'We're not coming from Mars, we know how things work in Morocco!' : how diasporic Moroccan youth resists political socialisation in state-led homeland tours

# 'We're not coming from Mars; we know how things work in Morocco!' How diasporic Moroccan youth resists political socialization in state-led homeland tours[1].

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**Keywords**

diaspora, Morocco, migrant youth, emigration, origin state, tourism

**Abstract**

Diaspora policies, to be defined as emigrant state policies aiming at maintaining and strengthening ties with its expatriate population, have become a regular feature of 21st century international politics (Gamlen 2014). A particular diaspora policy strategy adopted by various emigration countries including Morocco is the introduction of state-led homeland tours. These can be understood as an origin-state tool to socialize mainly young expatriate community members with homeland orientations and identities. Both by opponents as by sympathizers of these tours, it is often assumed that homeland tours are effective in their socialization project (Kelner 2010). However, this assumption undervalues the agency of tour participants. This article presents an in-depth investigation of the Moroccan *Summer Universities*, annual state-led homeland tours for college and university students of Moroccan descent, based on participant observation and qualitative interviews. The analysis highlights the tour participants' resistance against both discourses and practices of these homeland tours' organizers. As such, the article attends to the need to understand better how state diaspora policies are received by

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young members of the diaspora, in a situation where state-diaspora relations are tense and policies are top-down.

**Introduction**

Return visits tend to take a central position in the transnational practices and attachments of emigrants and their descendants (Levitt and Waters 2002; Ali and Holden 2006; Vathi and King 2011). More than anything else, visits 'back home' symbolize emigrants' continuing transnational ties to their societies of origin. While return visits are commonly private or community-based initiatives, states of origin are increasingly exploring the possibilities of organized educational travel to the 'homeland' as a strategy to bolster the transnational ties of the young segment of their expatriate population. While state-organised visiting programs widely differ in focus, format, and participant profile, the general ambition of these 'homeland tours' is to acquaint young members of their expatriate communities with the ancestral 'homeland' through a first-hand experience while inciting them to explore their roots further in the future (Kelner 2010). In terms of their target group, they are usually designed for people that have little direct experience with their ancestors' birth country (Newland and Taylor 2010).

The best-known and most-studied example of diaspora homeland tours – not at the least because of its large scale – are the *Taglit-Birthright Israel Tours* for young Jews living outside Israel. Since 1999, hundreds of thousands young American Jews have visited Israel on this all-expense-paid pilgrimage-like tour, which is the outcome of a collaboration of the Israeli state, Jewish diaspora organisations and private benefactors (Kelner 2010, Saxe et al. 2004, Abramson 2017). However, other countries whose diasporas stem from more recent emigration compared to the Jewish experience have adopted similar initiatives, often in cooperation with migrant community organisations. For instance, in mainland China the *Roots* program was launched in 1991 to enable young Chinese Americans to see their ancestral villages and rediscover their familial roots (Louie 2003). Similar 'know-your-country' programs can be

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found in countries as different as South Korea and Taiwan (Kibria 2002), Eritrea (Conrad 2006), and India (Agunias 2009). The Moroccan state equally offers a range of visiting programs for young Moroccans living abroad. In this article, I focus on the *Summer Universities*, which is Morocco's largest state-sponsored homeland tour for young adults. This annual program offers a two-week educational visit to Morocco to post-migrant[3] Moroccan students, aged 18 to 25. These Summer Universities are not a stand-alone initiative, but fit into the Moroccan state's broader diaspora engagement approach, which is characterised by a strong focus on consolidating the socio-economic contribution of the expatriate community (Mahieu 2015). The current Moroccan approach is grounded in a long process of policy evolution starting at the outset of Morocco's mass-scale labour and family emigration in the 1960s (Iskander 2010; de Haas 2007).

In two ways, the Moroccan Summer Universities differ from other similar programs, such as Taglit-Birthright Israel. First, there is a lack of expatriate community involvement in its design or implementation: it is a top-down initiative designed, organised and funded entirely by Moroccan state agencies. Second, regular travel to Morocco is a widely established transnational practice among the expatriate Moroccan population, including the foreign-born younger generations (Wagner 2008). Beside a range of specific facilitating factors, such as Morocco's geographical proximity to Europe (as the major destination region) and the availability of tourist facilities, the salience of diasporic tourism can be related to the relatively recent nature of Moroccan migration compared to some 'old' diasporas documented in the diasporic tourism literature (e.g. the Jewish, African-American and Armenian diasporas).

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[3]'Post-migrant' has been coined as an alternative to 'second generation (migrants)' based on the observation that the latter implies that the individuals in question are still in a process of migrating whereas '"post-migrant generation(s)", in contrast, refers to the rupture of migration as an event, and the contexts it creates in aftermath'. (Wagner 2008, 16).

Towards potential participants of homeland tours, which are usually adolescents or young adults, sharing ancestral roots in this 'homeland', these tours are commonly advertised as a unique opportunity to get to know the country and culture of origin, meet peers and locals with a similar background, and ultimately, through these encounters with people and places, get to know yourself. By returning to the country of origin, participants 'are promised an encounter with facets of ethnic culture and history that are said to be unavailable to them where they live, or available only in attenuated, adulterated or otherwise altered form.' (Kelner 2010, 89). However, the organizers' rather a-political framings (as cultural education) should not obscure that homeland tours are in fact a deeply political enterprise, because

> *On the one hand, the tours are efforts to garner diplomatic and material advantage for nation-states by mobilizing the support of foreign nationals; on the other hand, they are thoroughly implicated in the grand ideological work of imagining community and asserting relationships between people, cultures, and place (Kelner 2010, 193).*

Consequently, these programs should be regarded as origin state instruments of political socialization, aiming at transmitting particular orientations and values to diasporic members, in order to facilitate their mobilization for the state's political, economic or social projects. As part of this, they also aim at symbolic nation-building, to be understood as state initiatives strengthening or engendering diaspora members' sense of national belonging to the 'homeland' as well as their sense of belonging to a larger transnational community (Gamlen 2006).

I study the processes of political socialization taking place during the Moroccan Summer Universities, an annual diaspora homeland tour running since 2009. More precisely, I investigate through participant observation, informal and semi-structured interviews and an evaluation questionnaire how young expatriate Moroccans, participating in this program, react to the Moroccan state's diaspora policy strategies.

Theoretically, this article wishes to contribute to a better understanding of how diaspora engagement policies are received by members of the diaspora. Literature in the emerging field

of diaspora policy studies is concerned mainly with understanding why and how states of origin develop diaspora policies, and the various forms these policies take (Collyer 2013; Dufoix, Guerassimoff and de Tinguy 2010; Gamlen 2006), rather than with how ordinary expatriate citizens perceive the implemented policies (Kahmann 2014, Erdal 2016). Systematic efforts to understand the ways these policies are received by their target groups are commonly absent[4]. Therefore, the article deliberately focuses on micro-level social dynamics, as this level of analysis enables me to investigate the policies' recipients' perspectives, experiences, and agency (Délano and Mylonas, this issue). More broadly, the article highlights the often-neglected temporal-generational dimension of diaspora building (Abramson, this issue), by examining origin-state strategies targeting the younger generations in the diaspora (Huynh and Yiu 2015; Délano, this issue).

**Political socialization in homeland tours**

As Délano and Mylonas (this issue) indicate, while the existing literature in the field has provided useful typologies to distinguish different types of diaspora policies, emigrant states' differential treatment for different groups within their expatriate population – such as different migrant generations – has received rather little attention. In contrast, for emigration states' diaspora engagement policies, how to reach out to the *descendants* of emigrants is a central puzzle (Mahieu 2015; Délano, this issue). How to ensure these individuals' homeland ties and loyalties, while they are born and living outside of the territorial reach of the state of origin? One strategy adopted by Morocco as well as other countries (Ho 2011; Castles and Davidson 2000) is the allocation of expatriate citizenship status to this group. However, this strategy alone

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[4] If diaspora voices are investigated, usually only those having a direct influence on diaspora policies are considered. Indeed, diaspora policy scholars regularly employ interviews with expatriate political representatives (Lafleur, 2008) or trade union representatives (Iskander,2010). Broader perspectives of 'ordinary' expatriates on diaspora policies tend to be ignored.

guarantees neither homeland-centred identities nor homeland-oriented political loyalties among 'next generations' of expatriate citizens. This brings us to the matter of political socialization, as an understanding of how 'polities and other political societies and systems inculcate appropriate norms and practices in citizens, residents, or members' (Sapiro 2004, 2). Regarding expatriate citizens, this approach focuses not on what *being* a diaspora member means, but on how one *becomes* one (Friedman 2010) and what role the state of origin plays in this process. State-led homeland visits are one instrument origin states are using with the aim of political socialization (Kelner 2010). It is no coincidence state-led homeland tours commonly target adolescents and young adults. As 'individuals probably experience more change in their political views between the ages of about fourteen and twenty-five than at any point later in their lives' (Niemi and Hepburn 1995, 5), it is broadly accepted that these are the years in which youth must be formally educated about government, politics, and citizenship.

Similar to other forms of homeland-oriented education, such as origin language, culture and religious courses available to migrant children in their receiving societies (see, e.g., Garcia-Sanchez [2010] on Moroccan state and community-based education, Piqueray, Clycq and Timmerman [2016] on Polish state and community-based education), during homeland tours local guides, seminar speakers and staff members engage in 'explaining' the country of origin to the participants through their verbal acts. Different, however, from these forms of homeland-oriented education and other contexts of political socialization (such as the family), homeland tours are short-lived as socialization settings. Notwithstanding, for the Birthright Israel tours, Saxe et al. (2004) found that 'as a relatively brief educational intervention, Birthright Israel is an anomaly – unlike other educational interventions of comparable duration, its impact is sustained over time.' This may be related to the fact that socialization in homeland tours 'operates not simply at the discursive level but deeply beneath it as well, through embodied, emotional and interactional experience'. (Kelner 2010, 65-66) Therefore, while usually

political socialization is supposed to have an effect only when sustained over a longer period, the immersive, all-encompassing and targeted nature of homeland tours tends to turn them into an exception.

However, homeland tours also carry inherent contradictions undermining their ability to impose their ideologies on their participants (Kelner 2010). Contradictions mainly arise from the fact that during homeland visits, migrants' descendants not only discover 'home', but equally, their otherness vis-à-vis the local population and society. Resultantly, homeland visits enable processes of both identification and disidentification (Kelner 2010). For instance, in her study of homeland trips of second-generation American Chinese and Koreans, Kibria (2002, 305-306) found that 'homeland trips were marked prominently by experiences of being seen and treated as "different" by the local population', with language and cultural mannerisms as main markers of difference. Conrad (2006) too, reflecting on Eritrean 'Know-your-country' tours, concludes that they lead to disillusionment among Eritrean diaspora youth, as the 'real', present day Eritrea diverged from the images the youth had created, based on their parents' and the exile organisations' narratives. Resultantly, 'far from solving the question of belonging, these transnational journeys often complicate them' (Ibid, 16). This is because

> *(Homeland) tourism does not just represent a vehicle for straightforward, practically automatic voyages of self-discovery and identity affirmation. Visits to homelands or elsewhere in the diaspora may result in troubling, disconcerting and ambiguous experiences as well as new-found ambivalences (Coles and Dallen 2004).*

A major shortcoming in dominant perspectives on homeland tours is their assumption that participants are passive and captive (Kelner 2010). Participants are supposed to be naive novices to the country of origin, taking for granted whatever told. However, for the Moroccan Summer Universities this picture is unlikely to be accurate for several reasons, related to particular characteristics of the Moroccan 'homeland' and its diaspora:

First, the relationship between expatriate Moroccans and the Moroccan state is far from spotless. This is highly relevant when considering the Summer Universities, since it is an initiative organized and subsidized by the Moroccan state. While it is difficult to make generalist claims, both historical (Iskander 2010) as well as contemporary experiences of expatriate Moroccans with origin-state institutions, represented by, for instance, police and consular staff (Kahmann 2014), contribute to a general sense of distrust regarding the Moroccan state. Diaspora policy institutions in particular are regularly being accused of being inefficient, non-transparent and undemocratic (Belguendouz 2008, Østergaard-Nielsen 2012). More generally, major deficiencies in the Moroccan political system further spur a sceptical stance regarding Moroccan state discourses and actions. While Morocco has held free elections since 1996, some of the core principles of democracy, such as an effective protection of basic civil liberties are still not respected (Storm 2007). Observers note therefore that the term "democratization" does not apply well to the very limited ad controlled processes of political liberalization in Morocco over the past decades (Østergaard-Nielsen 2012). Other cases have demonstrated the significance of these dynamics: distrust of the state and frustration with corruption and ineffective governance represent major obstacles in the development of diaspora-state relations, eventually leading into dissociation between the diaspora and origin-state institutions (Erdal 2016, Agunias 2009, Huynh and Yiu 2016, Margheritis 2016). While the participants in the Summer Universities are too young to have experienced much of the above issues personally, they have been socialized in migrant families and communities where these problems were manifestly present. While the transmission of attitudes across generations is unlikely to happen unilaterally (Huynh and Yiu 2016), younger generations are likely to be influenced by their elders' views on the Moroccan state to some extent.

Second, due to the established habit of visiting family in Morocco during summertime among expatriate Moroccans,[5] most post-migrant Moroccans have spent entire summers of their youth in Morocco (Wagner 2008). The impact of these extensive summertime stays in Morocco on the migrants' children should not be underestimated, as return visits may be considered as a 'primary socialization' device into the origin-country traditions, rituals, values and norms (Ali and Holden 2006, 222). Moreover, while relatively few complete the ultimate 'myth of return' by moving to Morocco permanently, post-migrant generations are very much present in Morocco as seasonal visitors, spending their holidays with family and seeking leisure and pleasure in Morocco's touristic facilities (Wagner 2014). As a result, for most descendants of Moroccan migrants, Morocco is not merely an imaginary homeland; it is also a perceptible, embodied homeland. Their status of experienced homeland-visitors impacts further socialization processes, since unlike first-time visitors, they can put new experiences and information into perspective by comparison to earlier visits and acquired wisdom.

An additional factor contributing to agency among the Summer Universities' participants is their educational status. All are enrolled in higher education in their respective country of residence, which assumedly decreases the likeliness that participants are passively incorporating the organizers' messages.

Considering the particular nature of homeland tours, as an immersive encounter with the homeland, participant observation is the most appropriate data collection method here. Others too have used it to study socialization processes (Garcia-Sanchez 2010). It is particularly useful to detect individual agency during socialization processes. Golden (2001), for example, demonstrates how Russian newcomers to Israel taking part in Hebrew language classes for

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[5] According to Moroccan authorities, around 2 million 'Moroccans Living Abroad' return annually for summer holidays.

adults are resisting teachers' ethnonational views of Israeli citizenship and the matching Israeli political perspectives.

My analysis is based on an in-depth study of the Moroccan *Summer Universities* taking place in 2013 in Morocco. In the particular program observed, 51 college and university students of Moroccan origin participated in a twelve-day program. As part of the participant observation, I engaged in informal conversations with all participants during the program. As it was impossible to have in-depth conversations with all participants, an open-ended evaluation questionnaire distributed among the participants at the end of the program was used to acquire a more complete picture. To widen the reach of my study beyond this single Summer Universities' edition, I gathered additional data on other editions in two ways. First, I added (6) in-depth interviews with ex-participants of previous editions, who participated between 2010 and 2012. Second, I repeated the open-ended questionnaire in another location in 2013 as well as in 2014[6].

**The Summer Universities**

*Les Universités d'été au profit des Jeunes Marocains Résidant à l'Etranger,* or Summer Universities for Young 'Moroccans Living Abroad', were launched in 2009. The program is set up and funded[7] by the *Ministry in charge of the Moroccans living Abroad*. Created in its initial form in 1990 by late King Hassan II, this Ministry deals with a broad range of emigration-related affairs and operates in the cultural, educational, judicial, social and economic domain, as well as in diplomacy. Beside the annual Summer Universities, its activities for young expatriates also include the establishment of Moroccan cultural centres in various receiving

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[6] In total, 75 students participating in 3 different Summer Universities completed the questionnaire. By no means, this sample is considered as statistically representative. Accordingly, the data has been analysed qualitatively.

[7] In previous editions there was sometimes a small registration fee (between €100 and €250).

countries and the organisation of two *Forums* (large conferences for Moroccan expatriate students) in 2011 and 2016.

The Summer Universities' official goals are threefold: to preserve the national identity of the 'new generation of Moroccans living abroad', to reinforce the ties between this group and their country of origin, and to raise awareness about socio-economic and political change in Morocco[8]. The central occupation of the organizers is to show the participants the 'real' Morocco, that is, to demonstrate that Morocco is a modernizing and tolerant nation with favourable economic prospects. The organizers' hope is that the participants will internalize this optimist message, act accordingly by contributing to Moroccan development as well as spread the word as 'ambassadors' in their respective countries of residence (Mahieu 2015).

Candidate-participants for the program apply directly with the Ministry. In terms of their profile, the organizers target students in higher education aged 18-25 with a Moroccan background. Beside a large group from Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Italy in particular), participants come from North America, the Middle East and Gulf, the Maghreb and Australia. Every summer, between 100 and 300 students participate in different cities throughout the country such as Rabat, Agadir and Tetouan. Last years the participant number was usually around 250 and the program was concentrated in the northern city of Tetouan. While the participant group is particular in terms of its age and educational profile, in other respects it reflects quite well the diverse Moroccan expatriate population. In terms of countries of residence and socio-economic background, the participating post-migrant Moroccans are a microcosm of the wider expatriate Moroccan population. Also, both genders are represented, with a female dominance[9] however. While participants mainly motivate their application to the program substantially (i.e. to get to know Morocco better, to strengthen one's

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[8] http://summeruniversties.com

[9] Based on our information of various editions, approximately 6 out of 10 participants were female.

attachment to Morocco, to socialize with peer expatriates), the prospect of enjoying an all-expense-paid visit to Morocco further adds to the appeal of the Summer Universities.

Its concept is not entirely unique as other Moroccan state initiatives also offer short homeland visits for post-migrant Moroccan children and youngsters. For example, the Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans living Abroad, another national diaspora institution, has been organizing annual summer camps for children aged 9 to 13 for more than 20 years. Consequently, the Summer Universities can be regarded as another step in a longer tradition of bringing young expatriate Moroccans 'home' to educate them about their country and culture of origin.

**Negotiating socialization during the Summer Universities**

In the next sections, I investigate how participants receive the program. Two domains of contestation and resistance are distinguished. First, the program's content is being contested as biased. Second, several of the managerial practices of the organizers are met with critique, as participants consider them as incompatible with the core message of the program. These criticisms do not stand in isolation, since the contradiction between state discourses and practices is seen as symptomatic to broader Moroccan society.

*Contesting organizers' perspectives on Morocco: 'This is not the real Morocco!'*

A central concern of the Summer Universities organizers is to show the participants a glimpse of the 'real' Morocco; that is, a land of opportunities on the verge of modernity (Mahieu 2015). The underlying presumption of the organizers is that expatriate Moroccans' current views on Morocco are biased, selective, pessimist or even flawed, and therefore need correction. A core ingredient in the Summer Universities' political socialization strategy are the daily seminars, offered by Moroccan academics and experts. Seminars usually consist of an ex cathedra lecture with a Q&A-session afterwards, with topics ranging from Moroccan history, economic reforms and the 2011 constitutional changes to cultural heritage and religion in

Morocco. Presented as state-of-the art academic classes, various participants felt however the content was in fact strongly biased. They depicted the content of the lectures as well as the general message of the program as one-sided 'cliché-stories' which were 'strongly politically oriented' (Evaluation form, Hassan[10] from France), especially regarding the prospects of socio-economic development and the current human rights situation in Morocco.

> *These lectures . . . they were always the same story: "Morocco is a beautiful country, with many opportunities, there are no problems, there is this and that" But if you simply open the door and go outside, you see the opposite yet of what the person on stage was saying. (Interview, Sami from Belgium)*

When asked how he developed his own, more critical, perspective on Morocco, Sami explains:

> *You know, you read the news from time to time; you follow it. My parents, for instance, watch Moroccan television chains regularly. If you also have a group of friends that are mainly Moroccan, for instance, you stay in touch with your roots, somehow. And if you see this from early age on ... You hear stories of older people living there (in Morocco), and they are only confirmed over the course of the years. (Interview, Sami from Belgium)*

As this participant points out, his current viewpoint on Morocco has been shaped by an interplay of a various previous socialization processes, occurring both in the country of residence (at the family home, at school, through media) but also during previous stays in Morocco (at the Moroccan family and friends, through personal experiences in Morocco). As a result, he – as many others – has an outspoken opinion yet on how Moroccan society functions and is therefore unimpressed by the attempts of the Summer Universities' organizers to change this.

A good illustration of how the organizers' discourses on both the participants' emotional ties to Morocco as well as on Moroccan society are refuted, is offered by Ali from Belgium. As most other participants, Ali visited Morocco almost every summer since childhood. Of Moroccan Berber descent, he speaks both Moroccan Arabic and Berber fluently. While he

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[10] All participant names are nicknames.

identifies himself as Moroccan, he does not identify with the nationalist rhetoric and practices of the organizers who impress the participants to be 'proudly Moroccan'. With respect to the program, he expresses his dissent by keeping silent when participants are asked to sing the Moroccan national hymn. As such, he rejects the universalizing 'ideology of nationhood' (Mügge 2012) as presented by the Moroccan state, and he contests exhortations for patriotic contributions by the origin state (Ho 2011). At various occasions, he also expresses his critical viewpoint on Moroccan power structures:

> *Ali explains he doesn't buy the organizers' "hyper-positive" messages. On the contrary, he sees many persistent problems in Moroccan society. "Little is improving; today there are more poor people than ever." He considers the biased perspectives of the organizers are characteristic for Moroccan media more broadly: state-controlled media channels give attention only to accomplishments of the King and government, rather than offering a critical view on societal problems. Another day, Ali is sitting next to me in a seminar on Morocco's national development plans. He rolls his eyes and whispers, "the seminar is nothing but publicity for Morocco." "If we would believe everything, Morocco wouldn't even need more investments because it is the most powerful country in the world yet," he adds with a smirk. (Observation notes)*

While not all participants have outspoken, well-informed opinions as Sami and Ali, the general tendency of the organizers to present a very rosy picture of Moroccan society is a widely shared source of irritation. This is not only because it does not match with the participants' own perceptions, but also because it reveals the organizers' denial or ignorance of participants' previously acquired knowledge on Morocco. As Ouassima from Germany says,

> *"We are not stupid, of course. Those people [the lecturers] maybe think we're naive. They try to do their best, but they really think we believe everything they say. But we're not coming from Mars; we know how things work in Morocco!" (Observation notes)*

In terms of socialization strategies, besides the academic seminars, other non-discursive experience-oriented strategies are used. This focus on personal experience distinguishes homeland tours from traditional classroom education where abstract subject material is conveyed, largely stripped from personal experience and emotion (Kelner 2010). From this

perspective, the Summer Universities differ as socialization strategy from homeland-oriented language, cultural and religious education offered to Moroccan children in the receiving societies (Garcia-Sanchez 2010). An important element in the program were the guided excursions; varying from short guided tours in the city nearby, to more extensive day trips crossing the region by bus. Usually, these visits were linked thematically to the seminars; as such, they were intended to underpin the content of the seminars. Generally, participants enjoyed these field trips as a welcoming variation to the seminars, as an opportunity to socialize with their peers and to see locations in Morocco they had not seen before. However, the participants' behaviour reveals how these trips transcend the level of mere distraction; they appeal to their emotional attachment to Morocco. For instance, during a guided tour in the scenic, blue washed mountain town Chefchaouen, a tourist hotspot in northern Morocco, various participants express their sense of pride about this spot and exclaim their emotional attachment to Morocco. For instance, when interviewed by a joining reporter, Youssef from the USA cries half-jokingly, 'I want to live here!' Effectively, visiting particular sites may serve as a more powerful tool for political socialization than talking about them. Hassan's behaviour during a visit to the port of Tangiers demonstrates this. Standing on the hills bordering the Mediterranean coast and staring over the vast harbour, he exclaims emotionally that seeing this 'makes him feel *so* proud and hopeful of Morocco'. While during the lectures, he is usually the first to ask critical questions on Moroccan state policies, the overwhelming view of the harbour convinces him that Morocco's economic prospects are favourable - which is exactly the sort of conclusion organizers hope the participants will draw.

However, the participants' general enthusiasm about field excursions does not prevent them from reflecting critically upon what exactly is shown to them. The selective choice of destinations – which are either tourist spots or sites symbolizing economic progress – also strengthens the sense that they are not being shown the 'real Morocco', and that the Summer

University organizers want to impress certain perspectives upon them. For instance, tourist-like excursions are made to Asilah, known for its colourful murals, Chefchaouen and the archeologic Roman site of Lixus. Several spots embodying economic progress in the region are visited too, such as the harbour of Tangier-Med and a yacht harbour in Cabo Negro, an area known for its upper-class tourist facilities. At another occasion, a factory producing parts for Boeing is visited, representing Morocco's growing aeronautic industry. While less the object of strident critique compared to the one-sided discourses, participants are aware of the selectivity of sites visited and the impact this has on their views. As Naima from Canada suggests, 'making us leave the tourist zones would allow us to form our own opinions on our country' (Evaluation form). Several think that volunteering work (such as assistance to orphans or the poor) should be included in the program, as it would not just allow them to do something back for their country of origin, but also offer them a more balanced perspective, to 'see at once the negative and the positive side of Morocco' (Evaluation form, Ouassima from Germany).

However, notwithstanding the organizers' control over the sites participants are visiting, alternative viewpoints are developed contesting hegemonic discourses on Morocco. This is obvious in the way Sami recalls the visit to a leather tannery site. Instead of adopting the organizers' perspective, valuing the importance of handicraft for the Moroccan national economy, he looks at it through the prism of unfair labour conditions:

> *The stench was very, very strong. The way people were working there, surrounded by all those chemicals, with little protection, that was absurd. You could see these people were living on the streets, that their wages were very low, while the prices of leather goods are very high. There, you see the duality between the rich and the poor (in Morocco). (Interview, Sami from Belgium)*

In sum, participants contest the perspectives on Morocco as presented by the homeland tour organizers. Both in the literal sense as well as figuratively, the views presented to them are considered as too one-sided. However, it should be noted that not all participants feel this way. Some participants are clearly more sympathetic to the discourses presented. At least two factors

seem to contribute to their captive attitude. First, a small minority of the participants never visited Morocco before. Usually, they have grown up in families that were investing only minimally in homeland ties. Consequently, these individuals are rather ill-informed about Moroccan society and politics, which decreases their capacity to recognize biased information, in contrast to more experienced Morocco-goers. However, even among participants with stronger transnational ties to Morocco, not everybody expresses outspoken critical opinions on Moroccan society or on the ways it was presented in the program. For instance, Bouchra from the Netherlands, who has visited Morocco over twenty times, explains that due to the program,

> *My view became much more positive, and also more diverse. In this program,*
> *it was proven that Morocco offers many opportunities and that much can be*
> *done in the country, both economically as policy-wise. (Evaluation form)*

Unlike the more sceptical participants introduced above, Bouchra's viewpoint does not contest the program's optimist tenor. An explanation for this relates to the nature of previous experiences with regard to Morocco and, as part of this, previous state encounters. This element has been underscored by Kahmann (2014), who found that expatriate Moroccans' divergent positions to the Moroccan state related to previous experiences, such as successful holidays in refurbished neighbourhoods (as a positive experience) or confrontation with poverty and repression (as a negative experience). In turn, these experiences are related to structural inequalities, such as class differences. Some of the Summer Universities' participants belong to upper-class families, a few even having direct relations to Moroccan state functionaries. Presumably, their elite position shields them to some extent from ordinary live in Morocco, in turn influencing their political understandings of Morocco. Therefore, participants who do not contest the Summer Universities' discourses should not necessarily be regarded as more 'passive'; rather the discourses comply with their previous viewpoints.

As these two factors illustrate, post-migrant Moroccans' political views on Morocco are influenced by a variety of factors, ranging from holiday experiences to more structural factors,

such as their class position and relation to state authorities. Therefore, rather than assuming the Summer Universities' project to be either 'effective' or 'ineffective' as an instrument of political socialization for all participants, it is more fruitful to look into the diverse socialization dynamics at play.

### *Questioning managerial practices: The Summer Universities as a mirror for Moroccan politics and society*

Political understandings emerge through the interaction of verbal representations and nonverbal contexts of experience (Kelner 2010). Consequently, it is important to push our analysis beyond the participants' assessment of the program content, and consider participants' lived experiences during the homeland tour more broadly. Participants' political understandings with regard to Morocco are also affected by the way the Summer Universities are organised and managed, which include aspects such as the entrance procedure, staff communication before and during the program, regulations regarding participant behaviour, the quality of accommodation, time management, feedback mechanisms, the marketing of the program etc.

Several of these management aspects are received with criticism. As I will illustrate below, these criticisms do not stand in isolation, as the managerial practices are regarded by the students as symptomatic to broader Moroccan society.

### *Practice what you preach? Clientelism and censorship*

A first type of criticism regarding managerial practices comes down to the detection of a sharp discrepancy between the organizers' discourses on Moroccan society and some of their practices. Certain practices directly contradict the organizers' claims of Morocco as an increasingly modern, open and democratic society. This discrepancy is not considered as accidental; rather, it is perceived as demonstrating deeply-rooted problems in Moroccan society. Illustrative here are two incidents occurring during the program, one related to clientelism and another to censorship. In general, these are considered as major problems in Morocco by expatriate Moroccans (Saaf, Hida and Agbal 2009). The participation in the

program of a formally ineligible candidate demonstrated to the other participants that

clientelism remains omnipresent:

> *After a few days, suddenly a new participant joins the group. He is not an expatriate Moroccan but a local student. During a joint meal, four female participants discuss his situation. Rumour goes he managed to circumvent the eligibility criteria and registration procedure because his upper-class father is friends with someone within the organization. The four girls are strongly displeased. They regard it as particularly unfair that a privileged person is occupying the place of an expatriate Moroccan, while there were so many eligible candidates. To them, this incident demonstrates that equality in Morocco is non-existent: people with good connections have more chances. (Observation notes)*

At another occasion, it is the direct intervention of the Ministry for Moroccans Living

Abroad that stirs the participants. More in particular, the freedom of speech of one of the

participants, Anissa, is obstructed during the opening session of the program, which is attended

by the Minister, various Ministry officials and the local university's vice-rector.

> *Anissa has been appointed by the staff to give a thank-you-speech on behalf of the participants. She has prepared a speech herself, but a few minutes before the speech, Ministry officials take away her paper and force her to use one that is prepared by the Ministry. Anissa obeys, but she is enraged. She tells the other participants afterwards that she wanted to address some of the problems of expatriate Moroccans in her speech. She is very upset about the censorship by the Ministry, and concludes that "it is typical for Morocco: they try to distort and manipulate everything." (Observation notes).*

Due to this incident, various other participants feel disillusioned about any progress in

Morocco regarding the freedom of speech. For instance, Hassan sees this as a barrier to further

progress in Morocco:

> *I know now that the freedom of speech, which the propaganda tries to make us believe is existing, is inexistent [in Morocco]. The [constitutional] reforms of 2011 have not unplugged the changes hoped for ... I think that a lot of work needs to be done with regard to mentality change and education and that without this fundamental work, all the big projects [the organizers] don't stop talking about, don't make sense ... (Evaluation form, Hassan from France).*

*Professional management: clashing perspectives*

A second point regards the level of professionalism of the Summer Universities management. Many perceive there to be lack of professionalism, which is considered something 'really typical' for Morocco. Again, the problems experienced during the program are not considered as isolated issues, but as telling examples of how Morocco functions in reality:

> *On the second day, when I asked two girls for their opinion on the program, they said that regarding the organization, it is all going really "the Moroccan way": the fact we're waiting all the time for the others, the chaos, the lack of a clear timing on behalf of the organization, etcetera. In their country of residence, the organisational culture is exactly the opposite: everything is neatly organized. The girls prefer this to the Moroccan system. (Observation notes).*

While sticking to the time schedule seems a trivial issue, it raised a lot of consternation. At a certain point during the program, there is a long and heated discussion between the entire participant group and the staff over the lack of punctuality. Remarkable in the first place is the assertive attitude of various participants: in fluent Arabic, they invalidate the staff's accusation that participants are not respecting the time schedule. Instead, they point at the organizers' attitude as the source of the problem. Displeased about one particularly long delay - of around 5 hours in total – a Dutch boy named Amin shouts 'if in the Netherlands we say to be leaving at 11 am, we <u>do</u> leave at 11 am.' As such, time management issues are framed as a sign of the backwardness of Moroccan culture, whereas 'European' organization style is considered the (superior) frame of reference. Amin's reference to culturally defined norms and customs of his country of residence to evaluate the program's management is not an isolated example. For instance, when evaluating her overall impression of the Summer Universities, a German-born participant states:

> *I started to value a lot certain German habits, like punctuality, organization skills and discipline. Unfortunately, these are customs of which Moroccan people make rarely use (Evaluation form, Sara from Germany)*

Sara's example illustrates how negative experiences related to the management of the homeland tours may trigger participants' disidentification with the society of origin while strengthening identification with the society of residence.

Various participants also express a sense of not being taken seriously by the staff, who treat them as if they were irresponsible children. For instance, in one Summer University edition a curfew was placed at 9 pm after a conflict between participants and staff over the low attendance rate in the seminars. Similarly, in another edition, participants were unhappy about the fact they were chaperoned the entire day by staff members, allegedly to avoid them getting into trouble. Especially some of the girls were discontent about this, as they felt patronized. As Rabiya, a 21 years old girl living in the Netherlands, says to a staff member in a heated discussion,

> *I have been coming to Morocco on my own for the last 10 years, so I don't need someone holding my hand, I want to go and do what I want! (Observation notes).*

Warda from Canada summarizes well how inappropriate management ultimately undermines the Summer Universities' aims:

> *I was disappointed by the lack of professionalism and this has confirmed my idea about the lack of commitment existing in Morocco. The false promises and all the troubles before and during the stay would have never occurred in countries like Canada or France. So why do they occur in Morocco? I am still asking myself the question and I know I should not generalize, (but) this was not my first visit to Morocco, so I'm not basing my opinion on just one trip . . . This program wants to encourage us to return to our country to invest and work there, but this lack of professionalism damages the good intentions of the organization.' (Evaluation form)*

Whereas others have illustrated yet how homeland visits by diasporic youth lead to processes of identification but also disidentification (Kibria 2002; Conrad 2006), the above examples demonstrate how state-led homeland tours may not just lead to diaspora mobilization, but may also lead to disengagement. While it is beyond the scope of this article to address the deeper origins of his dynamic, one of the elements contributing to it seems to be the organisers'

lack of understanding of participants' views and norms with regard to 'proper' management. This, in turn, may be caused by the top-down nature of Summer Universities, whereby critical input of expatriate community members in the design or implementation of the program is absent.

*The Summer Universities as a showcase for Moroccan policies*

On a more general level, two factors contributed to a sense among participants that the Summer Universities were in the first place a symbolic initiative, serving not their interests but those of the Moroccan state: high media exposure and the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Both elements, resulting from managerial choices by the Ministry and local staff, were criticised widely.

Media coverage was omnipresent throughout the program. Media reporters of local and national (state-controlled) media systematically dropped by to take pictures and film footage, and to interview participants. Moreover, a camera team followed the group for about one week, the resulting documentary to be screened on Moroccan national television two months afterwards. This quasi-permanent media attention was however only mildly appreciated by most participants. The abundant presence of reporters led to the feeling among participants that the program served primarily as a showcase for Moroccan diaspora policies, and that this aim was harming the participants' interests. This feeling was further strengthened by the fact that the program content was regularly adjusted to fit into the time schedule and framing of the reporters. Participants were forced repeatedly to reproduce particular statements or actions in front of the camera. Moreover, the state-controlled media reporting on the Summer Universities, such as newspaper *le Matin,* were blamed for just reproducing the organizers' one-sided views, instead of offering a genuine view into the participants' experiences.

A second factor strengthening suspicion about the real aims of the Summer Universities was language use. Some of the seminars were taught in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), a

formal language bearing little similarity to the colloquial Moroccan Arabic (Darija). While most participants had conversational skills in the latter, few had a good command of MSA. While some of the staff translated simultaneously (to Darija or to French, Spanish or English), this was far from sufficient to help all students.

An illustrative situation where both elements – media presence and the use of MSA – converged was during a seminar at a regional Islamic advisory council. Throughout the entire session, reporters were taking pictures, while a radio station was interviewing some of the participants. Except for one, all speakers (members of the Council) were addressing the group in MSA. Reflecting on this session afterwards, various participants expressed their doubt about the Summer Universities' true aims. What puzzled them in particular, was that the organizers were well aware of the groups' lack of proficiency in Moroccan Standard Arabic. As Amin put it ironically to decry the incongruity of the situation: 'you could as well talk in Dutch to a group of Chinese tourists.' In sum, it appeared to various of the participants that the organizers prioritized 'making a nice television show' over the Moroccan expatriate youths' genuine interests.

**Conclusion**

Homeland tours for emigrants' descendants are one of the tools states of origin employ to safeguard the transnational ties of their expatriate communities in the long run. The article's focus on the foreign-born or 'post-migrant' segment of the Moroccan expatriate population responds to the call for the examination of specific groups – such as emigrants' descendants – within the broad category of diaspora (Délano and Mylonas, this issue). This is needed as these groups' characteristics and responses to diaspora politics are often lost in general categories and broader policy frameworks. In addition, the analysis engages with the temporal dimension of migration (Ibid, this issue), by indicating the role of origin states in "diaspora building" aiming at the continuous transnational ties across migrant generations.

The article draws attention to the limitations of state-led homeland tours as a tool of political socialization. Focusing on post-migrant Moroccan youth participating in the Moroccan Summer Universities, I demonstrated the participants' agency in contesting various elements of the program. Their agency to resist builds on knowledge and views regarding Morocco acquired previously (e.g. through regular homeland visits) but is also grounded by the youth's socialization into (Western) country-of-residence norms and values. As such, post-migrant Moroccans' perspectives on the Summer Universities' discourses and practices also highlight the role of socialization agents other than the state of origin, such as parents, family, friends, media, educational institutions in the country of residence etc., when it comes to the development of this group's political understandings of the origin country. While the analysis presented does not investigate what factors are paramount in their previous socialization, the respondents' frequent reference to country-of-residence values and norms in their reflection on the Summer Universities and Moroccan society was remarkable. Clearly, the notion of post-migrant youth as 'blank canvas' when it comes to their relationship to the origin country is inappropriate.

In particular, I have shown how the participants' perceptions of internal contradictions in the Summer Universities undermine the program's intentions: instead of engaging the young post-migrant Moroccans as Moroccan development actors, several dynamics at play rather stimulate this group's disengagement. As such, this article aligns with other research stressing the highly ambiguous role of homeland tours and tourism in homeland ties and identifications of post-migrant diaspora members (Bruner 1996; Kibria 2002; Conrad 2006; Wagner 2014), but focuses on the implications of the state entering into this realm.

A distinctive feature of the Summer Universities is the absence of expatriate community involvement in the set-up and implementation of the Summer Universities, a feature distinguishing it from similar homeland tours. This lack of critical input by expatriate

community members may explain to some extent the divergence between participants' expectations and views on the one hand, and the program content and management on the other. This resonates the general experience that diaspora policy programs are more likely to succeed if diasporas have input (Agunias 2009). A such, the lack of opportunity for input in state diaspora policies can be considered a major factor shaping the microfoundations (Délano and Mylonas, this issue) of the relationship between Moroccan state and expatriate communities, a point also made earlier by Østergaard-Nielsen (2012).

These findings not only confirm the relevance of focussing on the receiving end of diaspora policies, they also demonstrate the importance of taking into account discourses and practices alike when assessing the way diaspora policies are perceived. As Agunias (2009) asserts, both policy process (i.e. how the policy program is realised) and policy output (the program as such) are important. In the Summer Universities, participants' were questioning management practices as much as program content. With participants lamenting that the management was '*so* typical for Morocco', the program also served as a mirror to Moroccan society, reflecting its problems and their persistence. Ironically, it was here that the 'real' Morocco manifested itself in the program to the participants, more than in the organizers' polished, idealised accounts of the 'real Morocco'.

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