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Creative engagement with migration in Morocco: An ethnographic exploration of photographic encounters

ABSTRACT

This article examines the contentious topic of participation through the lens of a collaborative arts-based project on migration in Morocco. We call for the ethnographic exploration of photographic encounters: that is, participant observation of the processes of shooting, selecting, editing, preparing and exhibiting of photographs and films. First, we explore the need to identify barriers to participation and reflect on the role of researchers. Second, we stress how participatory arts-based workshops can confront Othering stereotypes amongst participants from diverse backgrounds. Third, we challenge social scientists' tendency to prioritize process over product by considering public encounters as integral to participatory processes.

Migration and arts for advocacy in Morocco

Morocco, formerly considered a country of emigration, is increasingly also characterized by transit and immigration, notably for a growing population of sub-Saharan migrants fleeing political persecution and endemic poverty (Cherti and Grant 2013), and more recently for those fleeing conflict and persecution in Syria. Morocco shares a land border with Europe via the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in northern Africa, and the Strait of Gibraltar between the two continents is only 14km wide. Spain, along with other southern European countries such as Italy and Greece, is one of the main entry points for migrants attempting perilous journeys amidst what is widely reported as a 'migration crisis' in the Mediterranean (McMahon 2017). A United Nations Refugee Agency report shows a 130 per cent increase in the number of crossings on the 'Western Mediterranean route' (i.e. the Moroccan–Spanish border): between January and July 2018 there were a reported 27,600 arrivals via sea and land into Spain from Morocco, compared with 12,100 in the same period in 2017. It also shows a sharp increase in the number of dead and missing migrants: 318 for the 2018 period compared with 113 in 2017 (UNHCR 2018: 6).

Morocco is an important partner for the European Union and its member states, especially Spain and France, for the management of so-called 'migration flows'. Along with Afghanistan, Morocco was on the list of the most important countries of origin and transit of asylum seekers and migrants requiring an Action Plan by the High Level Group on Migration and Asylum established by the EU Council in 1998 (Boswell 2003). As part of the externalization of European migration politics, the European Union and its members increasingly link migration to other strategic issues in the region such as foreign aid, fishing rights and the contested western Saharan territory (Gillespie 2002). The externalization of Europe's politics of migration has put the emphasis on neighbouring countries' ability to manage all aspects of migration, especially 'transit' migration from sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, as noted by Baldwin-Edwards, the treatment of migrants has been shown by NGOs 'to be at best inadequate, at worst profoundly inhuman' (Baldwin-Edwards: 312). Shortly before closing its health activities in Morocco, doctors without borders published a report to denounce the severe consequences of the 'widespread institutional and criminal violence' (MSF 2013) to which migrants were increasingly exposed. At the end of summer 2013, under mounting pressure from civil society in the face of increasing violence against migrants, King Mohammed VI announced a new 'politics of migration', which took the form of two waves of regularization for 'irregular migrants' to obtain temporary residency and improved access to health and education in Morocco, and new legislation on migration to replace Law 02/03 which had been widely criticized as too repressive (Bachelet 2014). Despite these improvements, there have been continuous episodes of violence and infringement of the rights of migrants within Morocco and at the border with Spain (GADEM and FIDH 2015; Amnesty International 2018).

In the context of these hopeful but contradictory developments, our project 'Arts for Advocacy: Creative Engagement with Forced Displacement in Morocco', aimed to foster participatory arts-based methods to enhance critical engagement and advocacy concerning migration in Morocco. Arts for Advocacy is an interdisciplinary project grounded in a longstanding tradition of anthropological reflection on power and representation (Asad 1973; Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Abu-Lughod 1991), which engages

with the rise in arts-based methods across the social sciences (Collier 1967; Pink 2001; Rose 2007; Kara 2015). A team of academics led the project in collaboration with three organizations based in the Moroccan capital Rabat: an anti-racist NGO supporting migrants (GADEM), a sub-Saharan migrants' association (ALECMA), and a collective of theatre practitioners and other artists (DABATEATR). Our Moroccan partners promote migrant rights and awareness of migration issues in Morocco through initiatives such as creative workshops and the *Migrant'Scène* festival co-organized by GADEM and DABATEATR annually since 2010. In collaboration with GADEM and three artists, we co-organized two visual arts workshops which brought together individuals from displaced communities in Morocco and Moroccan citizens. The creative outputs from these workshops were exhibited at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow during Refugee Festival Scotland in June 2017, at SPACE Gallery in Hackney in September 2017, and at Villa des Arts in Rabat during *Migrant'Scène* in December 2017.

In this article we examine the contentious concept of 'participation' in collaborative arts-based projects involving academic researchers, artists and other participants. Researchers have highlighted that not all 'participation' is worthy of the name (Waldis 2016), and that those involved in participatory ventures must acknowledge and address complex power relations. We reflect on the slippery issue of participation through an ethnographic exploration of photographic encounters; that is, participant observation of the processes of shooting, selecting, editing, preparing and exhibiting still visual images (i.e. photographs) and moving audio-visual images (i.e. films).[1] First, we suggest that the seemingly straightforward imperative to involve participants throughout the creative process requires concerted efforts to identify and overcome barriers to participation and to reflect on the opportunities afforded and challenges posed by the participant observation of researchers. Second, we show that participatory arts-based workshops can challenge some of the Othering stereotypes held by participants from diverse backgrounds. Third, we seek to overcome our tendency as social scientists to prioritize process over product by considering exhibition design and public encounters as part of the participatory process.

Participatory arts-based methods

Inspired by a desire 'to be able to see and think differently' (Leavy 2015: 2), social scientists have moved beyond an assumption that exploring the social world only necessitates 'asking people questions' (Gauntlett and Holzworth 2006: 83). Researchers have sought to overcome some of the limitations of traditional social science methods by using arts-based and visual methods to 'serve and expand the promise of traditional qualitative research' (Leavy 2015: 19). The creative processes inherent to artistic and research practices alike are propelled by both intuition and rigorous observational and analytical skills (Kara 2015: 6). Overcoming 'the division of roles between artists and academics' (Köhn 2016: 12) by conceiving instead of 'artist-scientists' (Janesick 2001) exposes overlaps such as the 'aim to illuminate something about the social world, sensitively portray people and their circumstances, develop new insights about the relationships between our sociohistorical environments and our lives, or disrupt dominant narratives and challenge biases' (Leavy 2015: 17). Arts-based and visual methods may be of particular benefit in relation to sensory, emotional and kinaesthetic engagements with the world (Law

1. Note that 'photographic' here encompasses photography and filmmaking alike.

and Urry 2004: 404), or when participants may otherwise find it challenging to 'express feelings and thoughts in words' (Kara 2015: 23). In addition to more creative methods of data collection and analysis, social scientists also see the potential to deliver research outputs beyond 'scientistic reports' (Jones 2006: 67) with their limited audience and transformative potential. Rather than replacing traditional methods, arts-based and visual methods are best seen as 'a way to generate new knowledge, to tap into existing resources which would otherwise lie dormant, unexplored and unutilized' (Packard 2008: 63).

Researchers deploying arts-based and visual methods may attempt 'to decrease the power differential between the researcher and the researched' (Packard 2008: 63) by focusing on participation. For instance, Harper suggests that photo elicitation, 'the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview', can be considered 'a postmodern challenge based on the authority of the subject rather than the researcher' (2002: 13) in the sense that participants can select images and direct the conversational flow. Reconsideration of participation is not confined to the 'new methodological genre' (Leavy 2015: 11) of arts-based and visual methods; 'collectivity and collaboration have been some of the most persistent themes of advanced arts and exhibition-making of the last decade' (Bishop 2012: 12). In her examination of the recent revival of 'participation' in the arts, Bishop notes that its proponents articulate a renewed affirmation of the collective in stark opposition to individualism, neoliberalism and consumerism. Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' call for 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space' (2002: 113). The core principles of relational aesthetics – intersubjectivity, encounter, togetherness, conviviality and sociability – have inspired participatory practices amongst artists and social scientists 'engaged in the (re) presentation of the storied nature of everyday events' (Jones 2006: 73).

Bishop is sympathetic to the ambition of repairing social bonds, but she is critical of the tendency in participatory arts for 'an ethics of interpersonal interaction' to prevail over 'a politics of social justice' (Bishop 2012: 25). If participation becomes the only criterion by which to judge the creative outputs, then 'there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art' (2012: 13). In her critique of relational aesthetics, Bishop argues that 'all relations that permit "dialogue" are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good', but she asks 'what does "democracy" really mean in this context?' (2004: 65). Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics recalls Cooke and Kothari's critique of the 'tyranny' of participation in development: 'participatory processes undertaken ritualistically' (Cooke and Kothari 2001: 1) can harm the intended beneficiaries. Thus, 'the depoliticisation of participation, its conceptualisation as a purely technical approach' is 'a major obstacle to challenging the causes of inequality and achieving political transformation' (Rotter and Jeffery 2016: 386).

Such critiques prompt social scientists to reconsider what they mean by creative and participatory approaches, especially when participation is intended not only to overcome hierarchical power relationships but also to address a broader audience and induce change. For Cole and Knowles,

> the transformative potential of and by arts-informed research speaks for the need for researchers to develop representations that speak to audiences in ways which do not pacify or indulge the senses but arouse them and the intellect to new heights of response and action.
>
> (2008: 68)

For instance, contrast photo elicitation, in which already existing photographs are deployed in a research interview, with photo voice, in which participants are asked to take new photographs (usually in the absence of the researcher) for subsequent discussion with researchers and others (Wang and Burris 1997). Drawing on feminist theory and Paolo Freire's (1970) problem-solving education, photo voice recognizes participants' expertise rather than relegating them as passive research subjects. For Wang and Burris, photo voice 'provides the medium through which people's visions and voices may surface' (1997: 382) and allows people 'to become advocates for their own and their community's well-being' (1997: 373).

Proponents of photo voice stress the importance of participation amongst respondents, but they do not explicitly engage with the opportunities afforded and challenges posed by the participant observation of researchers in creative processes such as photographic encounters. For instance, Packard argues that 'the act of photographing and the photograph are each a significant source of data in their own right' (2008: 69), but his work with homeless people entailed giving them cameras and waiting for them to be returned rather than participant observation of 'the act of photographing'. Rose argues that 'there are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences' (2007: 13), but her plea for critical visual methodology concerns the interpretation of existing images rather than participant observation of photographic processes. O'Neill makes a strong case for combining ethnographic enquiry and arts-based practice to generate a 'potential space' (O'Neill 2008: 1) with transformative possibilities, but gives little indication of how to generate such a space. Azoulay conceptualizes photography as 'an infinite series encounters' (2012: 26), but her call to examine these multiple 'encounters' is limited to reading the traces of such 'encounters' in photographs. By contrast, in this article we call for ethnographic exploration through participant observation of photographic encounters. Our suggestion is that if producing visual images is a powerful participatory tool, then participant observation of photographic or filmmaking processes also generates insights, particularly concerning how people decide what to capture and how they negotiate such decisions in a group setting.

Arts for Advocacy visual arts workshops

In 2017, with the logistical support of GADEM, we organized two creative workshops to explore migration, forced displacement, togetherness and racism in Morocco. We sought firstly to explore the potentials and limitations of participatory arts-based methods and secondly to co-produce creative outputs dealing with the changing dynamics of migration in Morocco. In conversation with GADEM, we settled on visual arts both because of the logistical challenges of securing authorization to use public space for live performances and because we hoped to make the creative outputs accessible to wider audiences via an international touring exhibition, our project website and social media. GADEM helped identify three artist facilitators with relevant experience. The Moroccan photographer and filmmaker Amine Oulmakki had previously worked on displacement and migration in Morocco, including with the renowned late French–Moroccan photographer Leila Alaoui. The French photographer Julien Fleurance had run two filmmaking workshops with

2. In recognition of their co-production of the creative outputs, we identify workshop participants by their real forenames (which also appear alongside their portraits at http://artsforadvocacy.org/people/um;participants), but we do not give their surnames, nor the immigration status of migrant participants.

GADEM during a previous *Migrant'Scène* festival. Dabcha, a Moroccan performance artist, had experience running theatre and bodily performance workshops, and had previously collaborated with Amine, including on a theatre project on cosmopolitanism in Morocco. Amine co-led both workshops: the first in collaboration with Julien, and the second in collaboration with Dabcha. The three artists shared our preference for an inductive process (allowing the participants to shape the workshop) rather than a rigid predetermined structure. In conversation with GADEM and the artists, we agreed to explore migration and togetherness in general but also to encourage participants to take the lead on the specifics.

Interviews with Morocco-based organizations and activists during preliminary fieldwork informed the recruitment of participants. In conversation with GADEM, we aimed for a balance of male and female participants – women are often underrepresented in workshops – and hoped for approximately one-third Moroccan citizens, one-third Francophone and Anglophone migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, and one-third Arabophones from the Middle East. Ultimately, we did not manage to recruit any participants from the Middle East because neither our project partners nor we had any direct contacts. Drawing on pre-existing contacts and our project partners, we recruited eighteen participants (ten men and eight women): six young Moroccans (mostly students and unemployed people in their 20s) and twelve migrants (refugees, asylum seekers and recently regularized migrants) from western and central Africa.[2] Their ages ranged from 15 to late 40s. Most participants attended both workshops; two Moroccan men who could not return for the second workshop, so two sub-Saharan women replaced them.

The first workshop, on photography and filmmaking, took place at the Agdal Cultural Centre, a public space for arts and culture in an affluent Rabat neighbourhood. None of the participants lived nearby, but its location is central and accessible from the participants' areas of residence dispersed across Rabat and in some nearby cities. Amine and Julien led icebreakers and provided introductions to photography and filmmaking before launching practical exercises: taking photographs, recording films and telling stories in front of a camera. Participants used their own mobile phones and digital cameras belonging to themselves, the artists or us. After a few days, Amine and Julien divided participants into three groups to create either a film or a series of photographs exploring migration through a material object of their choice. The second workshop, on physical theatre, took place near the central Rabat train station at a former school of administration owned by a Moroccan art collector who rents the venue to NGOs such as GADEM. Dabcha led the group in theatre exercises to encourage participants to gain awareness of their own presence within the space, the people around them and the cameras, which were introduced gradually. Amine and Dabcha then encouraged participants to get into smaller groups to recount, record and listen to stories. After the workshop Amine edited the recordings made by the participants into video installations.

Participation and its limits

At the recruitment stage, we described the first workshop as a photography and filmmaking workshop at which participants could improve their skills regardless of their prior experience, and as a space for creative and collective exploration of issues surrounding migration and displacement in Morocco.

When asked later why they had attended the first workshop, some participants explained that they had wanted to improve their photography skills. Brice, who is from Cameroon, is an amateur photographer who wanted to develop his skills to a more professional level but was frustrated by the lack of opportunities. He was keen to participate in order to improve his techniques and to meet established artists; towards the end of the project, we employed him to work with a freelance filmmaker to document our exhibition at *Migrant'Scène* 2017. Fatima, a chemistry Ph.D. student from southern Morocco, wanted to learn to edit videos, a transferrable skill she thought she could apply in her role as a volunteer trainer for her students' association. Others, both Moroccans and migrants, told us that they came partly because they felt bored or socially isolated and wanted to meet new people; it is not the case, however, that participants had nothing else to do: some missed project events due to other commitments such as association meetings or medical appointments.

At the end of the photography and filmmaking workshop, Milca, a Congolese teenager who attended with her mother Nadine, laughed nervously while explaining that she had initially attended the workshop due to the financial reimbursement we offered, but that after a few days she could not wait to return for the next sessions because of the content itself. The question of financial reimbursement is a fraught issue at the recruitment stage. Participants repeatedly mentioned that lack of means was a barrier to participation in workshops in general, and a sense of exploitation by NGOs when participants were not recompensed for their travel or their time, but rather expected to contribute for nothing or *pour le militantisme* (for the cause) while others are paid. Even if they had no regular income, attending a workshop would reduce the opportunity to seek employment or continue informal activities. We had to operate within the regulations set by our funders, employers and project partners, but we managed to recompense participants at a rate of 100 dirhams per day, which is close to the daily average wage and above the earnings of most migrants working in the informal sector, and was also valuable to our Moroccan student participants with few resources.

During preliminary fieldwork, a key issue arising from our discussions with migrant leaders and activists was that participants should not be treated as mere pawns in someone else's project. Participants criticized previous workshops in which they were asked to sit and listen or follow instructions, and they valued this opportunity to shape the creative process by learning new skills, applying them, and contributing their own expertise. Reuben, a Ghanaian musician, and Tarek, a Moroccan student, took the initiative to use the cameras to record feedback interviews with the other participants. Two Moroccan students, Fatima and Nourridine, applied the skills they had acquired as volunteers for their students' associations to facilitate icebreaker exercises during the first workshop. Oussama, a Moroccan sculptor, wrote and performed the music his group used in their short film. The participants directed the generation of creative outputs, producing three visual artefacts: a short film (entitled *And Time Breathes*) about a young Moroccan man tracing his mixed heritage by receiving recorded messages from his ancestors; a video installation (entitled *Missed Call*) which juxtaposed people leaving or receiving voice messages to/from family members across borders; and a series of portraits (entitled *Cutting Object*) which juxtapose sub-Saharan and Northern African fabrics, instruments and symbols.

Figure 1: Missed Call *(photograph credit: Amine Oulmakki).*

All of the participants took photographs and short films, learned basic post-production editing skills, and contributed to the texts co-authored in preparation for the first project exhibition during Refugee Festival Scotland in Glasgow. This level of collaboration blurs the authorship of the creative outputs: it is no longer possible to determine who took which portrait since multiple cameras were used and several people took and edited photographs.[3] However, to participate (to take part) does not necessarily imply equal participation in decision-making processes: Amine and Julien had provided the overarching structure by dividing the participants into three groups (with a mix of Moroccans and non-Moroccans in each) and had suggested that each group focuses on an object; additionally, given the finite time for the workshops, it was the artists who selected and edited the final exhibits. These processes were mostly frictionless, but there was occasionally some tension between the artists and, for instance, Reuben, a 'participant' but also a migrant leader, musician and founder of an artists' collective that similarly collaborates with NGOs to organize artistic residencies and creative workshops. Inequalities in migration regimes also highlighted the limits to participation: as Moroccan and French citizens respectively, Amine and Julien could travel to Glasgow for Refugee Festival Scotland, but Reuben (who is Ghanaian) was refused a visa and was therefore unable to take part in a scheduled concert with the Glasgow-based Ghanaian musician Gameli Tordzro.

Striving for participation in creative processes also required us as researchers to engage with our own problematic participation. This is a complex methodological and ethical issue at the heart of ethnographic research but also in artistic practice. Project researchers participated in and observed the workshops led by the artists. Participant observation ranged from fully taking part (e.g. in the physical theatre exercises) to accompanying the participants in activities (e.g. taking photographs of each other), to co-facilitating exercises with the artists (e.g. writing texts for the exhibition displays), to sometimes

staying on the sidelines (e.g. during video shoots). During the activities and breaks, the researchers discussed the unfolding creative process and encounters with the participants.

Having the researchers take part as participants (rather than directors) was key to the inductive unfolding of the creative process: the project determined the overall framework of migration, but the participants collectively identified the specific themes to be explored creatively (such as intermarriage in the short film *And Time Breathes*). However, the researchers' participation in the photography and filmmaking workshop led to some uncomfortable situations such as when participants insisted that the European researchers take part in the *Cutting Object* group project. The ethical issues of appropriation stemming from European researchers donning sub-Saharan and North African clothing and having Adrinka and Amazigh symbols painted on their faces was not lost on the researchers, but participants pointed out that the objective of the portraits was to challenge the lines or cuts which divide people. Later, Amine and Julien insisted on exhibiting a photograph of one of the research team despite her discomfort.

Prior to the physical theatre workshop, Amine and Dabcha wanted the researchers to participate fully and refrain from taking notes. At the start of the physical theatre workshop, Dabcha called on Amine, the researchers, and the other participants together to immerse themselves, remain *engagé* (engaged), and attempt to become 'one living matter'. On the fourth day of the physical theatre workshop, however, Dabcha declared that it was time for the two artists and the two researchers to become 'an invisible presence' to enable people to 'develop their own voice, their own creativity, their own reflection'. That is, he deemed it necessary eventually for the artists and researchers to become less present in order to avoid imposing their/our own priorities on the other participants. Dabcha and Amine would sporadically disappear, leaving the participants to engage with one another and their creative work, but they only went as far as a nearby café, so they remained on call to address questions and technical issues. For our part, by contrast, we felt that recognizing the central role of participants in shaping the creative process did not necessitate absenting the researchers. Arts-based and visual methods need not be limited to the production of creative outputs for analysis or to be inserted into interviews. On the contrary, we would argue that the process itself, especially in a workshop in which participants interact with one another and with artists and researchers, also requires examination. In the next section, we examine how the interactions amongst the participants in our migration-focused workshops were conducive to changing perceptions of the Other.

'One living matter'

In preparation for the two workshops the three artists repeatedly stressed that it was important for the creative process to focus on building rapport within the group. Dabcha often reminded people that it was important to be aware of one another, and many of the initial exercises were team-building exercises widely used in theatre and beyond: one person purposely falling backwards and relying on others to catch them, or pairs of people having to move around the room without breaking eye contact. Interactions were not limited to the exercises and interactions facilitated by the artists: participants bonded on the balcony during frequent cigarette breaks or during lengthy lunchtime conversations on topics ranging from football to politics. Despite having come

for varied reasons, as discussed above, workshop participants expressed their keenness to spend time with one another and their eager anticipation of subsequent sessions and workshops. Workshops can be a 'reflective/relatively safe space for dialogue, images and narratives to emerge' (O'Neill 2008: 9) to the extent that participants feel free to express themselves. After surprising everyone else with his physical and expressive engagement during an exercise, Alpha – a Guinean migrant leader – confessed that the physical exercises relieved him from the stresses of being a migrant in Morocco. He added that, unlike in more formal settings such as conferences in which discussions are 'framed' and migrants are asked to stick to specific predetermined topics, here he felt free to express himself, to talk about what mattered to him, and to move from one topic to another.

The workshops enabled Moroccan nationals and migrants to encounter one another rather than simply walking past one another on the street. Joel, who is from the Central African Republic, explained that he had never had an opportunity to work closely with Moroccans, and had spent only very limited time with Moroccans, giving the examples of negotiating his extortionate rent with his landlord or escaping from would-be muggers while going home from UNHCR or the market. For Milca and her mother Nadine, the workshop exposed them to Moroccans quite different from those who sexually harassed them on the street causing them to move to accommodation in another neighbourhood in between the two workshops. Participants took portraits and short films of one another as well as shared emotionally charged stories about life in Morocco. Challenging Sontag's assertion that 'the camera makes everyone a tourist in other people's reality' (1977: 57), Reuben commented that photography and filmmaking had 'gathered us. It gave us another vision. We need something that gathers us together'. Participants expressed enjoyment of 'exchanging' in a 'friendly' context conducive to 'respect' and 'harmony'. During a conversation about the fraught integration of migrants in Morocco, Moroccan student Tarek concluded that 'if we want to integrate migrants, we must first of all accept the other. And for this we need to exchange. We need something that brings us together'. Milca responded that 'all this comes from the workshop. If it did not come from the workshop, coming together would not happen'. When shooting a film at a private property owned by a GADEM staff member in the touristy Rabat neighbourhood of the Oudayas, the group received several visits from suspicious Moroccan authorities. Nlendfils, a Cameroonian migrant leader, said that the police had been alerted by the sight of black people taking pictures from a rooftop, and he shook his head at the irony that the police disturbed a workshop achieving the very 'integration' that officials had promised but failed to deliver for migrants in Morocco.

Through photographic encounters and other social interactions during the workshops, the participants debunked many stereotypes and learned about and from each other. Oussama stressed that he had not been in the habit of repeating the racial slurs he heard on the streets about sub-Saharans in Morocco, but explained that nevertheless 'interactions with sub-Saharans in the workshop, communicating with them, talking about different things, understanding their thoughts' had taught him that migrants and refugees should not be reduced to people fleeing war and famine; they are also 'capable of being creative'. Fatima knew sub-Saharan students at her university, but they had never shared with her their experiences of racism in Morocco, whereas during the workshop she had many conversations with Cameroonian migrant leader Nlendfils about barriers to education and employment for migrants in

Morocco. In addition to Moroccans seeing migrants differently, the process also changed migrants' perspectives of Moroccans. Fatima and Tarek shared with the sub-Saharan participants the discrimination they routinely face as Amazigh (Moroccan Berbers). The Moroccan students explained that poor and marginalized Moroccans face similar hardships to migrants in Morocco in that those who lack resources cannot fully access education or healthcare, and that corruption affects everyone. Whilst migrants face particular challenges, the workshop thus also generated a sense amongst people of different backgrounds that they had more in common than they initially thought.

The workshop did not, however, succeed in (or even strive towards) establishing a durable community amongst the participants. They enjoyed spending time together and were keen to regroup for the second workshop, but most had not seen one another during the six-month gap between the two workshops. When asked about this, some offered embarrassed smiles, explaining that they had tried but that they lived too far apart and were too busy. Like participation itself, there are limits to the capacity of two short creative workshops to achieve social cohesion, especially since the recruitment process was not embedded within a single residential neighbourhood. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's discussion of 'the constitutive character of social division' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 193), Bishop offers an alternative to 'relational aesthetics' in the form of 'relational antagonism' (2004: 79). It would be 'predicated not on social harmony, but on exposing that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of this harmony. It would thereby provide a more concrete and polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and to one another' (Bishop 2004: 79). This seems a useful reminder of the danger of quelling idiosyncratic ideas and disagreements 'in favour of a consensual behaviour upon whose irreproachable sensitivity we can all rationally agree' (Bishop 2012: 26).

In our workshops, the creative processes leading to the production of visual artefacts involved discussions and disagreements concerning whose lead to follow, and some of the male participants were noticeably more dominant. Most arguments were banal, but some touched on relevant issues, such as when the group producing the *Missed Call* film had an animated debate about the impact of information and communications technology on long-distance relationships. Outwith the creative processes, the main disagreement concerned polygamy: a group of sub-Saharan men praised polygamy over lunch, but the sub-Saharan women challenged them, and then others, including Moroccan men who grew up in polygamous households, joined the debate. The group reached no consensus, and the debate dominated the final two days of the workshop, with some participants wanting to create a film about polygamy, but by this stage there was insufficient time to realize this ambition. Nevertheless, as we discuss in the following section, participatory processes do not end with the creation of visual artefacts.

Participants and spectators

The three artists often repeated that the creative process was enmeshed with *la rencontre* (the encounter) between workshop participants, and they stressed that these encounters were themselves creations. At the start of the photography and filmmaking workshop, before Julien's arrival, Amine took the participants through some of the basics of photography, such as light and composition. He then asked the participants to go out and take ten different

pictures of a large tree in the garden, explaining that the objective was to pay more attention to one's surroundings and realize that there is more than one way to look at something because there are multiple perspectives on the same object. After taking a few pictures of the tree, participants quickly moved on to taking portraits and selfies. Seeing this, Amine talked the participants through framing, and asked pairs to take pictures of one another, including close-ups of body parts such as ears and eyes. When Julien arrived and reviewed the photographs, he commented that the close-ups were central to the aims of the workshop: they celebrate diversity as a richness (*une richesse*) and emphasize similarity over difference in the sense that it is no longer possible to tell for sure whether the body parts belong to a Moroccan citizen or to a sub-Saharan migrant. At Julien's suggestion, 'Body Parts' featured alongside the three 'Objects' exhibits in the Art for Advocacy project's first exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow during Refugee Festival Scotland 2017. The unexpected exhibiting of 'Body Parts' reveals that close interactions amongst participants can be as much a part of the product as it is part of the process. Bishop cautions against artistic practices emphasizing 'process over product' (2004: 19), but in the context of our project – fraught relations between Moroccans and migrants amidst slowly changing politics of migration in Morocco – it seemed legitimate for us, as social scientists, to prioritize process over product in an attempt to enhance relationships amongst participants. GADEM's expectations from the project were primarily geared towards the conversations and debates that would be sparked by exhibiting the creative outputs during the *Migrant'Scène* festival, at which performances and screenings were followed by a Q&A with audience members invariably asking participants to share their experiences of the process.

Whereas the photography and filmmaking workshop generated three clear 'Objects' exhibits (plus the 'Body Parts'), the physical theatre workshop did not generate ready-made visual pieces. The physical theatre and storytelling exercises – during which participants engaged with one another, with the space around them, and with static cameras on tripods – were recorded by Amine, assisted by the three participants who were the most interested in camerawork: Brice, Reuben and Tarek. After the workshop, Amine edited some of the films for the second Arts for Advocacy project exhibition at *Migrant'Scène* 2017. Yvon Langué, a Cameroonian curator who was already familiar with Amine's work, collaborated with Amine on the scenography and prepared the exhibition catalogue. The venue was the underground Virtual Museum at the Villa des Arts, a prestigious contemporary arts space funded by one of the main cultural foundations in Morocco; the directors explained that they usually exhibited established artists, so our focus on participation and co-creation was new to them. Over 200 people attended the exhibition launch, including the artists, most of the participants, and many of the activists and NGO practitioners who usually attend *Migrant'Scène* events, but also the upmarket clientele of the Villa des Arts.

One exhibit, 'Isli and Tislit', consists of nine screens assembled in a U-shape. The screens display black and white close-up films from an exercise in which Dabcha's only instructions were that participants had to sit in front of two cameras, reach a 'neutral state', and then express 'authentic' emotions. The participants are seen singing, staring blankly, laughing, looking sad, and often switching back and forth. For Yvon, it was important that the dark faces illuminated this underground Virtual Museum at a venue more associated with Rabat's Moroccan intelligentsia and privileged migrant 'expats'.

In her analysis of Arendt's (1958) writings on in/visibility, Borren notes that for Arendt '*public visibility* and *natural invisibility* constitute the criteria of sound political action and citizenship' (Borren 2008: 214; original emphasis). Reduced to a 'naked life' (Arendt 1958: 79) as the antithesis of the citizen, the condition of statelessness precludes full participation in the public sphere as a result of 'harmful invisibility and harmful visibility' (Borren 2008: 219). The exhibit 'Isli and Tislit' brings the faces of the workshop participants to the fore in an attempt to disrupt what Borren identifies as the politics of in/visibility targeting migrants in Europe and beyond through simultaneous 'regimes of exposing and regimes of obscuring: the first severely impairing the natural invisibility of aliens, the latter their public visibility' (Borren 2008: 231).

In Morocco, a large section of sub-Saharan migrants living in precarious conditions (regardless of their immigration status) are subjected to what Pugh (2018) calls an 'invisibility bargain': their presence might be tolerated for bringing economic benefits to Morocco, but they must maintain social and political invisibility. While rendered highly visible as black migrants subjected to institutional violence and hostile media campaign, sub-Saharan migrants were striving to make their political claims heard and visible (see Bachelet 2018). Cornered into 'a space of non-existence' (Coutin 2000: 28), migrants in Moroccan society were simultaneously absent and present, visible and invisible. This tension between invisibility and visibility was apparent when participants Brice and Joel explained how in the evening, upon returning from the workshop to their house in a peripheral neighbourhood, they needed to hide and run to avoid being targeted by violent thieves who often preyed on migrants. As mentioned above, one day we also received the visit of anxious plain-clothes security officers while shooting on the rooftop of a house in Rabat's historic Kasbah that was inhabited by a member of one of project partners. Reuben and Nlendfils remarked that although the neighbourhood was full of European tourists holding cameras, the authorities had been anxious to discover what black people were doing with cameras.

The workshop and the resulting exhibition directly addressed the visibility of the participants. Because the participants had been seated in front of two cameras, the footage on the screens in the exhibition shows them both looking straight into the camera (as if directly at the public walking around the exhibit) but also looking elsewhere (as if at one another's images on the other screens in the nine-screen U-shaped exhibit). The resulting exhibition enables the participants to visually carve a place into the intersubjective and political public sphere, what Arendt calls the 'space of appearance', that is 'the space where I appear to others as they appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly' (1958: 198–99). As Alpha commented, exhibition visitors, some of whom expressed surprise at seeing their gaze directly solicited by the on-screen faces, needed 'to become actors too'. For Borren, highlighting the dual process of perceiving and being perceived, 'the *actor* and the *spectator* are mutually conditional' (2008: 222; original emphasis). Walking through 'Isli and Tislit' entailed holding the gaze of the participants, thus extending the participatory process beyond the workshops and into the exhibition space. During the exhibition launch, the audience held the gaze of the participants on-screen but were also presented with the physical presence of a number of participants themselves who took time to answer some questions from the public. According to Azoulay, attention to the role of viewing reveals the 'always unfinished nature' of the 'event of photography' as 'an infinite series of encounters' (2012: 25, 26).

For photographer Julien, what matters most in participatory workshops and their creative processes is first and foremost 'the encounter with oneself, but also with others, and with a public too'.

Amine and Yvon entitled this exhibit 'Isli and Tislit' in honour of a song sung by Fatima in one of the films produced through the physical theatre workshop, although she later asserted that the song she sang bear no link to the Isli and Tislit story. Isli and Tislit were legendary lovers whose families prevented their marriage, and whose tears formed the twin lakes near the Moroccan town of Imilchil. The exhibit invites visitors to reflect on their own involvement within the complex relations between migrants and Moroccans: the people on the screens and those looking at them alike are invited 'to meet in a shared civil space where oppression, discrimination, exploitation, robbery and appropriation are not seen as the decree of fate or as a natural law' (Azoulay 2012: 124). The dislocation generates 'an autonomous space in which the current separation of roles between the citizens and the excluded can be called into question and different political configurations become possible' (Köhn 2016: 15). During the exhibition launch, the workshop participants' incorporation in the 'common world' (Arendt 1958: 52) along with other visitors also took on another dimension. When Alpha commented on the need for viewers to become actors, he was looking at himself on-screen. Other participants took pictures and selfies in front of their own on-screen images.

Conclusion

Our proposition in this article is that, in order to avoid embedding 'an ethics of interpersonal interaction' at the expense of 'a politics of social justice' (Bishop 2012: 25), researchers and artists alike must scrutinize their participatory methodologies and be transparent about decision-making processes. We have called for participant observation of creative encounters in arts-based practice, arguing that ethnographic engagement with participatory processes should incorporate consideration of the complex and not unproblematic participation of the researchers. Although participant observation of creative processes may generate further methodological and ethical challenges, it also enables researchers to interrogate changing relations amongst participants as a result of social interactions. During our workshops, for instance, we observed that photographic encounters and social interaction facilitated intercultural exchanges and the transformation of perspectives on the Other for Moroccan citizens and migrants alike.

Azoulay argues that 'the event of photography is never over' (2012: 25), and her focus on the 'spectator' is a useful reminder that photographers and the photographed are not the only people involved in photographic encounters. Our ethnographic examination of creative arts-based processes incorporated encounters amongst participants, encounters between artists, researchers and participants, and encounters with some of the spectators of the exhibited creative outputs. In our case, this was crucial given the barriers to participation in Moroccan social, cultural and economic life faced by migrants in particular, but also by marginalized Moroccans. We have limited our discussion in this article to the project workshops and exhibitions; later, in the aftermath of the project itself, we will be able to consider how the afterlife of the creative outputs extends beyond the project life cycle through their redeployment by the artists, the researchers, the project partners, and the workshop participants.

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