

**Koenraad
Bogaert:
“Globalized
Authoritarianism.
Megaprojects,
Slums, and
Class Relations
in Urban
Morocco.”**

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Morocco's metropolises offer interesting cases of urban development, not least because cities like Casablanca, Tangier, and the capital Rabat are by now home to several mega-projects that showcase current models of city planning in the Global South and their global connectedness. However, not far from these projects' construction sites, the attentive visitor will find slums – poor, informal neighborhoods that are likewise objects of urban development: Morocco is a trailblazer in “slum upgrading”. For one such apparently successful and inclusive program, *Villes sans Bidonvilles* (VSB), the country even received a prize from UN Habitat in 2010. Such social initiatives and several political reforms in the last decades lead some observers to consider Morocco an example of political liberalization and gradual democratization in North Africa/West Asia (NAWA).

The book under review here contests this view, precisely by taking both mega-projects and “slum development” programs in Morocco as prisms through which to read class relations and authoritarianism, in order to show “how authoritarian government converges with increasing globalization and transforms through its interaction with a rationale of economic liberalization” (9). Koenraad Bogaert, Assistant Professor

in the Department of Conflict and Development Studies at the University of Ghent and a member of the Middle East and North Africa Research Group (MENARG), has published extensively on the political conditions and processes in Morocco and the wider region. His first book is a highly important and eye-opening contribution not only to debates on urban development and political change in Morocco in particular; it also presents a fresh perspective on the broader logics of statehood and governance in NAWA, always understood in their interconnections and global dimensions. Since 2007, the author has conducted fieldwork in Morocco and interviewed program directors and managers of mega-projects and “slum upgrading” programs, as well as affected inhabitants. With a spatial perspective and a “problem-driven approach” that does not limit itself to a particular method, the book takes the city as an entry point “not only to understand political change in Morocco in relation to neoliberal globalization but to question this phenomenon of neoliberalism itself” (24).

The book is divided into three parts that tackle different aspects of neoliberal politics in six chapters: Part One, “Neoliberalism as Projects”, lays out the general theoretical perspective and introduces a concept

of globalization not as an external, inevitable phenomenon that impinges on a country like Morocco, but as a process that is coproduced there, in its local, particularly urban spaces. Chapter 1 problematizes what happens if we apply, in the sense of Massey, an “aspatial” perspective on political change, and consider “democratization”, associated with free markets, as an end goal of an unstoppable process of globalization. The author critically revisits the debates on politics and democratization in the NAWA region before and after the “Arab Spring”, an event he considers an opportunity to break away from a particular dichotomy: on the one hand, a “transitology” perspective that seems too focused on indicators of democratization, and on the other hand, a “post-democratization” perspective that instead permanently aims to explain the “persistence” of authoritarianism as a matter of fact, thus often implicitly attributing it to cultural traits. Both perspectives are fraught with a particular spatialized development logic in the sense that the “local” (a reified notion of “the Arab regime”, “crony capitalism”, or clientelism as family business that has not yet been “modernized”, etc.) is seen as the problem, whereas globalization is considered an external, anonymous process that is essentially associated with democratization and free markets. A “city

lens”, on the contrary, challenges these perspectives that both consider the nation-state or the “Arab regime” as the privileged domain of politics. Bogaert argues that the continuity of authoritarianism in a country such as Morocco should be understood through the practices and global encounters of various agents of transformation within new complexes of power that are involved, for example, in the reproduction of urban space. In this sense, he proposes to conceive of neoliberalism as “projects”, which

is not an attempt to redefine the local and its relationship vis-a-vis the global but rather an attempt to localize a phenomenon we usually ascribe to the global. By identifying projects, we can *situate* global capitalism. Identifying projects not only means that we make the connections between places around the world visible, but it also helps us to understand how all these connections produce the global situation from within different places or localities. The concept of projects makes globalization concrete, tangible, and thus also contestable. If globalization remains this abstraction, always something out there, always somewhere else, somewhere global, and thus in a way unlocated and untouchable,

it becomes in the end apolitical, with the properties of a force of nature, as it were. (46)

Against this conceptual backdrop, Chapter 2 offers an overview of the history of urban development in Morocco in recent decades and reconstructs major turning points in urban politics. The author broadly distinguishes a phase of state developmentalism after independence, characterized by a steady increase of public spending and public employment, to which the debt crisis and structural adjustment programs put an end in the early 1980s. What followed were two phases of neoliberal restructuring, first a phase of rolling back social spending and “creative destruction” that mainly dismantled welfare elements and, in the case of protests, drew on heavy-handed repression; since this approach was unable to combat poverty, it also compromised the further development of the neoliberal order itself. Mohamed VI’s ascent to the throne in 1999, in turn, marks the beginning of a roll-out phase of neoliberal consolidation that is epitomized by urban mega-projects, on the one hand, and social programs, on the other. However, this current phase is not characterized by a return to a welfare model, but by an increasing privatization of the state and a systematic reconfigura-

tion of the state apparatus itself, by outsourcing central competences of urban planning to agencies that work mainly according to a market logic. The mega-projects illustrate this managerial approach, which systematically aims to attract global capital, particularly from Gulf investors, and follows a conceptually new, more technocratic, but also more competitive logic.

The second part, “(State-)Crafting Globalization”, challenges predominant ideas about the role of the state and its relation to its subjects/citizens in globalization and current neoliberalism, by pointing out its key role in neoliberal government. Chapter 3 specifies the notion of projects as *class* projects and revisits the discussion of class relations in the NAWA region. According to the summary, many scholars considered the explanatory potential of class as an analytical category to be difficult to apply to the countries of the region, since no social stratum seemed to ultimately fit a concept like that of *bourgeoisie*, i.e., a class in possession of the means of production and with a relative independence from the regime. Instead, the elites appeared to rather consist of *ruling families* and their patronage networks, or, in the case of post-independence Morocco, as a *state bourgeoisie* made up

of technocrats who were completely dependent on the *makhzen*, the monarchy's own encompassing network of patronage and control. In these debates, Bogaert once more sees an aspatial logic at work, since such perspectives confine themselves to the framework of the nation state. In consequence, a localized version of crony capitalism is implicitly juxtaposed with a more abstract, place-less ideal type of capitalism, in which a bourgeoisie played the role of agents of democratization, as if there was an essential nature to them as a class. Instead, Bogaert argues for an understanding of class as “determined by what people actually do within the context of neoliberal projects and not by what they are ‘supposed’ to do” (117). From this perspective, which aims to bring Marx and Foucault together, class is not necessarily defined by the possession of the means of production, but rather by relations, in other words: class cannot be conceptualized as isolated from concrete projects and the localization of the regional, national, or global actors it brings together to extract surplus from a particular place. An illustrative example of such a project is the Bouregreg Valley project, a mega-project under construction between Rabat and Salé, which is in the focus of chapter 4 (see also Amarouche and Bogaert in this issue). In a detailed

analysis of the project and the agency that is commissioned to steer it, Bogaert points out how neoliberal authoritarianism functions through a technocratic logic, namely “agencification”: a mega-project is set up that will take years of planning and realization. Despite a certain discourse of development and participation, in the end a semi-public agency is created that functions according to a business logic, since technically this appears as the only solution to unite the necessary expertise for the administrative chores of a project of such dimensions. Successively, decision-making power is transferred to the agency, while local municipalities are effectively sidelined. The agency acts as an intermediary that attracts international capital, mainly from the Gulf and Europe. In consequence, urban planning and government become more accountable to these investors than to the citizens living in the vicinity of the project, who have little capacity to influence the changes made to their city. Bogaert analyzes these processes as the creation of new state spaces in the sense of an assemblage and concludes: “Authority, such as in the Bouregreg Valley, is thus a particular relational effect of interaction between local, regional, national, and international actors rather than the sovereign exercise of an

'Arab regime' as the sole locus of power" (140).

The third part of the book, "Transforming Urban Life", gives insight into the urban politics beyond the mega-projects, namely on the role of social struggle, urban violence, and political instability in reconfiguring neoliberal projects and authoritarian government. In chapter 5, Bogaert discusses the "Changing Methods of Authoritarian Power", i.e., the reinvention of social policy under Mohamed VI, after the phase of rollback and repression under his father's rule. The aim behind today's mega-projects - to maximize the process of capital accumulation in the city - necessarily entails the question how to deal with the existing urban population. In this regard, two watershed moments in Casablanca - the "bread riots" of 1981 and the 2003 jihadist suicide attacks - are presented as turning points, in that they made it an imperative to tackle the social problems in the poor neighborhoods. In contrast to previous riots, to which the government simply reacted with heavy-handed repression by the police and army, the 1981 riots that erupted in reaction to the rollback in the course of the IMF-imposed structural adjustment mark the end of the *benign neglect* of the urban periphery and the beginning of a tighter control over

urban territory. The ensuing thorough administrative redivision of Casablanca followed a logic of deconcentration and decentralization of state power, creating ever-smaller prefectures and minimizing the distance between the administration and the subjects administered, while at the same time connecting it closer to the Ministry of the Interior. These administrative reforms were supplemented with an encompassing urban restructuring strategy, creating new avenues that would make traffic more fluid and more controllable. In addition, the Hassan II-Mosque - equipped with the world's tallest minaret - appears as a neoliberal mega-project *avant la lettre*: Still imposed by the sovereign ruler alone, it responded to the Islamist challenge with a "reconfessionalization" of the city sphere; it addressed the citizens and faithful as co-financers; and at the same time it was a test case for waterfront development and the creation of a monumental tourist attraction. The chapter emphasizes that the processes since 1981 did not result in a return to the social policies of developmentalism or more inclusive models of "growth", but both social programs and repression have since been based on entirely different precepts, for which Casablanca has served as a "ville laboratoire":

The objective was to replace the old social contract of the developmental state, in which citizens had certain social privileges and rights in exchange for their loyalty (e.g., public employment), with a new contract between state and citizens in which people were "responsibilized" and encouraged to seize the opportunities of the (free) market. State power had to be redeployed and reorganized, not only to exploit strategic locations and redesign urban skylines but also to create neoliberal citizens (self-reliant, entrepreneurial, individualized), and facilitate their integration into the formal market ("inclusive growth"). (166)

Bogaert reads these processes, in which neoliberalism appears inseparable from authoritarianism, with Foucault's concept of governmentality: the 1981 response thus still largely followed a logic of sovereign power - aiming at control over territory and protection of the sovereign - and a strategy of "management by absence" (Zaki): maintaining the slum dwellers at the margins kept them in a state of legal insecurity that, according to the rationale, prevented them from collective mobilization and articulating demands. The response to the 2003 attacks, in turn, marks the predominance of biopolitics

directed at the individual lives of the slum population. Bogaert claims that the governmental social programs that were set up in the aftermath, namely *the Initiative Nationale de Development Humain* (INDH) and *Villes sans Bidonvilles* (VSB), aim to depoliticize the urban space by responsabilizing and disciplining the slum dwellers. Chapter 6 offers a detailed analysis of the latter program. VSB was launched in 2004, following an address by Mohamed VI in July 2003 that declared the living conditions in the slums a policy priority. Financed both by the Moroccan government, on the one hand, and international institutions and development agencies such as the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, and US Aid, on the other, VSB employs mainly a resettlement strategy. The inhabitants are offered housing on newly developed plots of land, usually on the city's outskirts, on the condition that they destroy their current informal dwellings. The program thus successively eliminates the slums as hardly governable spaces, while at the same time ending the inhabitants' legal insecurity, making them homeowners with a property title, and finally also including them in the market. In this resettlement scheme, the inhabitants usually build their houses themselves with a certain amount of financial support and easy access to loans.

However, Bogaert argues that behind the apparently successful statistics, such resettlement often actually results in deteriorated living conditions and even exacerbates urban poverty and marginalization, since the new neighborhoods on the outskirts offer less access to public services and markets or other places that are relevant for the petty economy that the inhabitants engage in. In addition, it also destroys the networks of solidarity that had developed over the decades in the old neighborhoods. Accordingly, the actual political rationale behind social programs such as VSB once more illustrates the intricate link between neoliberal governmentality and authoritarianism: on the one hand, such resettlement economically develops new territory, while at the same time it creates spaces that are more visible and better to control. On the other hand, it disciplines the subjects as individual self-entrepreneurs who now, since they are indebted and "included" in formal market procedures, have to abide by its rationale. Finally, VSB also clears the often valuable and usually well-connected land in the city's center for future investors, maybe even mega-projects.

Bogaert's analysis is highly innovative and convincing, just like the way he productively combines the theoretical perspec-

tives of thinkers such as Marx, Foucault, Massey, Lefebvre, and Harvey. However, since he emphasizes a notion of power that aims at a more dynamic and relational perspective, it would have been interesting to hear more from those inhabitants who are affected by mega-projects and slum upgrading, and to reconstruct the rationale inherent in their patterns of action – can their eventual mobilizations also be read as "class projects", maybe even with a global dimension? Likewise, the book surely leaves any reader familiar with Moroccan realities with further open questions. Morocco is not only a prominent case involving mega-projects and "slum upgrading", but as Bogaert himself remarks, also has the greatest urban-rural divide in the NAWA region. Can an approach that takes the city as an entry point include the situation in the marginalized rural regions of Morocco? How is "globalization produced" there, on the periphery, and how is it connected to the metropolises? The book is published at a time when the Moroccan periphery, in particular, has become a place of unrest and massive social protests. This goes especially for the Rif, the northern part on the Mediterranean coast, which is likewise the region with the highest rate of migration to Europe, thus pointing to another key aspect of globalization.

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However, Bogaert has extensively discussed elsewhere questions of protest mobilization in the Moroccan metropolises and the periphery (Bogaert and Emperador Badimón; Bogaert, “Contextualizing the Arab Revolts: The Politics behind Three Decades of Neoliberalism in the Arab World”; Bogaert, “The revolt of small towns: the meaning of Morocco’s history and the geography of social protests”), and it is up to the readers to productively include these analyses, which are clearly beyond the scope of this book.

To conclude, Bogaert develops a compelling argument and his book sheds light on often overlooked dynamics. It is a must-read for anyone doing research on urban development and the political process in Morocco, as well as for anyone interested in neoliberalism, authoritarianism, and globalization in general. As such, it is also highly recommended for teaching in a variety of courses, since it not only combines different theoretical perspectives in an innovative way and points to unexpected empirical connections, but is also written in a straightforward style that makes it a pleasure to read.

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