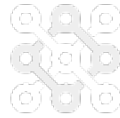


Pārmaiņas un izaicinājumi sociālā attīstībā un nodarbinātībā: Eiropa un Āzija / Driving changes and challenges of social development and employment: Europe and Asia



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Echoes from the suq: exploring informality. The case of Rabat (Morocco)

The aim of my research is to investigate informal economy in Morocco by taking the suq (lit. the market, bazaar) as a case study. This open/semi-open market represents a point of interest for multiple trades, but to reduce its value to the merely economic would be a mistake, since it encompasses multiple meanings, from the social to the cultural one. Therefore, the exploration of suqs as sites of informal governance moves beyond a narrow focus on economic considerations. In fact, the processes of economic informality cannot be separated from those of urban informality, as they are closely interconnected, especially in this case.

The theory underlying this research is that the French protectorate had a huge impact on the spread of informality. In fact, in 1912 (during the French Protectorate) the Moroccan population was pushed to reside in informal settlements on the outskirts of the city, sustaining themselves through informal economic activities. The urban transformation continued as the city was strictly divided between Moroccan and European zones. What happened in Morocco during the protectorate era had a profound impact on its urban space and the subsequent history of urban planning. In fact, still until nowadays, downtown (the “European” part) is often deemed an inviolable zone, subjecting street vendors to frequent forced evictions.

Consequently, since the medina (the old town, the “Moroccan” part during the Protectorate) is the place where the suq is placed, the research wants to explore the legacy of the cultural and social meaning of this place, and the impacts of the French protectorate on the contemporary urban configuration of the city and the resultant repercussions on the informal economy, that -although relegated to the “margins”- has constantly evolved over time.

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