

SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad

SIT Digital Collections

Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection

SIT Study Abroad

Fall 2021

Alienation of Labor or Alienation of Self: Perceptions of Hospitality Labor and Economic Development in Morocco

Julian Madera
SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection



Part of the [African Languages and Societies Commons](#), [African Studies Commons](#), [Growth and Development Commons](#), [Labor Economics Commons](#), [Labor History Commons](#), and the [Tourism Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Madera, Julian, "Alienation of Labor or Alienation of Self: Perceptions of Hospitality Labor and Economic Development in Morocco" (2021). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 3421.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3421

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

Alienation of Labor or Alienation of Self

Perceptions of Hospitality Labor and Economic Development in
Morocco

Madera, Julian

Academic Director: Belghazi, Taieb

Advisor: Hachim Ait-Mansour

Brandeis University

Anthropology, Politics, and International-Global Studies

Abstract

This work explores the relationship between a nation's economic shift to hospitality labor and a lower standard of living among the working class in said country. Specifically, the Moroccan economy's gradual increased reliance on service labor, particularly within the tourism industry. Standard of living in this work will be centered around well being understood through vocational fulfillment and perceptions of hospitality labor among service workers. In order to evaluate the standard of living among the working class, this work will utilize a comparative assessment of key interviews from three key sectors of the hospitality labor force: autonomist, alienated, and hospitality adjacent labor. All cases illuminated important aspects of service labor perceptions with unique values within each case interview. While alienated labor participants expressed a desire to withdraw from the industry due to a lack of vocational fulfillment, there was also a commonality of underemployment among their heavily university educated population. Hospitality adjacent and autonomist labor expressed a feeling of value that came with the multicultural connections through the tourism industry's propensity of international exchange. Despite all cases having a similar value in cross-cultural connection, the lack of skilled labor opportunities for university educated working class does not get addressed by an increase in tourism investment, thus causing an increased alienated labor population. This research takes thorough consideration of prior scholarly work done on economic development through tourism enhancement throughout the Global South, particularly in Morocco.

Key Words: labor alienation, underemployment, vocational fulfillment

Acknowledgments

Morocco, as vibrantly beautiful and hospitable as it is, was not originally in my research plans. The focus of this study was meant to be more centered around an island economy like Samoa. But political turmoil in the region forced me to look into new field research sites with a very small window of time to find one. However this turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as I could never imagine myself going anywhere different now that I have completed my studies there.

Entering Morocco, I felt very intimidated at first. The streets were filled with energy, chaos, and beauty. The cultural landscape was so admirable, but it was easy to feel like I did not belong in it, not knowing a single word of Darija Arabic. But the people I encountered were more than welcoming. I felt like I made more than helpful contacts in my research endeavors, but actual friends I can count on meeting when I inevitably return. Being a brown skinned person, I often felt out of place and unwelcome in my own home country, but there it was easy to feel like I belonged. So the people of Morocco and the entire nation as a whole are the first I would like to thank for their support in my overall experience.

I also want to express gratitude to my academic director, Dr. Taieb Belghazi, as he was the catalyst for my research approach as I took on field work. Beyond his academic consultancy, he was generally a kind and welcoming presence in my everyday life who I knew I could count on at any time. The entire SIT staff in general gave me nothing but confidence as I entered unfamiliar territory regularly.

Lastly, the United States Department of State and the Benjamin A. Gilman team. While travel advisory developments at the last minute caused me to no longer officially be a Gilman Scholar, the financial support was invaluable in my ability to afford living abroad as a student.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | 2 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Literature Review | 6 |
| Methodology | 11 |
| Case Description | 14 |
| Findings and Analysis | 19 |
| Conclusion | 28 |
| Limitations to Study | 29 |
| Recommendations for Future Study | 30 |
| References | 31 |

Introduction

Economic development in the Global South has always been a point of debate among economists, activists, and any other key stakeholders wanting to see their state reach a point of sustainable growth. Every aspect from the states' prioritized industry to form a comparative advantage to the monetary policies that could stabilize prices are debated on by economists dictating the developing nation's fate. What often goes unnoticed in such a quantitative heavy field such as macroeconomic policy building, are the feelings of the people being affected by these exact plans. These developmental strategies are often shaped with little regard to the potential emotion that could be connected to their decisions, setting any grievance aside as the 'growing pains' of economic progress.

In other words, developmental policies are often shaped by omitting important questions. An economist could only ask 'what could we do to increase employment?' while forgetting to also question what value labor holds with that state's population. A NGO (non-governmental organization) director could ask 'what emerging industry should we train this labor force to work in?' without thinking about what this population values through their labor. Forgetting to ask these questions can lead key decision makers to implement economic policies that blindside the populations they are intending to help. Industry shifts and abrupt changes to labor options available for these populations are usually the root of discontent among these states' working class. Economists could rationalize these decisions by figuring that every macroeconomic policy will result in certain segments of the population feeling left behind and it is naive to assume you can satisfy everyone. While that is most likely true, there is an argument to be made that addressing the social values surrounding labor can help economists properly raise the standard of living. Conflating GDP, or even GDPC, with a higher standard of living is often what leaves

labor populations in the Global South feeling unfulfilled and lacking agency. Accounting for what aspects of labor a developing nation's working class values can then help dictate which industries should be prioritized when shaping a sustainable economy.

An industry that is often suggested to prioritize among developing economies is tourism. At face value it appears quite practical: requiring very little resources, even at the human capital level. It would also give the working class the ability to move outside of the usually more physically taxing primary or secondary workforce into the service heavy tertiary workforce. However, the shift to a service economy that mostly caters to foreign tourists carries its own potential burdens on that country's labor population. Economic opportunities become dictated by the global perception of that country's safety and hospitality. These concepts often become defined by a Western standard of expectations due to the majority of tourism consumption coming from the Global North. As an industry works to match the needs or desires of the consumers, there becomes a heavy risk of alienating the laborer from their product. If service workers in tourism feel that they are not being true to their identities through their vocation, a perceived lack of fulfillment could become a general issue among the population's working class.

The reason why labor alienation and perceptions of vocational fulfillment are centered in this research is because mental well being will be included in the aggregate assessment of the overall standard of living for the working class. While other key socio-economic variables will be assessed, the key aspect of well being will be focusing on vocational fulfillment due to the lack of proper research in this region of labor. As every developing nation has their own distinct culture, the results of this research will not be generalizable, instead it will attempt to offer insight on a state where others with similar economic conditions could find takeaways.

The country of focus for this research is Morocco, a growing economy with a long history of multiculturalism. With a large majority of the population following core values of Islam and still maintaining steadfast traditions in everyday life, the dynamic between the service workers and a culturally globalized industry will be illuminating. Morocco is a unique place culturally, where the population has welcomed global socialization and yet still holds onto core national values, making their culture distinguishable in its hybridity. The tourism industry in Morocco has been consistently expanding in importance to the national economy for the past decade and has continued to offer more labor opportunities annually.¹ Even as the number of visitors coming into their country expands, Moroccan service workers have found ways to maintain cultural agency and adapt to the global economy. This paper will attempt to address the question of whether shifting the Moroccan economy to prioritize hospitality labor actually does increase the standard of living for the working class. Perceptions of labor fulfillment in Morocco will be based on a series of interviews conducted over a month-long period in three population hubs of Tangiers, Rabat, and Marrakech. This research will contribute to the greater conversation of vocational fulfillment being an economic right, even among the working class, when considering developmental policies. It will also raise the question if vocational fulfillment is a necessity among laborers, and if it can be substituted through other means such as spirituality or domesticity.

Literature Review

Research covering the labor perceptions of service work in the Moroccan tourism industry is crucial because developmental economic policies often prioritizes marginal monetary

¹ “International Tourism, Receipts (Current US\$) - Morocco.” World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Compendium of Tourism Statistics and Data Files, World Bank.

gains over the working class' well being. Historically speaking, it has been a common occurrence where a post-colonial state in the Global South will attempt to diversify or even potentially modernize their economy through catering tourism services to the Global North's consumers. While there are many reasons for that decision, like the often untouched natural landscape in developing nations that is so culpable for utility, a key factor is the Global North's political or economic influence on these post-colonial states. Powerful developmental NGOs, often based in the Global North, are left surprised when a country's labor force is struggling to adapt to their suggested industry. This is because the state conditions that are assessed by policy makers are national resources and socio-economic, but rarely utilizing factors deeply ingrained in their culture. While there is literature focusing on what employment means to laborers, there is a key gap in research on hospitality service workers' concept of fulfillment. Particularly among service workers in developing countries, who would be more at risk of having their cultural agency stripped as they cater to a majority Westernized consumer base.

My research contributes to the literature by producing qualitative evidence through interviews or field notes that capture perceptions of labor among service workers, as well as explaining how Moroccan hospitality employment adapts to the increasingly globalized economy. This research not only complements previous literature focusing on socio-economic factors that contribute to the possibility of sustainable development through tourism, but also aims to add to them. I intend to focus on how addressing these perceptions of service hospitality early on can limit labor alienation, and if shifting to a tourism based economy actually raises the standard of living for the working class.

By arguing that economists should consider a perceived alienation from labor in their assessment of "standard of well being," this research can open the door to a needed conversation

regarding vocational fulfillment as an economic right. The positive and negative outcomes of a developing economy utilizing tourism as a main source of revenue are substantially documented, but there are also very few resources covering the effects of converting to a service economy has on the working class. This research will go beyond just GDP growth and open up for a more holistic view of hospitality labor in Morocco. This paper will consider the developmental outcomes of other countries that expanded their tourism industries along with Morocco's tourism growth as well, but labor conditions for the working class will remain centered.

There are several important sources that are vital to the focus of this research. Wan-Chen Po and Bwo-Nung Huang's (2008) analysis *Tourism Development and Economic Growth – a Nonlinear Approach*, is relevant for my work because it analyzes the nonlinear correlation between tourism development and economic growth. An underlying assumption that is implied through this research's focus is that aside from mental well being (measured through perceptions of vocation) all other socio-economic variables that come with shifting to a hospitality based service economy are positive towards development. Huang and Po's research attempts to address this assumption through a comparative 88 country analysis. The analysis utilizes the value " q_i ," defined as receipts from international tourism as a percentage of GDP, to measure the relationship between tourism growth and economic development. They found that under the correct statistical conditions (a q_i below 4.0488% or a q_i above 4.7337%) there is a significantly positive relationship between tourism growth and economic growth. However, any country with a value between 4.0488% and 4.7337% showed no evidence of a statistical relationship. Their conclusion highlights the nonlinear nature of economic development and the tourism industry, showing that these assumptions of growth are not always correct. An incredibly important detail

to Po and Huang's results was the fact that Morocco was one of the countries sampled that met the criteria of a positive relationship between tourism growth and economic development.

Amin Sokhanvar et al's (2018) paper *Another Look at Tourism- Economic Development Nexus*, offers a more recent cross country comparative analysis of tourism receipts' statistical relationship with GDP growth. Sokhanvar utilizes Granger causality analysis² to compare the annual economic data of sixteen "emerging market economies" between the period of 1995 to 2014. Because this paper is utilizing mostly qualitative research, Sokhanvar's quantitative analysis of legitimacy to the assumption that more tourism equates to economic development becomes incredibly important. To form a nuanced understanding of such a large topic, it is important to address it from a macro-scale just as much as from a micro-perspective. This source effectively answers the macroeconomic question by ultimately concluding that the correlation should be considered case by case. Sokhanvar found that the only consistency among the countries' results was their lack of similarities. Their estimation results generate evidence for uni-directional causality from tourism to economic growth in three of the states while reverse relationship is detected for five others. Remarkably, no causality is obtained for seven out of sixteen emerging market countries, and finally, bidirectional causality is detected for one. These findings illustrate just how complicated of a question it is to ask if tourism growth leads to sustainable economic development. Handling the states through a case by case basis seems to be the most plausible way to answer this overall research question. Which is why this next source is coming from an intentionally Moroccan perspective.

Taoufik Dagabri et al's (2018) paper *Communicating a New Vision Of Tourism: The Case of Volubilis, Meknès, Morocco*, grants insight into the realm of tourism development through

² Granger causality is a way to investigate causality between two variables in a time series: the method is a probabilistic account of causality; it uses empirical data sets to find patterns of correlation

research formulated by Moroccan academics. It is important to consider research conducted within the Moroccan academic community because it provides this paper with a more in depth understanding of their priorities when devising developmental strategies. Daghri claims that the millennial visitors from the Global North want a new experience of tourism that goes beyond “sun, sea, sand, and sex.”³ They instead propose a concept of cultural tourism that is centered around the concept of a ‘Smart Village.’ They define SMART as standing for: social, moral, aware, responsive, and transparent: a tourism plan with the goal of bringing urban concepts into rural areas. The source argues that cultural tourism not only gives an opportunity for villages to modernize and reach the infrastructure standards of major urban hubs, but also enables agrarian Morocco to have access to sustainable development in the global economy. These concepts are compelling to this research because it poses a scenario where tourism can spur economic development and maintain cultural agency. Workers not having to adapt their hospitality services to fit a Westernized standard could help prevent labor alienation as they transition into a tourism economy.

Mario Holzner’s (2011) article *Tourism and economic development: The beach disease?*, assesses the volatility of the global tourism market and asks if there is a potential Dutch Disease Effect for tourism dependent countries long term. This research provides important context regarding consumer demands in the global tourism economy. If Morocco is consistently at risk of losing visitors in an industry they would potentially rely on, the market demand to cater services for Westernized consumers could jeopardize laborers’ cultural agency. However, Holzner found that there was no danger of a Dutch Disease Effect in touristic economies. Remarkably, he concluded that tourism dependent countries do not face real exchange rate distortion and

³ Taoufik Daghri, Houda Jorio, and Samira Kasmi. “COMMUNICATING A NEW VISION OF TOURISM: THE CASE OF VOLUBILIS, MEKNÈS, MOROCCO.” *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings* (2018): 297.

deindustrialisation but higher than average economic growth rates. It is also worth noting that Holzner's research supported the continued notion throughout the literature that investment in physical capital is complementary to investment in tourism.

Methodology

This research utilizes triangulation, the hybridization of qualitative methodology, to collect more abstract data, such as perspectives on vocational fulfillment. While this research is heavily qualitative, quantitative analysis is used to address questions regarding macroeconomic development. This meant that as participant observation, individual interviews, and field notes were gathered, quantitative data regarding economic development in Morocco was used to contextualize the bigger picture of tourism's impact.

Because a question as big as 'do hospitality service workers in the Global South feel alienated from their labor?' can not be answered from a series of individual perspectives, the qualitative data will be used to offer insight on a subject with very little written on it before. However, because of an abrupt travel ban implemented by the Moroccan government, the window of field research was shorter than expected. Because a substantial amount of field notes and in person interviews were conducted, the complications in data procurement were mostly due to the lack of formal interviews completed. This missing element of qualitative data was aimed to be substituted with one on one interviews via digital platforms (i.e. Zoom, Whatsapp Audio). Although interviews through a digital medium have the risk of not producing the same form of responses from participants, questions were phrased to at least require detailed responses.

Qualitative data was collected over a period of three months, beginning September and ending in December of 2021. Field notes were written on a variety of experiences, from everyday interactions, to more specific observations witnessed through different avenues of tourism. These avenues of tourism included conventional resort tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, and backpacking tourism. Conversations with hospitality (including hospitality adjacent) workers and observations of services provided were the most frequent subjects of the field notes.

Interviews were conducted through a series of methods, some via informal conversations others in formal interview format. Because of the relatively small window to hold interviews, this research will attempt to ascertain big picture takeaways from a limited sample size. The qualitative analysis of tourism from a development standpoint will ideally supplement a nuanced conclusion even with the slight qualitative set back. Along with informal participant observations and conversations, data regarding perceptions of hospitality labor will be centered around three key interviews. Each interview was conducted in an organized setting with verbal consent from the participant that their answers could be used for this research. Although these three participants could not encapsulate all aspects of hospitality labor in Morocco, they still covered three important sectors of tourism and labor.

The first key interview was with a tourist guide and business owner from Tangiers named Karim. Karim represents two segments of Moroccan tourism labor that provide an important perspective: a member of the business owning class and producer of cultural tourism experiences. Under Karl Marx's original definition of objective alienation of labor, Karim is not actually alienated because he owns the means of production.⁴ However, because this paper is focusing on a subjective alienation of labor, where a worker perceives alienation regardless of

⁴ Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. [1st American ed.], International Publishers, 1964.

whether they own the means of production or not, Karim's perspective was very valuable. Karim provided answers to the question of vocational fulfillment being rooted in production agency. Focusing on cultural tourism is important to this research as well, particularly when considering Taoufik Daghri's belief that it is the best avenue for sustainable economic development.

The second interview was with a hotel front desk receptionist living in Rabat named Said. Said provides a perspective from a conventional form of tourism while representing the 'unskilled'⁵ segment of the service labor sector. This segment is objectively alienated from their labor, but the goal of this interview was to find out if he was subjectively alienated as well. Having a master's degree in Arabic Linguistics, Said also spoke for a segment of the population that was overqualified for their position.

The final formal interview sought perspective from an AirBNB⁶ host residing in Rabat's 'Old Medina' named Abdel. Abdel represents a segment of labor that this paper would classify as hospitality adjacent. Because his profession as an IT professional is not specifically in the tourism industry, but still makes passive income from the hospitality industry thus defining his work as hospitality adjacent. Perception of tourism labor from a stakeholder in the hospitality industry who also holds complete vocational sovereignty from it is crucial to identifying core value in tourism growth outside of the Moroccan working class.

Because every interviewed participant was some form of a stakeholder in the Moroccan tourism economy, it seemed important to grant them partial anonymity in the paper. First names, general location, and their monetary connection to the tourism industry were included while intentionally omitting their full names, exact residences, and any identifiable information of their employment facilitators. Partial anonymity was important to ensure all answers were as genuine

⁵ Defined by needing no formal degree to obtain the position

⁶ Airbnb is an online marketplace that connects people who want to rent out their homes with people who are looking for accommodations in that area

as possible when asking their opinions on an industry they were financially dependent on. This anonymity was granted without request as the participants never appeared worried about the opinions they shared. This potentially could have been because they were immediately notified of their partial anonymity before beginning the formal interview. Informal conversations were less clarified over the course of having them with participants due to the spontaneity of pertinent information coming up. Because the participants were always aware of the researcher's purpose of interaction and reasons for being in Morocco it seemed implied that some conversations would contribute to field notes.

While this research takes a particularist approach with the qualitative evidence gathered, quantitative macroeconomic data utilizes comparative analytics to produce findings. Of course specific socio-economic data tied to Morocco's tourism industry will be considered as well, it is important to evaluate other states with similar makeup as well. Utilizing a comparative method with states that have already had a history of development being tied to tourism growth will hope to prove/disprove this paper's assumption that all factors are positive aside from 'well being.'

Case Description - a Current Assessment of Moroccan Tourism and Labor

Tourism in Morocco makes up an important and statistically underrepresented facet of their economy. Morocco's tourism industry has steadily increased its GNP impact along with total foreign receipts since 2015.⁷ Remarkably, the number of tourists going into Morocco has consistently risen since 1995, growing from 2.75 million to over 13 million visitors in the present day.⁸ Tourism within the country goes beyond just foreign consumers, with domestic tourism

⁷ "International Tourism, Receipts (Current US\$) - Morocco." World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Compendium of Tourism Statistics and Data Files, World Bank

⁸ "Tourism in Morocco." Worlddata.info, World Data, 19 Dec. 2019

making up a substantial 38% of total industry expenses.⁹ Because many ideal potential tourism destinations for Moroccans require a Visa to even visit, vacationing within the country is often seen as a more realistic option.

Data in the chart are given in millions of tourists. The red line represents the average of all 6 countries in Northern Africa.



10

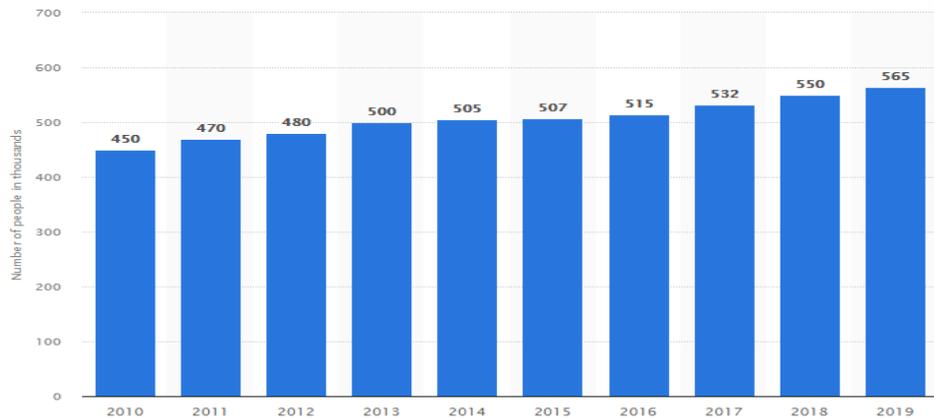
This consistent stream of tourism from within Morocco enables employees working within the economic sector to have year-round income. The Moroccan Ministry of Tourism recorded in 2019 (a pre-covid impact period of tourism) an estimated 565 thousand Moroccans working in the tourism industry, roughly 5% of overall national employment.¹¹ While this number is sizable, it only scratches the surface of tourism related employment in Morocco due to these numbers only addressing labor within the formal economy. The informal economy in Morocco makes up an incredibly large segment of labor opportunities within the country, however it often goes unreported because the sector has been historically difficult to document.¹²

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "Tourism in Morocco." Worlddata.info, World Data, 19 Dec. 2019

¹¹ Sasu, Doris Dokua. "Topic: Tourism Industry in Morocco." Statista, 2021.

¹² Aksikas, Jaafar. "Prisoners of Globalization: Marginality, Community and the New Informal Economy in Morocco." *Mediterranean politics* (Frank Cass & Co.) 12, no. 2 (2007): 251



Details: Morocco; Ministère marocain du Tourisme, du Transport Aérien et de l'Artisanat et de l'Économie Sociale; 2010 to 2019

13

The labor outlook for the formal economy is relatively more straight forward than the informal economy of Morocco. By occupation, the labor force can be divided into three categories: agriculture, industry, and services. Similar to the primary to tertiary labor categorization system, agriculture includes anything relating to the extraction of raw materials like farming, fishing, and forestry. Industry encapsulates mining, manufacturing, energy production, and construction. Services cover government activities, communications, transportation, finance, and any other economic activities that do not produce material goods. Under these definitions, 39.1% of the labor force works in agriculture, 20.3% in industry, and 40.5% are in service employment.¹⁴ Evidently, Morocco’s labor data shows that they are a service sector economy by the thinnest of margins, but agriculture and industry still play a vital role in the labor market. With no particular specialization or reliance on any one sector, this data meets the criteria of a country open to economic transition. However, while these numbers offer insight on more recognized forms of labor, it is important to note this data does not provide the

¹³ Moroccan Ministry of Tourism

¹⁴ “CIA Factbook: Morocco .” Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed December 14, 2021. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/morocco/#economy>.

entire labor outlook. The informal economy of Morocco plays a massive role in Moroccan service labor and their growing tourism industry.

To give an idea of how underrepresented the informal economy is in recorded Moroccan data, just see the official labor force. The official Moroccan labor force in 2020 was a total of 10.399 million eligible workers. The total population of Morocco in that same year was 36.910 million with around 24.419 million citizens between the age range of 15 to 64 years old. If the official mandatory retirement age in Morocco is 65 and the eligible working age is 15, then that would mean there was a gap of about 14 million possible workers not in the labor force.¹⁵ Of course this does not mean there were exactly 14 million citizens that were excluded from the labor force. Numerous variables could have led to some of the 14 million not participating in the workforce, like being a full-time student, mentally or physically disabled, an active duty soldier, or even a woman socially pressured to caretake her children. But even these many reasons would not be enough to logically justify 14 million people being missing from the official labor force.

The stark disparity between the eligible working population and the official labor force should highlight just how significant of a presence the informal economy has in the Moroccan labor market. This is particularly in Morocco urban centers, where a strong majority of the working population is employed outside the “formalized national economy.”¹⁶ The term ‘informal economy’ was first established by the International Labor Organization (ILO) when they used it in a report after they noticed the proliferation of casual labor in the Global South.¹⁷ The ILO identified seven characteristics that these forms of labor had in common: easy access to the activities involved, use of local resources, family-based ownership of the enterprises, limited

¹⁵ “CIA Factbook: Morocco .” Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed December 14, 2021. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/morocco/#economy>.

¹⁶ Aksikas, Jaafar. “Prisoners of Globalization: Marginality, Community and the New Informal Economy in Morocco.” *Mediterranean politics* (Frank Cass & Co.) 12, no. 2 (2007): 251

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 255

size of transactions, use of simple techniques with a small number of workers, use of practical skills developed outside the official educational system, and unregulated markets with open competition. However, it should be said that many in Morocco are not in complete agreement over what the ‘informal’ in informal economy actually means.

Moroccan scholar Jaafar Aksikas argues that the informal economy, and even its designation as informal, is problematic in nature. This is because he believes there is a stigma pushed on this form of labor by the Moroccan government and key stakeholders in their economic globalization. Because these forms of labor are often practiced by the lower class and difficult to regulate, the Moroccan government sees it as a sore sight in their economy, emphasizing that it is illegal labor.¹⁸ While Aksikas acknowledges that the informal economy includes illicit activity like drug dealing and prostitution, he stands firm in his position that the form of labor works as a legitimate method to offer income for disadvantaged Moroccans. Even choosing to refer to the informal economy as “marginalized labor” instead, this method of labor is often witnessed through the form of small family shopkeepers selling homemade goods within the ‘Old Medina.’ The formal economy in Morocco is also intrinsically tied to marginalized labor, with services or money made through this sector often going back towards the formal economy.

The informal economy is an important aspect of tourism service labor in Morocco because this paper would define many of these employment avenues as hospitality adjacent. At the risk of slightly irking Aksikas, an easy example to use from the informal economy is a drug dealer. Because of the popularity of Islam in Morocco, many drug dealers rely on tourist consumers from the Global North, who usually come from religious backgrounds that permit the

¹⁸ Aksikas, Jaafar. “Prisoners of Globalization: Marginality, Community and the New Informal Economy in Morocco.” *Mediterranean politics* (Frank Cass & Co.) 12, no. 2 (2007): 252

usage of their illicit products. So in this case, a drug dealer is hospitality adjacent, not by definition a hospitality worker, but still possessing a monetary stake in the tourism industry. The same logic could be used for an elderly woman residing in the Rabat Old Medina who exclusively sells authentic Amazigh garments. Selling clothes is not a form of commerce that is strictly for tourists, but many visiting foreigners would be more likely to purchase these goods as souvenirs than a Moroccan who would most likely view them as traditional apparel.

These distinctions will be important for the remainder of this paper, because hospitality adjacent labor and the informal economy play a key role in navigating vocational agency as the global tourism industry grows in Morocco. Globalization, particularly in tourism, often leads to cultural Westernization of everyday work practices and services offered. However, the informal economy is seeing Amazigh get to make a living handcrafting items that have been a part of their heritage for centuries, a trade kept profitable by visiting foreigners.

Findings and Analysis

Even in an unexpectedly shorter window of field research, the takeaways and results from these experiences have unexpectedly uncovered a far more nuanced understanding of working class well being in the Moroccan tourism economy. As ‘well being’ in this research included a sense of vocational fulfillment (or at least some form of workplace happiness) into the assessment, the organizational method of laying out the findings will be via keynote interviews. With every perspective will also come contextualization or illuminating data through the field notes taken and quantitative analysis.

Said will be the first focused participant, partially because he represents the more conventional hotel tourism which is often what comes to mind when someone thinks of tourism,

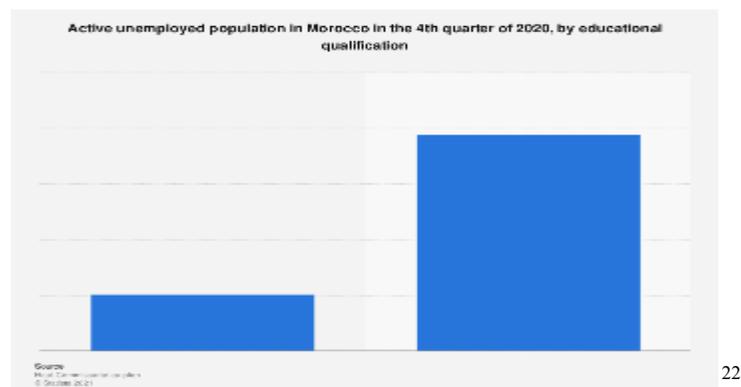
and partially because his perspective validated the research hypothesis. Said was in fact feeling unfulfilled through his vocation and even expressed his desire to move on from it in the near future. Two questions that seemed to be most illuminating of his perspective towards his form of service work were ‘do you feel like your talents are being utilized here?’ and ‘what did you dream of doing as a child?’ Said believed his best abilities were never utilized in his daily work routine, often making him feel alienated from his labor. He grew somewhat melancholy when describing his childhood dream vocation, and emphasized that he did not want to work at his hotel much longer. Many reading this now are probably thinking ‘everyone had a dream job when they were a child and did not get to live out, this is not a problem unique to service workers in the Global South.’

That point is valid, many grow up dreaming to be professional actors, models, and athletes only to realize that they must be practical in adulthood. But Said had a dream that was very attainable for him: he wanted to become a teacher in his home village and introduce literacy there to many children in need of it. With a master’s degree in Arabic Linguistics, Said is more than qualified to have become his dream profession. But in Morocco, even becoming a teacher while possessing two degrees can be considered an impractical vocation. After heavy investment in educational attainment during the 1950s and 1960s did not match their industry opportunities, Morocco became a “resource poor, labor abundant” country.¹⁹ University graduates became abundant but labor opportunities for them to utilize their learned abilities were sparse. Unemployment among university graduates became such an issue in Morocco that it was one of the leading causes of the infamous “February 20th Movement” during the 2011 Arab Spring.²⁰ Even after institutional labor reforms were implemented by King Mohammed VI in response to

¹⁹ Cammett, Melani, and Ishac Diwan.. A Political Economy of the Middle East. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015

²⁰ Dina Bishara, et al. “Why Unemployed Graduates’ Associations Formed in Morocco and Tunisia but Not Egypt.” Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, Oct. 2018

the protests, the issue of unemployment among the educated remains a problem. As recently as 2020, 19.5% of the economically active unemployed population were university graduates, compared to 5.9% that had no degree.²¹ The high rate of graduate unemployment in Morocco has remained disproportional to the increase in the number of graduates in the country each year.



Unfortunately Said was no exception to this phenomenon in Morocco, even with a master's degree in Arabic Linguistics. Under the circumstances, Said actually felt lucky to even be employed. However, he does not in fact represent the substantial population of university graduates that are unemployed, but a seemingly unreported segment that is underemployed in Morocco. Underemployment is when a laborer is forced to either work too few hours to support themselves financially or if their employment is not meeting the level of qualifications they have. In Said's case it was the latter. Of course he was feeling unfulfilled working at the front desk of a hotel when he was more than qualified to be in a more fulfilling vocation.

This is where the research circles back to vocational fulfillment as a working class issue. Said was one of many service workers encountered during this period that found themselves in hospitality labor after graduating from university. The frequent complaints of boredom were a theme in almost every conversation I had with them. Being bored at work is not an exclusive

²¹ Reference the graph right below
²²

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1175337/active-unemployed-population-in-morocco-by-educational-qualification/>

occurrence for service workers in the tourism industry, but the level of frequency I witnessed made me question why they even took the job. Said answered this question without me even needing to ask him. He told me about his family from his home village that he had to financially support all the way from Rabat. His parents were too old and unable to work, so that job was not rooted in desire but necessity for him. Surely just like Said, many of the other educated service workers I encountered during my period in Morocco had similar financial responsibilities that forced them to be underemployed.

Not surprisingly, very little (if anything) on underemployment in Morocco is documented, with unemployment being the sole focus of economic policy in the country. The priority to offer employment, no matter how little it matches the labor force's skill set, highlights why vocational fulfillment is an important consideration for working class well being. Said for example, found that his work did not utilize him properly and eventually felt alienated from his labor. Being financially tied to the position out of necessity and no other labor opportunities matching his education, Said has lost his vocational agency. This case shows that human capital development is not matching the labor opportunities available in Morocco. Shifting the economy to focus on hospitality services in the tourism industry could potentially lead to sustainable GDP growth, but it would not increase working class well-being under this paper's definition. Increasing labor opportunities and investment in tourism would be validating a trend that has left university graduates either unemployed or underemployed in Morocco. Although investing in more skilled labor industries and increasing tourism investment are not mutually exclusive, it is to say that attempting to form an economic specialization in tourism would be alienating a growing class in Morocco.

The second key interview was with Karim, who not only refuted my original hypothesis, but opened the door to alternative methods of sustainable development through tourism in Morocco. When I first met Karim, I expected him to hand me the keys to my temporary residence and keep our interactions as professional as possible to maintain the Westernized ideal of proper hospitality. Karim lived his entire life in Tangiers' 'Old Medina,' a historic and working class region of the city that still maintains some of Morocco's oldest traditions. Most foreign tourists that visit Tangiers, choose to stay in the 'New City' closer to the downtown area in modernized housing usually owned by non-local investors seeking to capitalize on the growing hospitality market in Morocco. Karim was a guide in the area, he and I crossed paths when I toured a Riad he was also a superintendent of. As he handed me the keys and took me inside, he unexpectedly sat down and began to talk to me about growing up in the Old Medina and his favorite traditions from the neighborhood. From hearing about his time as a guide and his childhood in Morocco, I learned more about the Old Medina's informal economy than I did from any article that I read in preparation of coming.

What I assumed would be a brief interaction turned into an hour long conversation, one in which he grew so comfortable with me he offered me hasheesh, an illegal substance in Morocco. However, in Tangiers the substance was all too common, making me far less surprised with the proposition than I would be further South in Morocco. However, what caught my attention most was when I asked if he used it and he responded with "of course not, I am Muslim, but I know its also just a plant that many Americans happen to use, and its also a principle of Islam to be as welcoming to any that enter your home." This interaction introduced me to the hybridity that becomes increasingly common in Morocco's cultural tourism sector.

Cross cultural connections were incredibly common due to the intimacy of the services offered and it often led to many service workers I encountered compromising on certain beliefs that I assumed were paramount to Islam. Originally forming this hypothesis, a preconceived belief I had coming in was that these cultural compromises would alienate service workers from their labor because it would fall under the umbrella of alienation from self. Alienation from self is identified in this research as the perceived lack of cultural agency in a service profession, challenging their sense of identity in the process. However, Karim had an entirely different view of this cultural hybridity. He saw it as a chance to learn about the world each day through others and become more understanding of his own values when hearing out other peoples'. He also felt like it gave him a chance to impart his culture and history onto outsiders so his "rich heritage could live on abroad." At first I thought his willingness to culturally compromise was due to his background as a hasheesh dealer on the side of his other business, but the longer I had time to know him the more he expressed how connected he was to his faith.

Karim expressed that for him and many other Moroccans, hospitality and Islam were intrinsically connected. Upon hearing this I started noticing just how many Moroccans, many of whom were not even working in the tourism industry, would treat me with kindness without any prior interactions. There was one occasion where a homeless man, who seemed to be mentally unwell, started chasing after a white friend of mine down the street. Seeing that he was clearly an outsider, many Moroccan citizens in the Old Medina stepped in the way of the homeless man and told him to leave my friend alone. A cynic would argue that perhaps these interveners were possibly hospitality adjacent and had some financial stake in outsiders' perception of their area. But that moment, and many others similar to it, opened up a new door for vocational fulfillment in the tourism industry of Morocco. If hospitality and Islam are connected to many in Morocco,

there is a chance that spiritual fulfillment and vocational fulfillment can work in cohesion giving many service workers a chance to feel connected to their work that others may not have in tourism.

It should be mentioned again that Karim and Said both worked in tourism under very different circumstances. Karim was a business owner who inherited it from his father. His father taught him everything about tourism and had him drop out of school by the age of nine. Karim emphasized that he felt more than educated enough from what he had learned through his experiences and his father's guidance. The point is, he had only one goal in mind from childhood going into his adult life: maintain his father's legacy and take over the business. Many times I insisted that he must have had an impractical childhood dream job, like professional soccer player or actor, but he never once changed his claim that from nine years old he knew that running his business is what he wanted to do. A clear difference from Said who had a divergent dream from the job he currently had. Said was also underemployed in his position while Karim was at a literal perfect level of qualification for what he was doing. Under Marx's objective definition of labor alienation, Karim owned the means of labor and was objectively not alienated. Even so, Karim emphasized he did not feel subjectively alienated either. The work he did was important to him on many levels.

The business Karim runs is not regulated by the government and is well within the informal economy of Morocco. His cultural tourism project is about more to him than just financial gains, he considers himself a stalwart community leader in Tangiers' Old Medina. He would often boast to me about the many jobs he provided for people in the community as guides and the support he provided for local members of the informal economy who were hospitality adjacent. When I asked if he felt that his livelihood increases as more tourists enter the country,

he countered with “Moroccan livelihood increases as more tourists enter the country.”

Remarkably, this is one of the few things he and Said agreed on regarding tourism. Said too believed that tourism was such an important part of the Moroccan economy, that more visitors only meant good for his country.

Aside from the support he could facilitate through tourism in his own community, there was some truth to what Karim said at macro scale as well. In a comparative study of tourism growth and economic development, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables in Morocco’s economic outlook.²³ Along with macroeconomic growth being in the realm of statistical probability, there is also room for long term development in underserved Moroccan communities through tourism. Similar to Karim being able aid his community in Tangiers through providing them employment or increasing business for hospitality adjacent vendors, new concepts in cultural tourism can possibly aid entire villages. Taoufik Dagabri et al’s proposed Smart Village would be a series of technological and infrastructure investments that would inspire tourists from the Global North to seek cultural tourism experiences in rural Morocco.²⁴ This would not only provide agrarian Morocco the opportunity to modernize, but also make additional income through a method of tourism that would not require them to put their cultural agency at risk. This would also enable any village services within the informal economy that are hospitality adjacent to benefit from an increased consumer base where they would otherwise see very few.

The last key interview will touch on a segment of the Moroccan tourism industry that benefits off of visitors coming in without any particular labor involved. Abdel made passive

²³ Tourism development and economic growth—a nonlinear approach
Po, Wan-Chen ; Huang, Bwo-Nung, *Physica A*, 2008, Vol.387 (22), p.5542

²⁴ Taoufik Dagabri, Houda Jorio, and Samira Kasmi. “COMMUNICATING A NEW VISION OF TOURISM: THE CASE OF VOLUBILIS, MEKNÈS, MOROCCO.” *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings* (2018): 299.

income from his AirBNB and would often enjoy influxes of tourists coming to patronize his business. What made Abdel's case more interesting was the fact that his guests would stay with him in his small home within Rabat's Old Medina. This meant that the clientele he usually experienced were backpackers from the Global North seeking a cheap place to stay. Sharing such an intimate space with a new stranger every week would personally have driven me mad, but Abdel seemed to genuinely love having the company. He did not even need the additional financial support, the home he had was modest but he worked a well paying job as an IT professional in Casa Blanca. He told me that he just has a love for meeting new people from different cultures.

He would often tell stories of foreign travelers that he became friends with over the years. When I asked him if he thought his life improved when more tourists entered the country he said yes but did not even mention the additional money he would be making. Instead he spoke about all the interesting people he would get to meet. This brought me back to Said. Who after I spoke with, made me feel incredibly poor about the state of labor opportunities in Morocco's tourism industry. However, I recalled Said speaking about how he too valued the interesting people he would meet and the friends he would make through his job. He went on about how the friends he made he would stay in touch with forever. That memory surfaced a remarkable revelation for me: a key commonality among them all was their value in cross cultural connection and friendship. The last major commonality that I realized they shared was the fact I reached a point where I considered them all friends myself.

Conclusion

Tourism in Morocco is so unique, it is difficult to confidently say that this research can provide any universal answers, but it certainly has opened up the floor for new conversations regarding the role of fulfillment in the workplace and the future of tourism in the Global South. The level of intimacy and emotional connection tied to hospitality work in Morocco is like none I had ever witnessed before (for whatever that is worth at only 21 years of age). Service workers often showed a genuine interest in the people they met and the relationships that came out of them. The issue with shifting to a service based economy through tourism specifically has more to do with the socio-economic conditions of Morocco than it does with the culture of tourism in the country.

The continued proliferation of higher education and lack of proper labor opportunities will only increase if the economy shifts heavily towards tourism. This could cause even higher levels of unemployment and underemployment within Morocco's increasingly educated labor force. Because underemployment can make it far easier for workers to feel alienated from labor and a perceived lack of fulfillment, a shift to a tourism economy would not increase the well being of Morocco's working class. While this may be confirming my original hypothesis, it is not for the right reasons. I assumed that the environment of tourism would be so overbearingly Westernized that hospitality workers in Morocco would feel a lack of cultural agency thus alienating them from their labor. Instead I learned that expansion of the tourism economy can uplift working class well being in Morocco, but under the right circumstances.

The first thing that would need to have been different was of course labor opportunities for university graduates. The stark difference in educational priorities between Said and Karim showed to an extent what a shift in perspective education or qualification can cause. University

graduates are going to far more easily feel unfulfilled working in a hotel over what their degree specified compared to someone who had not participated in formal education since he was nine. The other aspect that would need to be maintained in Morocco to ensure the well being of all the working class would be the popularization and shift towards cultural tourism (or any other form of low maintenance alternative tourism). Cultural tourism would help spread foreign investment away from just the many coastal urban hubs, but also agrarian Smart Villages that can provide modern resources for Morocco's rural population for generations.

There is something very valuable to the relationships that can result from Moroccan hospitality, but with all foreign tourism investments come along the conventional forms of tourism that damage those practices. The connections you form with a guide riding slowly through the desert could never be replicated in a large resort setting where all signs of Moroccan culture are wiped from the premises. If the tourism industry in Morocco can find a way to expand without stripping the cultural agency of labor involved and ensuring employment for university graduates, then I will gladly shift my hypothesis.

Limitations to Study

A project tackling questions this big requires at least a year long ethnography, three months with only one month dedicated to open field research and interviews was definitely not enough time. Of course not being a fluent speaker in Arabic Darija was also a limiting factor in my research focusing on the hospitality adjacent informal economy. Because most participants in the formal tourist economy spoke English by necessity, there was little in the way of impromptu communication. Another major setback to my data collection was my abrupt and forced departure from Morocco.

I had intended to conduct two more key interviews in person the week I was sent home. Having to do one of them digitally made the interview feel less organic at times, but the honesty of their responses made me feel comfortable that we were not wasting each other's time. Attempting to collect any data from the informal economy also proved difficult as there has historically been very little recorded on it. However, this gap in data did give me the opportunity to experiment with Moroccan labor data and come up with my own conclusions.

Recommendations for Further Study

Because I intend to continue this research myself, a lot of these recommendations for further study are action items I would like to take in the future. The first suggestion is the most obvious, but a longer ethnography needs to be conducted in order to form more concrete conclusions. Ideally this field work should cover three core segments of Moroccan hospitality labor: conventional hotel tourism, cultural tourism, and eco-tourism. By following the daily activities of service workers in these three segments will help the researcher capture a more nuanced understanding of labor perceptions. A more in depth understanding of hospitality adjacent labor within the informal economy will also be vital in fully understanding what working class well being means if Morocco were to fully invest in the tourism industry.

Bibliography

Tourism development and economic growth—a nonlinear approach

Po, Wan-Chen ; Huang, Bwo-Nung

Physica A, 2008, Vol.387 (22), p.5535-5542

Sokhanvar, Amin, Serhan Çiftçioğlu, and Elyeh Javid. “Another Look at Tourism- Economic Development Nexus.” *Tourism management perspectives* 26 (2018): 97–106.

Taoufik Daghri, Houda Jorio, and Samira Kasmi. “COMMUNICATING A NEW VISION OF TOURISM: THE CASE OF VOLUBILIS, MEKNÈS, MOROCCO.” *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings* (2018): 297–306.

Aksikas, Jaafar. “Prisoners of Globalization: Marginality, Community and the New Informal Economy in Morocco.” *Mediterranean politics* (Frank Cass & Co.) 12, no. 2 (2007): 249–262.

Cammett, Melani, and Ishac Diwan.. *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015.

Dina Bishara, et al. “Why Unemployed Graduates' Associations Formed in Morocco and Tunisia but Not Egypt.” *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University*, Oct. 2018,

<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/why-unemployed-graduates-associations-formed-morocco-and-tunisia-not-egypt>.

“International Tourism, Receipts (Current US\$) - Morocco.” *World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Compendium of Tourism Statistics and Data Files, World Bank*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.RCPT.CD?locations=MA>.

“Tourism in Morocco.” *Worlddata.info, World Data*, 19 Dec. 2019, <https://www.worlddata.info/africa/morocco/tourism.php>.

Aksikas, Jaafar. “Prisoners of Globalization: Marginality, Community and the New Informal Economy in Morocco.” *Mediterranean politics* (Frank Cass & Co.) 12, no. 2 (2007): 249–262.

Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* . [1st American ed.], International Publishers, 1964.

“CIA Factbook: Morocco .” *Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency*. Accessed December 11, 2021. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/morocco/#economy>.