

## UNESCO and the daily life of cultural heritage: the case of Fez (Morocco)

What does the universality of Unesco World Heritage means and how is it carried out in daily-life? Being smack in the middle of a fieldwork in a Unesco World Heritage city, namely Fez in Morocco, I want to share with you what appears, to me, to be the daily life of some elements of cultural World Heritage, to be specific houses of the medina used as tourist accommodation. Beginning with a very short presentation of the Unesco's discourse on cultural heritage, I then briefly present the old city of Fez and my current fieldwork. Afterwards, I briefly examine the visibility of the Unesco in Fez and the daily-life of houses in the medina. I conclude with some general remarks of a theoretical nature and implications of my research and its relationship to the discipline of anthropology.

### Unesco discourse, politics and studies

Since 1972, one the aims of the Unesco has been to promote peace and intercultural dialogue by encouraging the preservation and protection of heritage be it cultural, natural or intangible. Indeed, by listing heritage, representing the cultural and natural diversity of all humanity, the Unesco aims to promote social cohesion and mutual dialogue. The transmission of different heritages to future generations is seen as being of prime importance.

I'm not going to enumerate all the texts published by the Unesco. I will focus on the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, also known as the World Heritage Convention. As they are of universal value, the World Heritage Sites belong to the whole of humanity, irrespective of the territory on which they are located. It is the responsibility of the States Parties to the Convention to ensure the protection and promotion of their heritage sites, by means of legal texts, public funding and civic education programs. While, the Unesco is not a funding body, it can provide experts, technical aid, emergency assistance,... to states as they seek to protect their sites.

Anthropologists and others academics have become increasingly interested in the impact of Unesco listing on sites : how to manage the site, how to preserve the buildings, how to involve the local population, how to edict politics? The link between heritage and tourism is among these questions of growing interest. For example, the first Conference of the Unitwin Network, "Culture, Tourism and Development" in June 2010 focused on Heritage Sites and Tourism. But the relation between World Heritage and tourism is not a simple one. As Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot (2008) put it, four elements are involved : listing, heritage, tourism, development. The Unesco also publishes texts and programs devoted to tourism, for example "Tourisme, culture et développement durable" by Mike Robinson and David Picard, "Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites : a Practical Manual for World Heritage Managers" and the program "Sustainable Tourism" by Arthur Pedersen. According to some scholars, it shows a shift in the way Unesco considers tourism : tourism is not a threat for the integrity and conservation of the site anymore, but a means of local development, if appropriately used.

So, what happens on the ground when tourism, World Heritage listing, and daily-life meet on a cultural site? Fasten your safety belts, we're going to Fez, which is one of 890 Unesco listed heritage sites. My aim is not to infer from a specific situation, but to investigate as far as possible this situation in order to grasp how it works, and how actors, humans and materials, make it work.

### Fez and fieldwork

Welcome to Fez. "Smile, you are in Fez" is the slogan of the CRT-Fez (Regional Council of Tourism). Moroccan hospitality is indeed famous. And Fez is felt by many to be to this reputation. Briefly, since its creation in 808 by Idriss II, a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed fleeing Bagdad, this city has welcomed a wide array of populations : Berbers, Arabs from Kairouan and

Spain, Jews from Spain, French under the Protectorate, Moroccan rural migrants, tourists, African students,... All those populations and the successive dynasties have had, and still have, an influence on the city, on its craft industry, religion, arts, architecture, social life,... All this made Fez the cultural and spiritual capital of Morocco for a long time. This reputation, and image, of a holy city (the city of Moulay Idriss), a cultural centre (the city of the first university in the World, the Karaouiyne), a unique architectural style (the arabo-andalous style), is still vivid nowadays. According to guide books, local guides, foreign and Moroccan residents, academics,... Fez is a traditional city (the most conservative in Morocco), a mysterious city (a city with a "deep spirit", with a labyrinth of small streets where it is easy to loose,...), a medieval city (no cars inside, presence of craft guilds,...). But along side this discourse, there is the negative discourse of the medina as a place of exclusion, poverty, insecurity and marginalisation. Since Moroccan independence in 1956, the wealthy Fassi have left the medina to settle in the New Town, then deserted the French, or cities of new importance like Casa or Rabat. As a consequence, their houses were left closed and remained empty, or were rented to several families, generally quite poor and coming from the countryside, each one living in a room. So, people (the same as mentioned above) refer to the degradation of the city's architecture, a densification of the population, a ruralisation of the city,...

That's why, in 1981, the medina of Fez was listed as a World Heritage Site, meeting two criteria : that of displaying an important interchange of human values over time, and that of being an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement.

Since the late decade, foreigners have been buying houses in the medina, restoring them, and using them as a holiday residence or a guest house. This phenomenon was initiated in Marrakech some twenty years ago, and has gained Essaouira before arriving in Fez. But it is important to mention that Moroccan people, from the upper middle class at least, are also involved in this process, named gentrification by some academics (Kurzac-Souali, 2007; Angelini, 2008). For example, of the 54 official guest houses in Fez, 35 are owned by Moroccans. There is, moreover, since 2007, a home stay program called Ziyarate : 30 Moroccan families welcome tourists in their medina houses. This development of tourist accommodation is encouraged by the national program "Vision 2010", which aimed to welcome 10 million tourists in 2010. This program is declined in Fez with the PDRT (Regional Tourist Development Program). Hence by 2015, the city is supposed to be a "full-fledge tourist destination", through the development of the airport, tourist accommodation availability, cultural animation of the city, professional training, creation of institutional organisations, and "rehabilitation" of the medina.

My research focuses on the triangle formed by World Heritage, Tourism and daily-life of heritage : how houses, part of a Unesco listed site, are lived in by people and used in a tourist development context? How houses, traditionally presented in the literature as the perfect Muslim house preserving intimacy of the women and the family, have become houses to accommodate tourists? In order to answer those questions, I work with Moroccan and foreign guest-house owners, home-stay families, and several authorities in Fez and Rabat, as I have been living in Fez for a year for a Ph.D. It is their voices you can hear in this presentation. Following them in their every-day life, my initial question about the importance of cultural heritage for the local populations has become a question of encountering the Other. This encounter takes place in a "flat world" according to Latour, which means that there is no global World Heritage imposing itself on a local context, but a "complicated situation" mixing actors from several places, times and states of being. So, my research is not about the impact of the listing on the local populations, nor about what happens to the buildings in terms of preservation, but how both meet in a specific situation. Studies about guest houses in Morocco (Kurzac-Souali, 2007; Angelini 2008), about the foreign presence in Moroccan medinas (Escher, à paraitre; McGuinness, 2006 ), about tourism in Morocco (Berriane), have mostly investigated the situation in Marrakech, Essaouira and some coastal cities. But few examined Fez in anthropological terms.

I will first present the public and institutional initiatives of conservation in Fez, and then turn to

private ones in the houses of the medina. I will finish with some theoretical remarks arising from my research and broader reading.

### Public initiatives under World Heritage label

I will begin with a brief overview of the achievements of the last 30 years in relation to the Unesco. First of all, there are academic studies, in areas such as architecture, economy,... For example, the "Atlas de la médina de Fès", published by the Centre interdisciplinaire d'études urbaines of the University of Toulouse and the Department of Geography of the University of Fez. Also, institutions like the ADER Fes (Dedensification and rehabilitation Agency) were created, in 1989 in this case, as a technical and practical tool for the restoration of the medina. Some monuments were restored as experimental projects. Dar Adiyel is presented as an example of international cooperation between the Unesco, Italy and Morocco. This project lasted 5 years, beginning in 1994 but eventually, Dar Adiyel was rehabilitated as music school specialising in Andalusian music. Some private sponsors also funded restoration or construction works : Benjelloun from the BMCE bank (construction of one door in 2010), Fondation Karim Lamrini (foundouk Nejjarine in 1990),... The Ministry of Culture informs the Unesco of every project menacing the integrity of the medina. For example, Ouislane is expected to be a commercial centre and accommodation for both tourists and Fez residents. But part of the projected building is located on the non aedificandi area resulting of the listing. And the project of the Ministry of Tourism to implement a cable car to join the medina has been evaluated as not really useful and menacing the intimacy of people (it was possible to see in the houses). Another warning has been sent about the current R'cif works where a public square and bus and taxi terminal is being constructed.

Regarding international campaigns, the 1980 Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Urbain à Fès, realised by the Ministry of Housing and Land Settlement, lead to the specific project for the medina of Fez in 1985 : la Campagne internationale pour la sauvegarde de Fès. So, consultants (Bianca, Mackel, Michon,...) and experts (Foulon, Van de Kerchove,...) were sent to Fez to supervise the works, money was gathered from several countries, some monuments were restored (medersa Bouananiya and Palais Batha, zaouiyas), improvement of the water and electricity supply were done. But the final result was disappointing compared to what was expected, because of technical and financial reasons. The UNDP (United Nations Development Program) also ordered a technical and feasibility study in 1992, but no support. So the most important one was the World Bank Rehabilitation Project of the Fez medina in 1999. It was the first project to include a social dimension : the participation of the population and the improvement of the housing, and not only the rehabilitation of the cultural heritage. Started in 1993 with the evaluation studies, it finished in 2003, later than expected, and the money lent was inferior to the initial credit (9 millions of euros instead of 17). Action were taken in diverse areas : rehabilitation of historic buildings, improvement of accessibility, improvement of the urban environment, institutional reinforcement and poverty reduction. It is also interesting to mention the current Hammamed project, consisting in the renovation of an old hammam in Fez. Several partners are involved, from the University of Liverpool in the UK, the Institut Francais du Proche Orient in Syria, the ADER, the Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability and Euromed Heritage. The American Millenium Challenge Corporation also donated money (111 millions\$US) for the promotion of craft industry in Fez in 2007.

So, after 30 years of listing, the medina is still in work. Efforts have been made, monuments have been restored, public infrastructure has been improved, the Unesco label helped promoting preservation campaigns, and mobilizing sponsors. In a way, the Unesco has succeeded in making Fez a city of universal concern, a place of encounter between international sponsors, academics, public authorities, and tourists interested in it and its cultural heritage. But there are still houses in dangerous condition, no general guide lines for all the parties to know what to do and how, Unesco experts have left the medina,... After the great hopes of the first Fez Campaign in 1985 and programs aiming to the preservation of the entire medina, it is now the time for small and isolated

works promoted by a huge range of sponsors and public authorities. But tensions are tangible between public authorities of the city. The agenda of the Tourism Office, promoting Fez as a cultural destination and increasing the number of beds, is not the same as the Ministry of Culture one, preserving the city. Tensions also concern the allocation of money to the diverse authorities and the choice of the buildings to restore or work to be done. According to their budget, the Ministry of Culture has to select the actions to execute in the medina, the Office of Tourism has to decide on the kind of promotion to implement,...

Secondly, there is no visibility of the Unesco in Fez. A billboard on the motorway points out that it is a World Heritage Site. Then, in the medina, the billboard of the CIPA (International Centre for the Promotion of craft industry) shows the logo of the Unesco. But this centre is always closed. Guide books and local guides present the medina as a World Heritage city worth visiting. And on their website, some owners of guest houses make mention of this listing. After 30 almost years of listing, the Unesco is absent of the discourses in the medina, except in the form of a myth. Most of the foreign or Moroccan owners I have met don't know when the medina was listed, nor what Unesco means. For them, the Unesco is giving money to the medina, but no one is able to mention any action led or financed by the Unesco. But, as one member of the Unesco office in Rabat put it, the Unesco doesn't give money or undertake works, it is an intellectual and technical structure which helps governments to elaborate policies, present projects to international backers and take decisions in the cultural area. And it is said by foreign owners of property in Fez, and some quite wealthy Moroccans, that Moroccan families are still unaware of their heritage, except when they want to sell it, at a very high price. So, the educational programs promoted by the Unesco don't seem to have an impact. Nevertheless, cultural heritage is presented in programs on the national TV channels.

Furthermore, there is no clear link between the listing and tourist development, which bears out Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot's work. Indeed, if the listing of Fez goes back up 1981, tourist development is quite new, beginning in the late 1990. If Fez has always been an Imperial city in tourist circuit, it was just a one day visit city. Nowadays, one aim of the PDRT is to promote Fez as a city break in itself, where people spend at least 3 nights. It is in this context that guest houses and home stay have developed since 2000. But not everywhere : if both Fes-el-Bali and Fes-el-Jdid are listed at the Unesco only the old part of the medina, Fes-el-Bali, is concerned with tourist accommodation. Fes-el-Jdid, composed by the former Jewish quarter and the Royal Palace, was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is nevertheless worth mentioning cheap hotels and couchsurfing guests. One Moroccan, living in the mellah, told me that what tourists want is the old medina, not the Jewish quarter : "why would they want staying here? There is nothing for them!". So, the old medina is seen as more authentic than the mellah. And in the medina, the secure areas are more invested with tourist accommodation than houses located deep in the medina. Security is part of a crisis in the medina. If Moroccan women living in the medina are afraid of going out after 10 p.m., guest house owners are concerned about the security of their clients and don't hesitate to pay security guards. And homestay families located deep in the medina receive fewer paying guests than those located at the edge. So, location in the medina is of prime importance, in relation to the security of the medina at night.

Let's now move to the houses of the medina.

#### Houses of the medina : places of encounter and crisis

As already mentioned, the Unesco is not important to guest-house owners and home-stay families. Most of the time, they don't know when the medina was listed, nor what Unesco means. For home-stay families, Unesco is just a name, something positive that happened to the medina. Some guest house owners argue that the Unesco didn't help them restoring their house, and that they just guess the Unesco would agree with what they did. Others deplore the lack of precise guide lines about what is allowed in terms of restoration in the medina houses, and the lack of control from the authorities on what is done. "Even if it is a Unesco site, look at the bunkers which are constructed

on some roof terraces.... In Fez, when you have the money you can do what ever you want", explained a foreign owner.

Corruption is part of a larger crisis about the authorizations. The term "crisis" is not used by the informants as such, they most of the time speak in terms of nightmare and bad times and difficult events to deal with. In order to open a guest house, you need three kinds of authorizations : one for the restoration works, one for the business, and one for the listing of the house. Those authorizations take place at different times, and involve several authorities, including the Municipality, the Agence Urbaine, the Historic Monuments Office, the Office of Tourism, the Police, the Fireservice, the Health, the Association of Guest Houses,... Firstly, these authorities sometimes have unclear and even contradicting criteria for granting a permit. If the Fireservice wants to put security at first, which means for example installing fire hose in the house destroying the zelij of the patio if necessary, the Historic Monuments Office wants to keep the house as authentic as possible, which means not destroying the zelij of the patio. And the Office du Tourisme is said to implement 5 stars hotels rules, which doesn't fit the characteristics of the house (to have two stairwells) nor the desires of the clients (to have one television or one mini-bar in the bedroom). So, for some guest house owners, you need either a lot of money or a lot of time, to complete a project successfully. In addition to this lack of agreement, there are no clear and precise guide lines about what to do, where to do, which official documents are required, in order to open a guest house. So, the restoration works and the process of opening are often described as a difficult moment : you spend more money than expected, the works always lasts longer than expected, the authorizations are more difficult to obtain than expected... In brief, forget your expectations. This discourse is mostly that of foreigners : Moroccan owners don't seem to face these problems, or at least don't speak of them. These problems don't appear in home-stay, probably because families already are the owners of the houses, because they don't need major works to refit the house (only the addition of some bathrooms, new furniture, and repainting), and because they are supported by organisations leading the project, such as the CRT, the local authorities, and the INDH (Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain).

Another discourse about crisis, increasingly present since 2008, is one of economic crisis, used as such by the informants. In 2009, the crisis touched the market of the medina houses : few of them were sold, as their prices remained high. This summer, the economic crisis was cited to explain the lack of tourists in Fez : after the exams and the World Cup, tourists are not yet in Fez, at least not as last year. So, the economic crisis is not experienced as such, but serves as an explanation of the situation.

A last final of crisis is a personal crisis among foreign owners. First of all, some of them are in Fez to change their lives, to break with the Western way of life they consider to be constraining, to come to what they think to be a more simple life. Second, as restoration works and the authorization's deliverance are difficult moments, they construct a story which is one of personal victory ("it was difficult, I fought, but I eventually managed to have what I wanted") or defeat ("even if the times are more lenient, I still don't have what I expected in terms of way of life). And most of the time, the losers don't stay in Fez : Fez is famous for selecting its inhabitants, according to the foreign discourses. Thirdly, a few couples describe the project of having a guest house as an adventure that has broken, or reinforced, their couple. With facing the same problems and being involved as a team in the project, opening and managing a guest house is a way to test compatibility. So, the main idea is that nothing is easy to obtain in Fez, that you must face problems before getting what you expected (it is abnormal not to have problems). The perfect story to tell to tourists is the one of the personal crisis overcome.

Being a place of several crises, the house is also a place of encounter, of which it is possible to distinguish two kinds. For foreigners, this encounter is with Moroccans (the workers during the restoration works and the employees once the guest house is opened), and with tourists from all over the world : "I receive the world in my house" is a frequently heard sentence. Same for home stay families, who mention with pleasure all the nationalities they have welcomed.

Those encounters lead to at least two processes. First, imagination. According to Appadurai (1996), imagination is the main task of individuals in the post-modern area. If not the major task, imagination is important. For example, it is important to meet the needs and desires of the tourists. In home-stay families, this resulted in language training courses (being able to speak French, English,...), hygiene (how to make a bed, how to serve breakfast,...), the city (being able to give information about Fez,...),... In guest-houses, imagination plays an important part in furnishing for example. For some owners, it is important to present a typical Moroccan house and typical Moroccan family life, to provide the real experience of the medina. So, some furnish their house with Berber items, others with the Syrian and European furnishing that wealthy Fassi families appreciated at the beginning of the last century, others play with the 1001 Nights theme. For other owners, it is important to provide all the luxury and rest tourists are looking for : minimal or uncluttered decoration, swimming pool, television, intimate rooms,... So what is typically Moroccan? Good question! Anyway, the fuzziness of the rules (Moroccan salon, Moroccan architecture, traditional furnishing,...) allows owners to use their imaginations. According to foreigners, decoration in Moroccan houses is "too much", and Moroccans don't know what tourists want, whereas Moroccans accuse foreigners of being Orientalist, not respecting the traditional architecture, and life, of the medina. But all agree that Marrakech is not a Moroccan city anymore, and everything possible must be done to help Fez to avoid what is called "Marakechéisation" by some informants.

Further, it is worth mentioning the image associated with some rooms. The living-room, or Moroccan salon, was, "in the tradition", the room where the master of the house received guests, the only room guests could enter. Now, it is the meeting place par excellence, the place to have a glass of tea comfortably, to read books from the library, to listen to music, to have a talk in front of the fireplace in the winter evenings,... But in home-stay families, the salon is the living, or lively, room of the house, where the television is, where the members of the family, when at home, spend their time. And the terrace, from being traditionally the women place, has become a space to have the breakfast, to sunbath, to look at views over the medina. Terraces of guest -houses are furnished, and owners, or the staff, invite the tourists to use them. But in home-stay families, the terrace remains a space for washing and drying, where tourists are not invited to spend a lot of time. So, where is traditional Moroccan life? Good question too! I don't want to evoke the deep and complex question of tradition here. Simply, it depends what tourists want the tradition to be. Thanks to Internet, it is possible for them to see where they are going, to read what they can expect, and to choose what tradition they want to experience.

Second, a will to separate private life and working life appears most strongly in guest-houses. In home-stay houses, families maintain intimacy and private life with the prohibition to tourists to enter their rooms, I mean bedrooms and bathroom, as the living room is shared. For guest-house owners, the house has generally become first of all a business, and, in order to be legal, they need a least 5 bedrooms. It means it is impossible for them to live in the house. They then buy (or rent) a house in the medina or the new town. It is different for Moroccan owners, which already had a house outside the medina (most of the time) and have bought a house, or used the family house, to open a guest house. There are two different ways of maintaining family on, and private life. But both mention it is difficult to live in a house which is your business. Having two houses allows them to enjoy the guest house and the work. We are far from the English Bed and Breakfast or the French Maison d'hôtes, which are just supplementary activities. In Fez, running a guest house is a main and full time activity. So that guest houses are nearer to being small hotels than home stay. Some informants have proposed using the term "Hotels de Charme".

### Anthropological implications

So, what are the anthropological implications of this research? There are two major themes I would like to investigate.

First, the encounter with the Other. In the contemporary age, referred to as post-modern by some, it

is extremely easy to become aware of the Other through watching television, surfing the Web, and travelling. The major threats (ecological, nuclear,...) and crisis (economic crisis, world crisis, social crisis,...) are, in the economically developed world, part of the daily life. One major discourse about threats is one of loss and nostalgia : loosing contact with the past, nostalgia for traditions,... Not only our past and traditions, but the past and traditions of the world. International organisations are thus responsible for fighting those threats, for example, the Unesco, which promotes cultural encounter and diversity as a mean of world peace. So, where is this encounter in Fez? It is present at least in two forms. First, the meeting of international sponsors, academics, and public authorities. So, Fez medina is a place of universal encounter and dialogue and is imagined as a cultural heritage. This encounter involves guidelines and organisation, so that the partners know what to do and what they are responsible for. That's where the Unesco helps the government in making policies and intervening in preservation projects when needed. Second, the encounter between Moroccans, tourists and foreigners in houses of the medina used as tourist accommodation. Fez medina is then a place of daily-life, lived according to personal stories under the absent but well-know myth of the Unesco. The encounter is a mutual learning process, where imagination and respect play an important role. So, my aim is not to define what is cultural heritage, nor tradition, but to investigate how and why they are mobilised by several actors in Fez.

Those practices and uses lead me to the second theme, the global and the local. I have mentioned the Unesco, the authorities of Fez, the owners of houses in the medina, each of them being involved at a particular level. The Unesco is responsible for global policies on cultural heritage, not specific to Fez. The authorities apply national norms in the medina. And owners are concerned with their houses. From the house to the world, from the local to the global, or reverse. I could have investigated where world heritage is, and what the Unesco is doing, at these three levels. Instead, my approach is based on the idea of a "flat world", as described by Latour (2005), and not a networked one. World heritage at the Unesco is not more global than the house as heritage, in the sense that World Heritage is an emanation of an international power which imposes itself in the local context. Indeed, another part of my research consists in a fieldwork at the Unesco Office in Rabat and Paris, to investigate how people deal with cultural heritage every day. So, the idea is that the world cultural heritage is a localised construction, consolidated into a form (or mediator) which circulates in several different spaces, all of them being localised. So, a situation is not global or local, it is localised, being the meeting point of actors and mediators (humans or materials) coming from different times, spaces and beings. Then, what is the encounter of those actors like, who are they and where do they come from? How is world heritage practiced by those actors in their daily-life? Those two questions are central to my research, and I will let you know later what kind of practises and responses I have found.

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