able to describe the organization’s services in detail and prepared a packet of catalogues about the organizations in a large red box (these packets are usually for sale). Then, I asked if I can ask her a few general questions about the women who receive services from the organization, work at the cooperative, and the customers for the cooperative. She gave her consent and I interviewed her for about twenty minutes.

Then, she asked someone to walk me over to the cooperative (approximately twenty-minute walk from the organization headquarters). I was escorted by Jafar, a boy who works at the cooperative restaurant. At the shop I was greeted by Henna, who was working at the shop and gave me a tour of the shop, restaurant, and the atelier upstairs. Henna and I communicated using a mix of Arabic, English, French, and Spanish due to a language barrier.
Fondation Orient Occident – Migrants du Monde Findings

Fondation Orient-Occident is a Moroccan non-profit organization, founded in 1994 by current Chief Executive Officer, Yasmina Filali, that aims to address the difficulties of migrants, refugees, and disadvantaged youth in Morocco, hence serving as a “bridge between the two shores of the Mediterranean.” It seeks to empower individuals by promoting employability through its socio-education and professional training centers, in addition to working for the protection of diversity and valorization of all cultures. Fondation Orient Occident is a non-profit organization that offers a number of resources and opportunities, including cultural programs and literacy courses, so women who come to Fondation Orient Occident are not limited to working for Migrants du Monde. Migrants du Monde does outreach for potential members through partnerships with NGOs like UNHCR, which recommends services and opportunities at the foundation to migrants including language courses and work opportunities at the atelier.

Migrants du Monde is the label of Fondation Orient Occident’s sewing and embroidery workshop. Over time, the atelier has been composed of refugees of sub-Saharan, Afghan, Iraqi, and Yugoslavian migrants and refugees, in addition to Moroccan migrants. There are currently seven individuals working at the atelier producing garments and other products: one Moroccan man (who is the chief of the atelier), three Moroccan women, and three women who have migrated to Morocco from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Prior to the interviewee’s arrival at Migrants du Monde, the atelier organized formations, or workshops to teach sewing or embroidery techniques. Each artisan would apply to participate and selected artisans would choose to learn either sewing or embroidery techniques; this allowed the women working at the workshop to teach each other traditional embroidery from different cultures. These embroidery techniques were later
incorporated into designs for collections. These formations no longer occur and now women are working and learning as they work. They are paid by Fondation Orient-Occident but are legally “self-employed.” The chief of the atelier who led the formations was a Moroccan woman who left in December 2017 after working at the atelier for nearly seven years. She left because she had gotten married and her husband would not like her to work anymore; however, she visits the atelier weekly. Prior to working at Migrants du Monde, she studied how to make clothes with Fondation del Maroc. After the trainings, the organization created a test and placed the six women who passed with other organizations and she was the only one placed with Fondation Orient Occident. She has now been replaced by a Moroccan man. The decision to make the chief of the atelier a man is interesting given the emphasis on the “women” of the atelier online, especially because the former chief experienced the formations with everyone else, whereas the current chief has been given a leadership position without the same familiarity with everyone at Migrants du Monde. Nonetheless, women who have worked at the atelier longer help newer members.

Migrants du Monde provides an opportunity for women who are already skilled in sewing and embroidery to learn other embroidery techniques and earn a consistent wage. The first two years of the initiative were focused on trainings on sewing and embroidery. Women had to first apply and pass a test on the basics of sewing or embroidery and twenty were selected for the trainings. After the two years of training, women were asked to test their ability to produce garments and only fifteen women remained after the test was instituted. Now the artisans work from 9am to 2:30pm, not teaching and learning, but making garments and other products. The women come from very different backgrounds and I observed that some worked silently while others were helping one another or in casual conversation. There is large desk by the entrance for atelier chief,

12 Interview with former staff member at Migrants du Monde, April 12, 2018.
a large wooden table in the center of the room where a few people were working. There are small desks with sewing machines along the back and left side of the room. The workspace appears busy but well-kept and in good condition. One of the interviewees learned about Migrants du Monde from a relative (who still works at the atelier). Before working at the atelier, the interviewee would help her relative when there was a large order and her relative brought work home in order to complete the order on time. When her relative saw that she was really good, she recruited to work at the atelier. She is really happy to have this work opportunity because now she is getting paid to do something that she did at home for herself and relatives. Another interviewee migrated from Congo and has been working at the atelier ever since and learned about the atelier from her sister (who also works at the atelier). Another woman who is currently working at the atelier is hearing-impaired and non-verbal, yet another interviewee describes her as a hard-working employee who has produced many excellent pieces. Together the women have produced countless garments in addition to over 300 bags for the association.\footnote{Ibid.}

As the clothing label for the Orient-Occident Foundation, the clothes are meant to represent a fusion of East meets West. Their products include tunics, dresses, pants, and bags. The collections are inspired by the traditional embroidery of the different countries and ethnic groups from which the women of the workshop come from. Along the right side and part of the back of the workshop, there were two rows of finished garments and bags. There is not a large variation in size for each garment and there are only a few of each unique garment, but there is diversity in colors and designs, type of clothing (tops, dresses, jackets) and there is a kids' collection. It appeared that all the women were working on sewing or embroidery pillows and bags. When I asked one interviewee how she feels about the clothing line and the project to represent clothing
from different places, she described that when someone asks about clothing from Congo, she shows them products from Migrants du Monde, which may not have traditional Congolese embroidery, but they are Congolese because she made them. While the clothing is supposed to be traditional clothing from Morocco and the different countries that the migrant and refugee members of the teams come from, a French stylist Isabelle Camard would visit two to three times per year to create “modern” designs and worked with the chief of the atelier to incorporate traditional embroidery from different cultures into the designs. This approach to designing the products suggests that only what is European can be “modern.” The “modern” designs are essential to making the clothes marketable to European consumers, but the clothes are marketed as representative of various cultures - Afghani, Moroccan, Yugoslavian, etc. During my visit, some of the women pointed different clothing as Yugoslavian or Afghani and showed me the differences in embroidery between garments. They explained that some individuals knew embroidery from different parts of the world and they produce garments with Afghan embroidery because a refugee from Afghanistan worked at the atelier for two years and taught everyone else traditional Afghan embroidery techniques. Clearly, there is intercultural dialogue among those who work at the atelier and the women have opportunities to become leaders by not only collaborating with other women, but teaching them new techniques and designs that can potentially be used in collections. However, this form of “empowerment” comes to the cost of creating clothes for individuals hoping to save women, especially “migrant” and “refugee” women who are preserving their “culture.”

The garments are sold in shops and luxury hotels in Morocco as well as pop-up shops in Europe and operate very separately; they receive the clothes from the workshop, sell them independently, and then send profits back to Fondation Orient Occident. Until July 2017, a woman

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14 Interview with current staff member at Migrants du Monde, April 12, 2018.
worked with Migrants du Monde for two years and directed the selling of the clothing and initiated sales to a pop-up shop in Italy. The products are also sold at shops all over Morocco, including hotels. While there is a website for the clothing with prices, the clothing is not sold online due to the unreliability and long time for shipping, large shipping costs, the difficulty of processing online payments, and the small quantity of stock (and limited number of sizes). The clothes are modeled for the website by migrants, European models, organization volunteers – anyone is available and willing to model. While the products and their prices are listed online, they are not sold online because of the difficulty of selling clothes online.\textsuperscript{15} Every year or two, there is a fashion show for ambassadors from countries like France, Italy, United Arab Emirates, and the United States. They would sell the clothing to organizations and hotels and send earnings from selling the clothing and the clothing is expensive, but she expressed that the prices ought to be higher because, given the time and labor required to produce each garment, the profits are very small. Some improvements she would like to see in the organization include a bigger space, a replacement for the marketing director, higher salaries for the women working at the atelier, more employees to produce the garments, and more shops for the garments, especially in Europe. In addition to these revenues, the initiative also receives funds through French, Italian, American, Spanish, Saudi, and African programs.\textsuperscript{16} Clearly, the initiative large depends on international funding and Western consumers. Unfortunately, it also seems like the initiative appeals to such consumers using salvation rhetoric.

According to the description of Migrants du Monde online, the women who work at the workshop have “fled countries at war or in the grip of misery.” Perhaps this is the case for some of the women working at the workshop, but currently the majority of individuals working in the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
workshop are Moroccan. The atelier has employed refugees from countries like Afghanistan in the past and currently hosts migrants from Congo, but there has always been Moroccan women working at the atelier. These descriptions of the atelier fail to distinguish the various experiences of the women working at the atelier. While it emphasizes that the women as coming from different places, it also homogenizes their very different experiences into a story that victimizes them and removes them of their agency. Furthermore, on the Migrant du Monde website, there is a quote from President of Fondation Orient Occident Yasmina Filali that states: “Pour que les migrants soient intégrés dans une nouvelle société, ils ont d’abord besoin de retrouver leur dignité,” which translates to: for migrants to be integrated into a new society, they first need to regain their dignity.” While the experience of migrating to Morocco must be a dangerous and awful experience, introducing migrants as such reduces their identity to victims of a tragedy. However, presenting migrants as such and emphasizing that migrants work at Migrants du Monde (even if they make up less than half of the artisans at the atelier), is a great marketing strategy. A different post on the page states that “to buy a simple piece is to restore the dignity of these women, it is to encourage their creativity, it is to save lives.” This description intends to sell the garments by appealing to a consumers’ sense of empathy and guilt. The revenue resulting from consumers who purchase clothes from Migrants du Monde because of this guilt will help the atelier continue operating such that women working at the workshop continue to be paid for their labor, but it does so at the cost of implying they have lost their dignity, lack creativity, and are in grave danger. Thus, there is a paradox by which the organization’s efforts to empower women rests on their ability to be depicted as powerless.
Au Grain de Sésame Findings

Au Grain de Sésame is a social enterprise in art and ecological design, founded in 2007 by Moroccan artist Asmaa Benachir, that is comprised of an ecologically-minded, community-based art gallery, a multicultural café, and an organic handicrafts workshop promoting sustainable development in the old city of Rabat, Morocco. The social enterprise is based on the belief that the development of human capital in art can contribute to socio-economic conditions of individuals in a sustainable way, encourage social inclusion, and promote intercultural dialogue.

The gallery space is a riad, or traditionally structured Moroccan house, with an open space in the middle. The ground floor is comprised of a café, and a gallery room that is set up like a Moroccan guest room. There are couches on either end decorated with pillows, tables and stools, and paintings around the room among other decorations and almost everything is on sale (there is a price tag on them). In the room upstairs, there is a table with chairs around it, cups and placemats on the table, pillows on benches along the wall, art pieces on the wall with symmetry, photographs of women working, sewing, embroidering on the wall, products neatly in shelves for display or like storage and almost everything is on sale. Tourists regularly walk in and out of the gallery, but the set up of the gallery makes a statement about the artists and how the space itself is designed for individuals to stay and sit and engage in intercultural dialogue.

About the Interviewee

Asmaa introduced herself as an artist from Rabat, Morocco. She founded the organization about ten years ago when she had an idea to train women to make artisan products using recycled paper. She developed a program to build the skills and capacities of women from the old cities of Rabat and neighboring Sale through paid trainings in art and eco-friendly design using recycled
paper. She first became inspired to create this initiative when she started a small gallery at the entrance of the Old City in Rabat and then opened a literary café. Many women living in the medina would come by and describe their problems to her. She decided that one way to “empower” them would be to “transmit what we know in a simple way.”

Within the gallery, I noticed the repetitive use of the phrase “empowering women” or “empowering women through art” to describe the organization during both the interview and in all of the papers and boards to describe the organization, located at the entrance and inside the gallery. During the interview, Asmaa also used the words “learning,” “teaching,” and “creating” to describe the purpose of AGS. She did not spend much time describing the backgrounds of the women – she simply said they come from the Rabat-Sale medinas and at the founding of the organization, many women complained about their problems at home. During the rest of the interview, she usually referred to the “women” as “artisans” and emphasized that the artisans already know to sew and embroider and she herself does not know how to embroider. She aims to teach the artisans the basics of design (i.e. how to use a square to create different designs) to encourage them to explore their own creativity.

About the Initiative Services

Many of the women already know how to sew and embroider and can copy techniques, but were not able to create new and unique designs. Despite their talent, they would also struggle to sell the products because traditional designs and decorations have become outdated and Moroccans tend not buy hand-embroidered products for house décor or traditional clothing often and traditional designs can be found anywhere. Asmaa teaches women how to use geometry to learn the basics of design and then use their own creativity to create new, unique designs. Every Thursday, Asmaa leads trainings on using different materials like recycled paper and cardboard to
create new products, like furniture and packaging, in a sustainable way or on producing organic products like handmade traditional Moroccan soap or lessons on making traditional Moroccan soup and crepes. Additionally, many women face the obstacle of not understanding how to determine a fair price for their products and do not know the or minimum wage in Morocco. Asmaa taught them how to calculate the price of their products in a simple way that is considerate of their own expenses and necessities like electricity, food, and other living costs. Therefore, they can sell products on their own as well and are not financially dependent on AGS.

After completing a two-year training program, artisans have a choice between launching their own cooperative, creating a small enterprise, and working for the AGS production workshops. Today, the gallery holds many products made by Asmaa and other artisans, including artisans trained as a part of the AGS initiative. The products include handmade artisan glass products using recycled glass, natural beeswax, handmade soap made during trainings, recycled cardboard art, and so on. Part of the work is exhibited at the gallery in Rabat and other works are exhibited in the Museum of Philadelphia in the United States (“By the work of her hands” exhibit).

In addition to production workshops and training in ecological arts and crafts, Au Grain de Sésame also offers creative workshops for adults for personal development, organizes a cultural exchange program called “Rabat Cultural” offering trainings and cultural exchange for international visitors. The enterprise also hosts an EcoBio Market on the first Sunday of every month. From 10am to 2pm, a farmers’ association sells organic products from farms in Morocco and then in the afternoon, there are trainings.

Migrant Artisans

There are many Moroccan artisans and Asmaa would like to recruit more migrant artisans and Syrian refugees, but there is no additional financial assistance to recruit or train them. Many
of the artisans who come in learn about the organization through partner organizations, including Morocco-based United Nations organizations. She said that it would be beneficial to have more migrant artisans to encourage greater cultural exchange and great variety in products. Most products at AGS are influenced by traditional Moroccan resources/ingredients, designs, and processes, but there are resources like natural dyes from Senegal and Cote d’Ivoire that are not found in abundance in Morocco and could be more accessible or familiar to migrants who can learn other ways to use these resources to make products through the trainings, and then they can sell and make a living off of these products.

Workshop:

When I observed and participated in a weekly workshop (held every Thursday), Asmaa prepared all the ingredients and supplies to make traditional homemade Moroccan soap on three tables before the artisans arrived. The training was scheduled to begin at 2pm but Asmaa mentioned that the artisans tend to come in late. Two women entered with a man around 2:15 and they greeted Asmaa warmly and then the man left and more women entered over time. All the women knew each other well and they all talked among themselves (but also noticed me as someone new and greeted me). All but one woman covered her hair, most women wore djellabas, others wore jeans and a long top, and one woman was dressed in traditional clothing for woman in southern Morocco. Eleven women were present and one woman brought her daughter. They split up into groups of three with four women per group and I was included in the group of three. A few women entered the kitchen upon entering the gallery and prepared coffee for everyone. After the women settled in and the coffee was finished, Asmaa directed them to one of the rooms to learn the recipe. She wrote the recipe and ingredients and explained the chemical reaction that occurs to produce soap. Then she directed them to the computer screen where they learned how to
look up a recipe for soap and take down exact measurements. After they wrote the recipes on their notepads, they began to work together (the groups did not work independently) to measure out the ingredients precisely. They took turns pouring and measuring out the different oils, the shea butter, etc. Once everything was measured out into the pot, everyone had a turn using the electronic mixer to churn the ingredients, including myself. After the soaps were poured into the molds, they all helped clean up and then made their way home. They worked collaboratively and Asmaa she did not overlook the entire process, but only checked in to see that everything was going smoothly, allowing the women to learn not only how to make soap, but to find a recipe and use it. In this sense, Asmaa challenges the women to be their own agents and during the trainings, the artisans are not simply developing technical skills, but are also learning how to learn and collaborate in a workspace.

Why Art?

According to Benachir, art can be used as a powerful tool to develop human capital and contributes to sustainable socio-economic development. Empowering women through art and cultural exchange is very unique and “they see life in another way – more comprehensive – and they teach that to their children.” She argues that it is the best way of empowerment and she would like to see more cultural exchange initiatives through the organization and social integration in emerging countries like Morocco that prioritize intercultural dialogue. It changes their lives and there is more communication between parents and children. For example, she tells she story of a woman she visited who had received trainings through AGS and saw that her son was playing a guitar and her daughter was singing, both activities which would not have been allowed before. Women who come in for trainings become much more involved in their children’s education, more confident, and open-minded. This shows that Asmaa’s goal of “empowerment” is not about
economic decision-making power. She seeks to empower the artisans she trains in a way that is not political, but makes artisans aware of different cultures and techniques and their own potential.

Collaborations:

Moreover, the artisans learn about their impact on the environment, but making eco-friendly products also appeals to Western consumers. AGS is the 2013 Africa winner for the SEED initiative, a global partnership between the United Nations Environment (UNEP), United Nations Development (UNDP), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to support entrepreneurship for sustainable development. The business model for AGS is described by the SEED initiative as an enterprise that “improves quality of life for both its customers and its producers – women in vulnerable situations who are trained to manufacture the ecological products.”

Asmaa notes there is an increasing interest in eco-friendly and organic products and she would like to access more ecological trade channels to sell products made at AGS. While she describes the choice to make sustainable products as a decision that is helpful for the environment, the artisans, and herself, the products are marketed using “eco-friendly” as a key word that likely helps bring in revenue. The rhetoric used by this UN initiative illustrates how AGS is also marketed for helping “women in vulnerable situations” and thus gains revenue from consumer guilt. Describing the artists as such removes their agency and fails to acknowledge that the artisans are skilled prior to entering AGS or the fact AGS trainings are not limited to technical skills. Furthermore, the “imported” techniques of creating products out of recycled materials are combined with traditional techniques for sewing, embroidery, or making soap or other products, and thus this “culture” is also marketed to Western consumers.

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While AGS offers more than technical skills to its artisans and the artisans bring more to AGS than products they have been trained to “manufacture,” the marketing for AHS appeals to consumers using keywords like “empowerment,” “vulnerable,” “culture,” and “eco-friendly.” While Moroccans also purchase products from AGS, Western tourists and consumers of Western markets have the buying power to purchase expensive products from AGS and therefore, not only allow AGS to remain sustainable, but to expand and create new opportunities for artisans in Morocco. AGS also works with Institut de la Méditerranée de Corse, IFG Strategy and Management, and ClairCom’Net, associations and agencies that help with networking, consulting, and marketing. Partnering with international organizations has also allowed AGS to expand its impact. For example, Asmaa’s outreach has allowed her to be recognized by and partner with United Nations organizations in Rabat, like UNIDO and due to this recognition and these partnerships, Asmaa has been recruited for help by other organizations throughout Morocco, including organizations in northeast Morocco like the REVIS project, allowing her to have a positive impact on more potential artisans across Morocco. AGS’ recognition has allowed it to participate in the Museum Connect project, which was an incredible opportunity for AGS artisans, the Quilters of Color of New York, and students in Rabat and New York for intercultural dialogue and exchange of knowledge on making quilts and embroidered products. Such partnerships with international organizations, marketing associations and agencies, and ecological trade markets abroad are necessary for sustainability, open up incredible opportunities, and are essential to launching different product workshop and expanding the work of AGS. However, these great opportunities come at the cost of painting AGS artisans as “vulnerable” women who have been trained to create products for customers with a guilty conscience seeking to “empower” poor Moroccan women and to purchase eco-friendly products that preserve Moroccan culture.
Funding, Consumers, and the Western Market

As a social enterprise, AGS is self-sustaining and there are only two such social enterprises in all of Morocco. AGS does not receive government funding and is not a non-governmental organization. Presently, consumers of artisan products are very diversified with buyers from the United States, Europe, Morocco, Israel, etc. However, consumers from Germany and the United States tend to have more buying power than consumers from Morocco and France, among whom a minority can afford to buy more expensive products while the majority tends to buy many smaller and less expensive products. Products are sold in Rabat gallery and in the weekly EcoBio market every Sunday. The profits from the gallery sales covers all expenses but Asmaa funds the payments to women for attending the trainings. The initiative is successful in having trainings for artisans to make a variety of products and have completed this large step, but the next big step for the organization going forward is to have more trainings and acquiring access to fair-trade shops in the United States.

In order to expand its impact, Au Grain de Sésame is seeking new opportunities to further develop this initiative or to participate in other projects dealing with empowering these populations through ecofriendly design training. There is a large consumer interest internationally in natural, organic products and Asmaa would like to have greater access to these markets so that the initiative remains sustainable, artisans have access to these markets to sell their products, and to fund more trainings to help more artisans develop the skills to create their own products. In order to expand, the enterprise must test and develop new products, train artisans to produce the new products, and with access to fair-trade shops abroad, artisans must be trained to respond to large order. Asmaa visited the Rhode Island School of Design, a prestigious art school in the United States, on the week of April 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2018 to speak to students about the organization and host a workshop on
creating organic and sustainable products from recycled paper and cardboard. She hopes to collaborate with RISD and other universities to increase AGS’s access to organic, fair-trade markets in the US to sell products made by AGS artisans and fund trainings. She hopes to partner with trade shows in New York where products will be well-appreciated for being hand-made, innovative, and organic.

**Association Darna**

About the Association and its Services:

Darna means our home. It is a safe home for women and children and offer many activities, including their theatre program and pedagogical farm, and professional training workshops. It also has a restaurant and a shop selling handmade crafts. The association was founded in 1995 because under Hassan II, “all was forbidden” including forming an association; in 1995 the law changed allowing individuals to start associations so Mounira formed the cultural center citizen initiatives. She closed her practice as a private therapist to dedicate her time to the association and her husband supported her throughout the whole process of forming the association. At Darna, the women and children who come to Darna are the foremost priority of the association. During the interview, Mounira often used “them” in reference to the individuals receiving services from Darna. While this made it difficult to determine whether she was describing women or children or both, it illustrates what she emphasized throughout the interview – that the priority of the association are the individuals who come to Darna for its services. Through the different programs, Darna offers a way for individuals to become empowered, not only by the prospect of gaining financial independence, but by not viewing themselves as individuals with potential.
The association was started for children because Mounira wanted to help the kids in the street who are not heard. One problem that Darna noticed was that students would have school in two sessions – one in the morning and one in the afternoon and during that time in between, students would be in the street where it is dangerous for them. Darna provides them with activities during that time to distract them and provide them with all the things that their schools do not provide, like art projects. When they are at Darna, they are not in the streets and they are learning and improving in school and they keep improving. Mounira describes how she can see the changes in the lives of individuals who came to Darna fourteen years ago – they are so successful in school and in life.

When the Darna team also noticed that many children talked about their problems at home and how their mothers wanted to leave their husband but they do not know where to go or that their mothers are begging in the street, Darna decided to open a safe house for women. This decision to open these safe houses reveals that Darna does listen to the concerns expressed by those who come to Darna and attempts to create an appropriate solution. Darna also runs a pedagogical farm where individuals can come to learn to produce and weave. There is also a theater for them to express themselves. Many victimize themselves before coming to coming to Darna, but in the theater, they write a story and turn it into a play. There is also a safe house specifically for girls named after Moroccan activist for women’s rights, Hajja Habiba Amor. Opened in 2010, the building is now home to over 100 young women from rural or disadvantaged areas from around the country who are studying in colleges and universities in Tangier and provides them with housing and a cultural space including a library, computer room, kitchen, living rooms, and bathrooms. According to Mounira, they are not always sure of the “rules of the city” and do not
have enough money for food and a safe home and therefore, they are susceptible to become a “prostitute.” Darna gives them a place to stay and be safe and focus on their studies.

Mounira describes how many individuals see themselves as victims when they first come to Darna and then they participate in the theater program where they write their own stories and perform. She implies that after participating in activities like their theater program, individuals no longer see themselves as victims. If Darna is offering these activities, then the association does not treat them as helpless victims either and throughout the interview, Mounira alludes to their potential by stressing how so many people have changed and become successful as a result system that Darna provides. In addition to the theater, the association offers various forms of education through the pedagogical farm, musical and visual traits, in additional to professional training such that individuals are not limited to opportunities based on their circumstances and are not being pushed towards a goal of securing employment.

Recruitment:

Most people come to Darna on their own. Children will come when there are events and ask about Darna’s services and then come voluntarily with friends. Children who also go to Darna and show improvement in school also bring their friends who came to Darna voluntarily. At first, some kids are pushed to come to Darna by their mothers. However, the children learn to work with the other children and participate in activities that stimulate their intelligence so that after two or three days when their mothers come to pick them up, they want to stay at Darna because they have things to do like make art and play with other students. Mothers of children who go to Darna will also come on their own to stay at the safe house or for training workshops.

Most of the individuals who come to Darna are Moroccans from Tangier. There are also migrants who come to Darna, but they disappear. Mounira says that the migrants are welcome here
- Darna has its arms open but the problem is that they don’t want to stay here - they want to leave the country so they come for about three days and sleep here or get the training and then they leave. However, there are two or three migrant individuals (one is a photographer, another is a farmer on the pedagogical farm) who have stayed with Darna from some time and are doing very well.

Women:

At Darna, women are offered literacy courses in Arabic and French, courses on rights awareness space and citizenship, and prevention and health information.\(^\text{18}\) Thus, Darna encourages individuals to understand their own power and become aware of political dynamics. Women are also offered training courses in “learning, traditional weaving, embroidery, pastry shop, as well as catering service.”\(^\text{19}\) It was unclear what “learning” refers to but the other courses listed are consistent with very traditional gender roles. During the interview, Mounira listed other forms of trainings like training in carpentry, but it was unclear if they were offered to women. While women are given options for training and work at Darna and their courses in literacy can allow to become skilled in work elsewhere, the range of training courses are, nonetheless, limiting. Unlike Fondation Orient Occident and Au Grain de Sésame, most individuals who come to Association Darna do not how to sew or embroider beforehand and they choose (from a number of technical skills to learn) to learn how to sew and embroider. After training, they have a number of options to go into work, but some stay and start a cooperative and sell their products through Darna. The training time is adjusted for each individual so that each individual receives training for however long it takes whether it takes three months or an entire year.\(^\text{20}\)

The Shop:


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) El Alami, Mounira, director, Association Darna, April 26, 2018.
The cooperative is comprised of the Darna shop and restaurant. For fourteen years, the shop was a library because one of the staff members was a librarian. One of the first things that children who came to Darna see is the library and it is a symbol for the children because they had never seen anything like it before. The library was turned into a “global boutique” that is served for the association and those who make the products. Each woman who chooses to form a cooperative or work with an existing cooperative and Darna provides them with access to resources needed to produce products and start cooperative (i.e. sewing or weaving machine). Working for a cooperative can be a challenge because often the women working at the cooperative (most, but not all staff are women) have conflicting interests. The products produced are sold through the Darna shop and one-third of the profits from the cooperative stays with Darna and two-thirds goes to the women who make the products.

When you enter the building with the shop and restaurants, there is a lobby with stairs leading to the workshop and the entrance to the restaurant. The restaurant has indoor seating space, outdoor seating space, and a more elegant seating space further back. During my tour, I was led inside the kitchen where two boys were working together to prepare pastries and two others were preparing a salad. There was also one woman working in the kitchen. From the indoor seating space, there is an open door leading into the boutique and there is artwork made by Darna members on all the walls – the lobby, the restaurant, along the stairwell, etc. In the boutique, there are clothing, pillows, rugs, embroidered towels and bags, wooden showpieces, stuffed animals etc. There are also paintings for sale that are hung by the boutique entrance and hung in the lobby and around the restaurant that are for sale. The bags were decorated with print or embroidery ranging from very simple stitches to very intricate designs or patterns and the cost of the bags ranged from 70 to 500 Moroccan dirham. In the atelier, there were women working at the sewing and weaving
machines, younger girls hand-sewing together pillows and boy ironing clothing and pillowcases. There were different rooms for different kinds of sewing and embroidery and one room for health classes for the women.

The shop is a way of allowing individuals from Darna to easily gain an employment opportunity. As Mounira indicated in her interview, the shop is not very profitable but “keeps their heads above water” and she emphasizes that the shop is for those who produce the products. In the kitchen behind the restaurant and in the atelier above, I saw a community of individuals who are working together. As Mounira said in the interview, when new individuals join, older members teach and support them, leading to the creation of network of women; this allows them to view each other as a collective group of people. Like Au Grain de Sésame, Association Darna trains individuals to produce crafts and other products from recycled material, making artisans aware of their impact of their environment. Nonetheless, the shop is very much catered to its consumers (tourists walked in to the restaurant and shop one after the other) using marketing terms like “eco-friendly” and these consumers tend to be European and Asian tourists with buying power. For example, the bags are more expensive than products in other local shops – the cost of a small bag decorated with embroidery or print ranged from 70 to 500 Moroccan dirham depending on how intricate the design or print is; a bag of similar size with print and designs (but likely mass-produced) costs only about 10 Moroccan dirham in local shops.

Funding the Association:

When the association was founded, it had no money. The boutique does not make a lot of money but they “keep their heads above water” with boutique sales. While there are Moroccan customers, most customers are foreign tourists of European and Asian backgrounds. They come to eat at the restaurant and then make purchases at the boutique to show their support. Darna also
Akkas raises funds through events, like their International Women’s Day event, and many Moroccans are present for these events. They also have exhibitions of the work created by artists (from Darna) and the artists were paid by Darna for exhibiting their work.

Most of the money to support the organization comes from donations. In 1996, there was international cooperation to support the organization from Spain, France, Catalonia, the European Union to give kids a place in society here and stop emigration to Europe. All these international organizations also send delegates to the association to work at Darna, make reports, develop projects, and so on, such that delegates are always present and involved at Darna. Funders, organizations, and donors learn about Darna from the organization website. There are also individual donors from around the world. There is a model from New York who came to Tangier for a photo shoot and came across the association and liked the work it was doing. She raised money in New York to fund the association and sent money back for two years. The association does not receive any money from the government, but in 2006, the association was recognized as an association of public utility. The association also receives a small amount of funding every year from the Ministry of Work and the Ministry of Professional Training. The organization currently does not have enough funds to house more homeless children because in addition to providing a home for these kids, there are also many medical expenses, like rehabilitation from drug addiction. However, the organization does provide preventative care measures for the children who are already at Darna.

Projects are also often led by European guest artists including French actress and artist Delphine Melese who led art projects, French musician, composer, and sculptor Robert Hebrard who led music projects, percussionist Monsieur Jackson who performed for Tanjajazz, and Jacques Abribat who directed professional trainings on the pedagogical farm for two years.
Conclusion

Fondation Orient Occident, Au Grain de Sésame, and Association Darna were created by Moroccan women seeking to help others through opportunities to develop skills in sewing and embroidery, among other opportunities. However, the ability of these initiatives to help others also depends on Western consumers, governments, and organizations who are looking to help “empower” women and preserve “culture” and purchase “eco-friendly” products. When products are sold to them, they are sold along a narrative that appeals to a savior complex and paints women as victims in need of greater economic decision-making power.

While Migrants du Monde, AGS, and Darna may not live up to “empowerment” as it was originally used by activists of Global South in the 1980s, they help women know their rights, understand each other as a collective, engage in intercultural dialogue, become aware of their environmental impact, and see themselves as individuals with power. While the artisans are not necessarily being encouraged to question the larger political dynamics that contributed to their marginalization, their “empowerment” is not limited to their ability to sell products and they would be empowered by the organization whether or not someone purchased their products. Thus, suggesting that they have lost their dignity or that their lives will be saved if an individual buys one product reduces skilled artisans individuals to mere victims.

However, the organizations are also compelled to appeal to consumer with the greatest buying power in order to sustain and grow the organizations, especially considering they are all limited in their operations by funding. In the opinion of former staff at Migrants du Monde, the artisans are paid for too little given the difficulty of creating each piece and there are not enough
artisans to produce the work. However, the profits from the selling are too little and the best approach, in her opinion, is to have more pop-up shops in Europe and Morocco, but Europeans have more buying power. At Au Grain de Sésame, the trainings and the number of artisans who come in for trainings is limited because of the limited profits from sales and limited access to consumer markets. At Association Darna, limited funding has limited how many people can Darna can take in to its shelters. Darna operates not only on large funds from international donors and European governments and organizations, but operates with delegates from these organizations working at Darna, in addition to hosting different European artists for programming.

During my interview with Asmaa of AGS, she asked me to come in for the training to understand for myself that the artisans come from very different backgrounds and cannot be limited to any homogenous description. While written material about AGS refers to “disadvantaged women” or “women in vulnerable situations,” the difference between marketing material and the reality of AGS is very clear. AGS is a gallery where artisans come together and treat the space as their own by making tea and making themselves comfortable, but also cleaning the space before they leave. Asmaa works with artisans from different backgrounds, stories, and skills and they learn with and from each other. Will this narrative appeal to as many tourists and Western consumers in eco-friendly trade market or even international organizations and raise the same revenue?

Limitations of the Study

My research was limited by a language barrier that impacted interviews I conducted and those that I could not. During my interviews at Fondation Orient Occident, my translator translated on the spot and for longer replies, she did not translate word for word, so it is difficult to know if
any information is missing or if anything is lost in translation. During my tour of Association Darna’s workshop, I was not able to speak to anyone working (beyond greetings) due to a language barrier and while I was able to ask a few questions to the woman who gave me a tour of the workshop, there were questions that I was not able to translate into Arabic for her. Thus, I can only convey a limited number of voices. Moreover, this research is heavily impacted by my own conceptions of what women’s empowerment should look like.

The interviews were also inevitably impacted by the fact that I am an American and an outsider to the organization. Perhaps some of the interviewees were a little open because I am a student researcher. During my interviews at Orient Occident when I asked (via translation) if members would like to see any changes at Migrants du Monde, two interviewees replied that there is nothing she would like to see change while a former staff member had an entire list of things that Migrants du Monde needs to work on, including wages, number of staff, number of shops, etc. Asmaa Benachir and Mounira El Alami were pretty open with me about their initiatives and as the founders and directors, they were also able to speak more frankly. Moreover, my interviews at Migrants du Monde felt very structured, especially because they required translation. However, I was able to speak with Asmaa and Mounira very comfortable and the interviews were much more of a conversation.

A shortcoming of this research is the very limited information on how migrant women are impacted by this power dynamic. Migrants du Monde operates differently than AGS and Darna and uses salvation rhetoric with regards to migrant women more than with other women, but it would be incredibly beneficial to this research if there were more information on other similar initiatives that service more women migrants in Morocco.
Recommendations for Further Study

My research aims to critically consider the power dynamics implicit in women’s empowerment organizations in Morocco. This research was limited to organizations where women participated in opportunities related to sewing and embroidery. It would be interesting to see how the power dynamics compare and contrast to organizations that help migrant women through legal aid and other opportunities. Moreover, there are initiatives for women’s empowerment in Morocco that are organized and funded almost entirely by Americans and Europeans – it would be interesting to pose the same research questions with these organizations. Lastly, I chose this research topic because there are so many initiatives that “empower” women through opportunities in sewing and embroidery throughout the Global South and these various initiatives across the world should not only be compared but the very fact that this is common long-standing international trend ought to be challenged.
Bibliography


Interviews

Benachir, Asmaa. (director, Au Grain de Sésame) in discussion with the author. April 17, 2018.

Statement of Consent

Purpose of Study

To study organizations that provide employment opportunities in garments to Moroccan and migrant women in Morocco and critically assess the organizations in their ability to represent the concerns of the women they are assisting and the dialogues resulting from the work of the organization.

Duration and Elements of Study

The study will be conducted over a period of three weeks, from April 8 to May 10 2018. It will include observations of participants as well as interviews and fieldwork.

Risks

The study has no foreseeable risks for participants. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the observation or interview process at any time, you are free to terminate your involvement.

Compensation

Participation in this study will not be compensated, financially or otherwise. However, your assistance is greatly appreciated by our research team.

Confidentiality

Every effort to keep your personal information confidential will be made in this project. Your names and other identifying information will be changed in the final write-up, and will only be known to the research team.

Participation

I, the undersigned, have read the above statements. I affirm that my participation in this study is voluntary and understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

__________________________  ____________
Signature                        Date

I recognize that this study involves interviews and/or observations that may be audio-recorded and transcribed.

__________________________  ____________
Signature                        Date

Research Team:

Researchers may be contacted by e-mail or telephone for any reason.
Déclaration de consentement

L’objectif d’étude

Étudier les organisations qui offrent des opportunités d’emploi dans les vêtements aux femmes marocaines et migrantes au Maroc et évaluer de manière critique les organisations dans leur capacité à représenter les préoccupations des femmes qu’elles assistent et les dialogues résultant du travail de l’organisation.

La durée et les éléments d’étude
Cette étude sera dirigée pendant une période de trois semaines, et ce à partir du 10 Avril jusqu’au 10 May 2018. L’étude inclura les observations et les interventions des participants en incluant leur travail sur terrain.

Les risques
L’étude n’a aucun risque prévisible pour les participants. Cependant, si vous ne vous sentez pas confortable avec le procédé d’observation ou d’interview, vous êtes libre de terminer votre participation.

Compensation
La participation à cette étude ne sera pas compensée, financièrement ou autrement. Cependant, votre aide est considérablement appréciée par notre équipe de recherche.

Confidentialité
Tout effort de maintenir votre information personnelle confidentielle sera fait dans ce projet. Vos noms et toute autre information d’identification seront changés dans la description finale, et seulement connue à l’équipe de recherche.

Participation
Je soussigné, ............................................................, confirme avoir lu les rapports ci-dessus et compris que ma participation à cette étude est volontaire tout en ayant la liberté de retirer mon consentement à tout moment sans pénalité.

_________________________  ____________
Signature              Date

J’ai pris conscience que cette étude puisse comporter les entrevues et/ou les observations qui peuvent être enregistrées et transcrites.

_________________________  ____________
Signature              Date

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Les chercheurs peuvent être contactés par E-mail ou téléphone pour n’importe quelle raison.
وثيقة قبول

الهدف من الدراسة (البحث):

١. لدراسة الجمعيات التي توفر فرص عمل في الملابس للمغربيات والمهاجرات في المغرب وتحليل نظري للجمعيات في قدرتها على تمثيل هموم المرأة التي تساعدها والتحليل المناقشات التي النتائج من خدمات الجمعيات.

المدة والالتزامات المستعملة للدراسة (البحث):

١. هذا البحث سيستغرق لمدة ٣ أسابيع وستمتد من أpring 8 إلى ١٠ حوار حول موضوع البحث.

المخاطر:

١. هذا البحث لا يحتوي على أي مخاطر محتملة. لكن إذا كان هذا سبب لك أي إجرازي أو قلق، لك الحق في التراجع و إيقاف صلك بالبحث. كما إذا أردت التنحي تماما عن هذا الموضوع في المستقبل يمكنك و بكل حرية الاتصال بي مباشرة.

التعويضات:

١. المشاركة في هذا البحث لن تكون مقابل سواء مادي أو غيره، ولكن مساهمتك ستحصل على تقدير من طرف فريق العمل.

الخصوصيات و الأسرار:

١. ستبدل كل الجهود لإبقاء هذه المعلومات في سرية تامة، كذا أسماءكم وكل المعلومات التي تعرف بشخصيتكم. الشروط التسجيلية ستجري بتصرف داخلي مباشرة بعد الامتناع إليها و تدوينها من طرف الأساتذة.

المشاركة:

١. أنا المعني (ة) أسفله، أقر بأنني قرأت و فهمت المعلومات المشار إليها أعلاه، وأؤكد أن مشاركتي هاته كانت بموجبه إرادتي و بكل طواعية. و أعلم أن لي كامل الأحقية في التراجع عن هذه الموافقة و بدون غرامة أو جزاء.

الامضاء: 

١. وأعلم أن هذا البحث يتضمن حوارات و ملاحظات من الممكن ان تكون مسجلة او كتابية.

التاريخ: 

١. فريق العمل:

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