THE MAKING OF THE SOCIAL ORDER – MIGRATION, RESOURCE AND POWER CONFLICTS IN THE MOROCCAN DRÂA VALLEY

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Summary: This paper explores the complex interrelations between migration, power contestations and the making of social order using a case study example in the middle Drâa Valley of Morocco. Conflicts between different ethnic groups arose throughout the valley's long history of immigration and due to the sedentarisation of nomads. Nowadays, contestations of power result partially from national and international migration, as formally disadvantaged ethnic groups in this valley aim to improve their social status via remittances and investments in land and water rights. The possession of land and water rights plays a crucial role for social status and political decision-making power in this community. Apart from physical capital, social capital by means of membership in the community and symbolic capital as discourses of belonging are central to status and power, drawing on Bourdieu's (1979) theory of practice and his concept of social fields. The study reveals that the social order itself remains unquestioned, while actors and groups work to improve their social standing within it. Pursuing this strategy of repositioning following Wimmer (2008), groups challenge the other groups' privileges and claims of belonging which causes hidden conflicts.

Zusammenfassung: Thema dieses Artikels sind die komplexen Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Migration, Machtanfechtungen und der Herstellung sozialer Ordnung am Beispiel einer Fallstudie im mittleren Drâa-Tal Marokkos. Konflikte zwischen verschiedenen ethnischen Gruppen entstanden aufgrund der langen Geschichte an Einwanderungsbewegungen im Drâa-Tal und aufgrund der Seßhaftwerdung von Nomaden. Heutige Aushandlungen von Macht sind oft ein Resultat von Migration, da ehemals benachteiligte ethnische Gruppen ihre soziale Stellung durch Geldsendungen und Investitionen in Land- und Wasserrechte zu verbessern suchen. Der Besitz an Land- und Wasserrechten spielt eine ausschlaggebende Bedeutung für sozialen Status und politische Entscheidungsmacht in dieser Gesellschaft. Bourdieus (1979) Theorie der Praxis und seinem Konzept des sozialen Felds folgend, spielen neben physischem Kapital soziales Kapital durch Mitgliedschaft in der Gemeinschaft und symbolisches Kapital in Form von Diskursen um Zugehörigkeit (belonging) eine große Rolle. Die Untersuchung zeigt, dass die soziale Ordnung selbst unhinterfragt bleibt, während Akteure und Gruppen an der Verbesserung ihrer sozialen Stellung innerhalb derselben arbeiten. In Anlehnung an Wimmer (2008) verfolgen Akteure eine Strategie der Neupositionierung, indem sie die Privilegien besser stehender Gruppen und ihre damit verbundene Beanspruchung von Zugehörigkeit anfechten, was zu Konflikten führt.

Keywords: Migration, ethnicity, power, identity, conflict, resources, Morocco

1 Introduction

Land is fundamental as a physical means of subsistence, but also as a carrier of feelings of group identity and belonging. According to Geschiere (2009), the concept of *belonging* is in its essence only about claims to have come first and is evidently a social construct that shapes people's physical relationship with the landscape. Geschiere further argues that each time questions of belonging are raised, they lead to the exclusion of those who are defined as outsiders. The notion of first-coming or claims of *autochthony*, implying that people always stayed in the same place

is, however, "historically impossible – after all, history is movement" (Geschiere 2009). Evidently, migration has always been intertwined with questions of land and belonging. Access to land and its contestations play an important role in the *politics of belonging* (cf. Lentz 2010; Lund 2011) as these are intimately connected with community membership, status and power.

This paper explores how different ethnic groups in south-eastern Morocco have articulated their belonging and claims to resources and power, and provides insights on how the ideology of belonging intersects with migration. Given the long history of migration

and struggles in the Drâa Valley, this paper assesses how the different ethnic groups have constructed notions of belonging, identity and ethnicity, using the case study of Ouled Yaoub. It further outlines how these identity constructions are embedded in and shaping power relations, and which strategies are used to contest the hierarchical order. Theoretically, the paper draws on Bourdieu's (1979) theory of practice, Wimmer's (2008) concepts of ethnic boundary making and repositioning, and Martin's (1995) definition of identity construction.

The research results are based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in which a mixed-methods approach was used, including participant observation, different forms of interviews, and surveys (Rademacher 2009).

2 Study area

The Drâa Valley is situated on the south side of the central high Atlas Mountains in south-eastern Morocco. The Oued Drâa, a perennial river, curls around 220 km through the Anti Atlas Mountains, and comprises of six river oases which serve as agricultural spaces, situated in a resource scarce semi-desert to desert environment (see Fig. 1). Total annual rainfall sums show a high variability. Rainfall sums (with an annual mean of 50–70 mm) in the middle Drâa Valley are insufficient for agriculture, thus making it profoundly dependent on irrigation.

2.1 Settlement history of the Valley

An examination of the settlement history of the Drâa Valley provides the background for understanding the conflicts between the ethnic groups and their access and rights to land and water resources. For centuries, agriculture and commerce formed life in the Drâa Valley. The population of the Drâa Valley is heterogeneous: Draoua are said to be the autochthonous population. Between the 8th and 13th century, various pastoralist Arab and Berber groups such as *Maquil* Arabs and *Ait Atta* Berbers conquered the valley and subordinated the Draoua. The different immigration waves of pastoralist groups led to power struggles over the political hegemony of the region and, at the same time, fundamentally changed the ethnic composition of the population. Today, the people of the Drâa Valley compose an ethnically-stratified society in which the descendents of *holy men* (Arabic: *Mrabtin*) rank highest, followed

by Arabs and Berbers. The lowest social rank is allocated to the Draoua and Haratin.

Between the 13th and 20th century, the sedentary population (Draoua) was forced to conclude protection agreements with the militarily superior nomads (Arabs or Berbers) which gradually changed the land tenure system. As a return service for the protection of the villages, nomads demanded a portion of the harvest, parts of the agricultural area and the permission to settle in the *Ksar*, the traditional fortified oasis village. In the case study, the Arab *Ka'aba* nomadic pastoralists concluded contracts with the local *Ksar* population (Bouzidi 1994). As a result of their militant conquest and fostered by their strong belief in their own superiority, the Arabs managed to establish themselves as the ruling elite – like Berbers did in other parts of the valley.

In the 20th century, a number of extended droughts led to the end of the nomad's pastoralist way of life and their sedentarisation in this region (Pletsch 1971). Until the mid-twentieth century, the former nomads did not work as farmers, but delegated farming to the sedentary Draoua population for one fifth of the harvest via patron-client-relations (Arabic: *hamassat*) they had established. Until the 1930s, conflicts with looting nomads made the protection of the *Ksar* necessary. Only when the Drâa Valley was taken over by French colonialists in 1932, did the security for the sedentary population increase (Pennell 2000).

3 A society in transformation

3.1 Changing livelihood in the 20th century

The colonial period in Morocco, from 1912 to 1956, led to an economic reorganisation of the whole country. In the Drâa Valley, agriculture and commerce changed profoundly: the trans-Sahara trade was prohibited and, consequently, the Drâa Valley became a marginal border region of the country, whereas in the north an economic boom started as an effect of increasing industrialisation. In northern Morocco, a modern agricultural sector was established, whilst agriculture in southern Morocco remained small-scale, subsistence oriented (Pennell 2000, 186). In addition, from the 1930s onwards, the economy of the Drâa Valley – agriculture and animal husbandry – was weakened due to several drought periods accompanied by famine. The north became more attractive for people from the southern oases due to the availability of jobs in industry, agriculture and commerce.
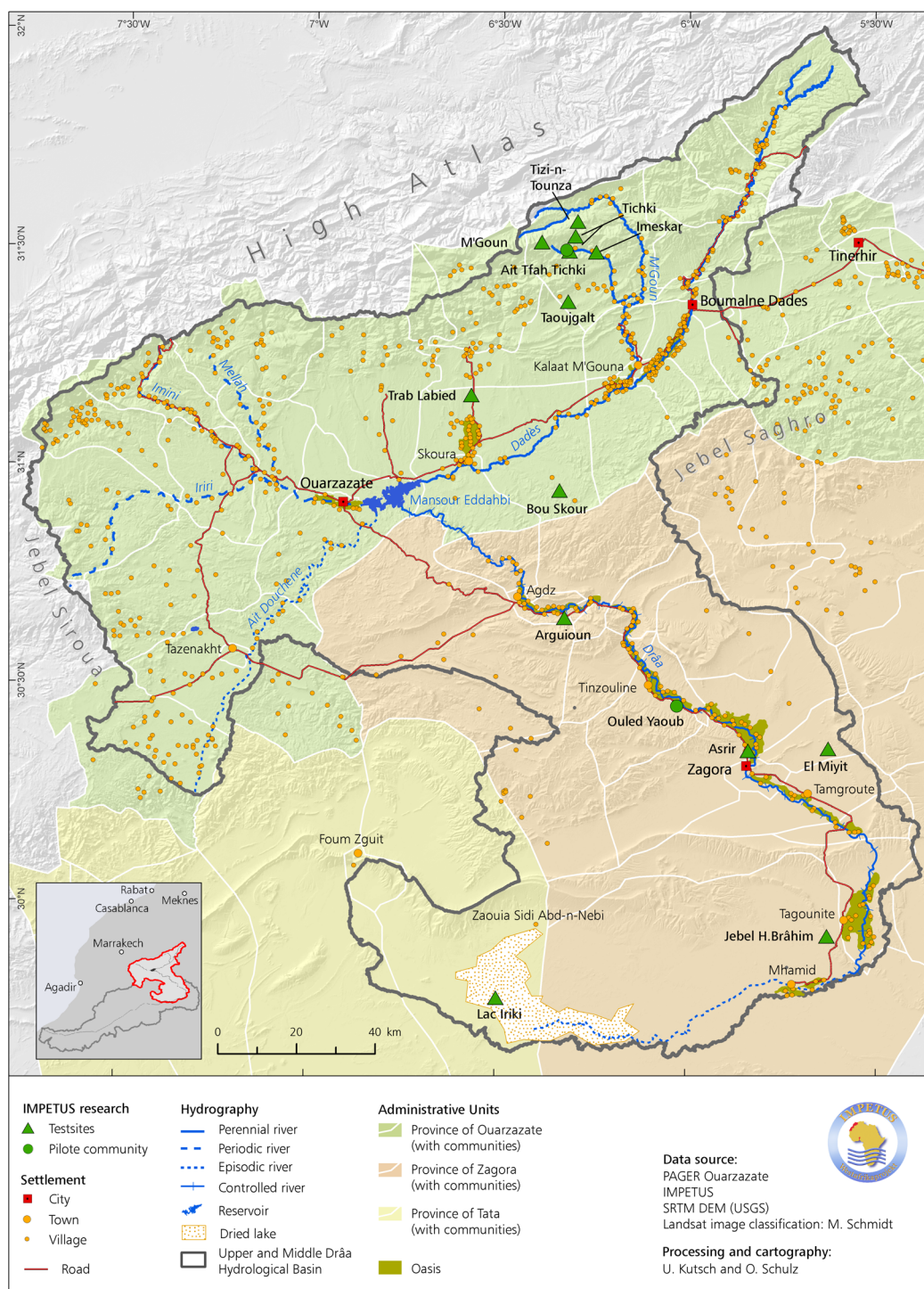
Fig. 1: Overview map of the upper and middle Drâa Valley with the case study village of Ouled Yaoub in the central part of the middle Drâa. Source: SCHULZ and JUDEX 2008

Slavery was officially abolished during the colonial period, but it was only after independence in 1962 that all citizens became equal by law. The economic imbalance in the country and the unfavourable conditions for agriculture in the Drâa Valley led to a constantly increasing number of migrants. The population in the oasis grew despite out-migration. However, the surface area of the Drâa Valley that is suitable for subsist-

ence agriculture is only 2%, namely in the oasis itself. Limited resources, traditional agricultural techniques, rainfall variability with recurrent periods of droughts and population pressure characterized the situation in the Drâa Valley (ZEINABI 2003).

Water is a scare and valuable resource, and its distribution is embedded in a complex system of irrigation rules (cf. HAMMOUDI 1985). Water rights still play a crucial role in the Drâa Valley. After the inauguration of the dam in 1972, the Drâa Valley was connected by a modern concreted canal system through which water from the river was conducted to the villages with their traditional irrigation canals. Farmers became dependent on water releases from the dam that did not always satisfy their needs. They consequently started motor pump irrigation in the 1970s, which is a cost-intensive method of irrigation.

3.2 The social and political setting

In 2006, the village consists of approximately 1200 inhabitants and 100 households. It is situated north of the province capital Zagora. The inhabitants are Draoua, Arabs (from four sub-groups of the *Ka'aba*), Haratin, two religious families and one Berber family (with the last two groups playing an insignificant role in the social setting). There are different versions of the village's settlement history. According to the dominant Arab version, an Arab *sheikh* took possession of Ouled Yaoub approximately 220 years ago. At that time, the inhabitants of the *Ksar* were Berber speaking Draoua, who asked the Arab nomads for protection. The sedentary population in the whole region was suffering from countless conflicts that happened around land and the irrigation canals between the major Arab and Berber tribes of the region. According to Draoua local history, they are the autochthonous population that was subjugated by Arab conquerors. Nowadays, Ouled Yaoub is an Arabophone village in which the major ethnic groups are Draoua and Arabs. Some families are classified as Haratin which in the local context means that they were former slaves of one specific Arab lineage. In Ouled Yaoub, people interestingly distinguish between Draoua and Haratin in terms of origin and skin color whereas in other parts of Valley, the two terms are used interchangeably (ENSEL 1998).

There are different types of land tenure, namely communal land that belongs to a tribal group and two categories of private agricultural land: land owned by private persons and land owned by religious brotherhoods or by mosques. In this part of the Drâa Valley, land can be separately bought and sold from water whereas in other parts of the Valley, land and water are sold together (HAMMOUDI 1985).

Before colonialism started, village life was entirely organized by the village council, the political organ of the community. Nowadays, village life is still organized by it to a certain extent. The village council's tasks were: caring for internal and external security, such as solving internal contestations around land and water; jurisdiction; organising collective tasks such as work on the irrigation canals or religious feasts; determining the irrigation cycle among others. Ouled Yaoub can be characterized as a close corporate community in which the Arab families traditionally dominated village affairs and local politics.

Previous studies on power relations and identity formation in southern Morocco have demonstrated that in Berber dominated communities with high-ranking Arab religious groups (ILAHIANE 1996) and in communities that are headed by distinguished religious groups (ENSEL 1998) very similar identity constructions and claims of belonging, property and power were at work. In the case of Berber communities, their nomadic ethos combined with their historical military dominance, their social organization and persistent political power are fundamental elements in Berber social status construction (ILAHIANE 1996, 94). The religious groups are believed to be either descendents from the Prophet Mohammad (*Shurfa*) or descendents of holy men who were revered as saints (*Mrabtin*). Both of them do possess *baraka*, the supernatural quality of divine grace (ENSEL 1998). The question that this paper seeks to answer is whether in a community dominated by Arab lineages that has no influential religious families, similar patterns of identity formation are at work.

3.3 Land ownership and status then and today

In the Drâa Valley, the dominant ethnic groups hold a monopoly on water and land rights and developed certain mechanisms to remain in power. From interviews conducted in the field, the deep bonding with one's *bled* (Arabic: village, region, land) or *'ard* (the land) was stressed, referring to the community, the agricultural land inside the oasis and the tribal land outside of the oasis. Farmers expressed their strong emotional attachment to the plots they cultivated, referring to their "roots," and to the fact that farming entails the sacred quality of receiving "*baraka*." Some farmers would in consequence nev-

er sell their ancestral estate as it is integral part of their identity and "*al-asl*" (Arabic: origin, ancestry, decent). Owning property in the form of land is a proof of one's ancestry. The symbolic value of the scarce resource water is constantly referred to in several idioms, such as "everything depends on water" and "water is the foundation [of life]" (own interviews). Interestingly, a saying equates birds and migrants when referring to the scarce water resources: "Migrants are like birds. If they do not find water in a place, they continue moving (own interview)."

ILAHIANE (2004) stresses the two-sided character of land ownership in southern Morocco, which contains much more than the material value and is an important form of symbolic capital (BOURDIEU 1996; BOURDIEU and WACQUANT 1998), signifying power and influence. In BOURDIEU's terms, land ownership in the Drâa Valley constitutes a field of power following a certain logic: The field of power is a space of power relations between actors that are sufficiently endowed with (at least) one of the three capital sorts: economic, cultural, and symbolic capital. The power centre is occupied by those with the largest accumulation of capital, representing the recognized authority and full members of the community. The property of land and water rights (economic or physical capital) is linked to meanings of rootedness and affiliation that in turn serve to justify the high status and legitimize those in power (symbolic capital). The concentration of symbolic capital in particular enforces recognition. Here, the symbolic capital of the ruling ethnic group (Arabs) takes effects as 'superiority' over the Draoua. The Draoua, in turn, perceive and accept the symbolic capital of the Arabs and thus confirm the prevailing logic of land ownership and power structures. Their submission to the ruling ethnic group of the Arabs and thus to the structures of the social order is a historical product. The incorporated logic of the field of land ownership is called *doxa* by BOURDIEU – the 'taken for granted' in any given social context that structures normative behaviour (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT 1998, 108, 118).

In south-eastern Moroccan communities, property in land and water was and still is the founding pillar of law and tradition (DE HAAS 2003, 365). This tenure was, to borrow ILAHIANE's term, "virtually the decisive vehicle" (ILAHIANE 1996, 100) through which the Arab and Berber social organizations expressed themselves (cf. SILVERSTEIN 2010). The exclusion of outsiders or those who were denied "*al-asl*" was a chief operational element of the Arab's construction of property, and the patrimony was strictly guarded.

In a similar vein, LUND stresses that in conflicts around land a complex interplay enrols: political and legal struggles intertwine, local powers and less localized power structures interact, and political and cultural symbols of power and authority are brought into play. "It is never merely a question of land but rather also a question of property and of social and political relationships in a very broad sense" (LUND 2011, 73). Status, membership and social identity, he continues, do not automatically entail rights, but serve as means for legitimizing claims. If somebody is not regarded as a local citizen, he may be denied a legitimate opportunity to stake a claim (LUND 2011, 74). As such, "claims to land are partly defined by social identity, and social identity is partly defined through property rights to land" (LUND 2011, 72). In the case of Ouled Yaoub, Draoua were denied their autochthonous status by Arabs (see 6.1).

In comparison with the case studies by ILAHIANE and ENSEL, it can be noted that in Ouled Yaoub similar processes of acquiring capital linked to claims of power and status are at work. Like the *Ait Atta* Berbers, Arab nomads subordinated the sedentary population and established themselves as the ruling elite. They accumulated physical capital in the form of land and water rights and linked it symbolically to rootedness and "*al-asl*" to justify their high status. The religious element supporting claims of power and prestige is however missing. The social construction of power that was outlined did not yet mention any contestations of power or changes within the structure. The interlinkages with migration, transformations in the social order affecting identity narratives and ethnic boundary making will be described in the following.

4　Migration patterns in the Drâa Valley

Migration patterns in Ouled Yaoub in the 20th century reflect the general trends of the Drâa Valley and some other parts of south-eastern Morocco. According to MTER (1995) and ENSEL (1998) labour migration at large from the Drâa Valley started in the 1930s, mainly due to recurring droughts, famine and epidemics. In Ouled Yaoub, seasonal labour migration to the north started in the 1950s according to a local assessment. Farmers left for the north to help with the harvest in the destination areas and returned some months later.

Until the mid 1960s, Arab families of Ouled Yaoub gained income from pastoralism, while Draoua were cultivating their land in the oasis on the basis of patron-client-relations. Droughts in the middle of the

1960s resulted in a decline in animal husbandry. As a consequence, some of the Arabs had to learn agriculture, while others migrated themselves.

After independence, migration arose as an opportunity specifically for the disadvantaged ethnic groups as a means to disengage themselves from patron-client-relations. All ethnic groups engaged in migration, but among the first and among the most successful migrants were Draoua and Haratin who started investing in their community of origin. Draoua and, to a lower extent, Haratin are using their new wealth to circumvent the traditional barriers of access to resources via investment in land and water rights (SILVERSTEIN 2010).

According to inhabitants of Ouled Yaoub, internal labour migration increased in the 1970s only, when agriculture as the primary income source for extended families was no longer sufficient for subsistence. Those who migrate are usually men with a low education level who find work in the construction sector through internal rural-urban circular migration. International migration is limited to a few families whose members, especially returnees, are highly influential in local politics. However, since 2000, whole families have permanently left Ouled Yaoub, which demonstrates a shift away from migration as an activity reserved for individuals (RADEMACHER 2009).

5   Rights possession and social status

In this section, the assumption that the social status of an ethnic group improves via the purchase of land will be examined with the help of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The agricultural area encompasses 120 ha. Using a survey on remittances and investment behaviour of the different ethnic groups, the current distribution of land and water rights as well as irrigation wells were identified after four decades of labour migration. Survey results show that members of each ethnic group invested in land, water rights and motor-powered irrigation wells. The weighting, however, is different: 30% of all households are Draoua and they possess 42% of the arable land of the village. The biggest ethnic group is comprised of Arabs (65%), but they currently possess only 53% of the arable land (see Fig. 2). As protectors, they possessed most land and water rights, but sold some of their rights to Draoua (RADEMACHER 2008, 2009). In ILAHIANE's concise words, the landlords were forced to "eat their fields and *al-asl*, one by one" (ILAHIANE 1996, 103) to make a living. By selling fields, they allowed Draoua to build belonging and rootedness, which resulted eventually in their improved status.
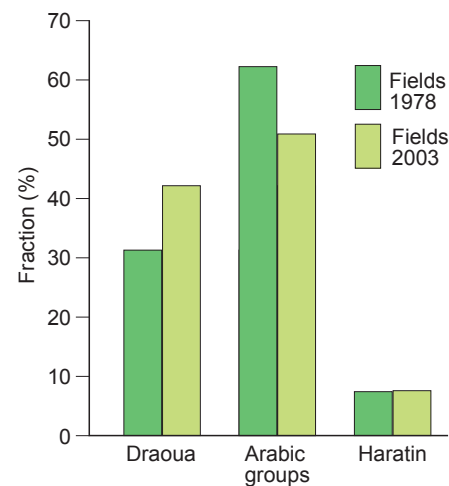

Fig. 2: Distribution of land possession according to ethnic group in 1978 and 2003. Sources: Land register, ORMVAO and own survey 2003

It is remarkable that apart from land rights, Draoua invested in both traditional and modern water rights (motor pumps), even though in the 1970s and 1980s it became apparent that traditional irrigation lost its importance. This investment behaviour of Draoua supports the assumption that water rights are not only a material property, but related to an increase in social status. In local concepts, water rights are indeed fundamentally linked to origin and belonging (HAMMOUDI 1985). In accordance to BOURDIEU's work on power relations, one can say that Draoua found means to acquire physical and symbolic capital.

The distribution of fields and wells according to ethnic origin reveals that the Draoua acquired more property than each Arab lineage alone or the mixed group in the village council (see Fig. 3). Draoua thus appropriate *asl* or land and water rights. As a result, Draoua gained an important voice in the village council. In the past, the Arab lineages dominated the council and the Draoua were excluded from decision making processes. All official posts were held by Arabs. Nowadays, the situation changed significantly: Draoua not only form the biggest interest group in the council, but also act as a solidly united community. Today, the ethnic groups are organized in four interest groups that form the village council. One group is Draoua, two groups have Arab members and the last group is composed of Arab and Haratin. The Arabs are disputing and disunited, contrary to the Draoua group. One consequence is the dissolving of Arab extended families while Draoua mostly keep the traditional family structure with undivided property. Draoua invest more in agriculture
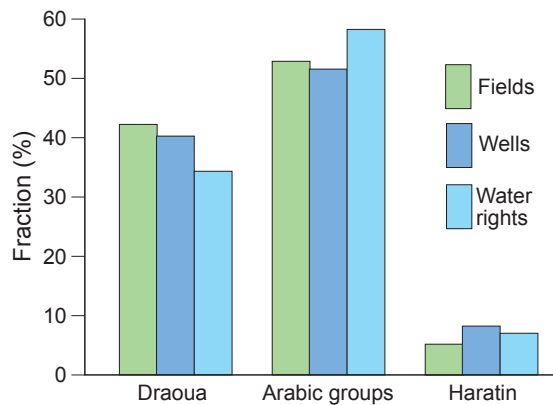
Fig. 3: Distribution of land and water rights and wells according to ethnic group in 2003. Source: Own survey 2003

than Arabs and have more family members actively engaged in farming. In contrast, according to survey results, Arab groups invest more money in the higher education of their children. The Draoua show a more inward orientation that focuses on agriculture and the village of origin or locality, whereas the Arab developed a more outward orientation and encourage their children to acquire well-paid jobs in cities. Most of them doubt that the situation of agriculture will improve in the Drâa Valley in the future and thus look for alternative livelihoods (RADEMACHER 2009).

Thus, changes in resource possession led to an increase in social status and political power for the Draoua. These in turn caused numerous conflicts, accompanied by the silent resistance of those who lost parts of their power and influence.

6   Recent hidden and open conflicts in Ouled Yaoub

The analysis of recent conflicts sheds light on the ways of how people and groups of people interact in the existing complex web of power relations and the ways they pursue strategies in the attempt to improve their situation vis-à-vis others.

Open, violent conflicts are normally avoided, seemingly good relations prevail: i.e. it is custom to invite all inhabitants of the village in the case of marriages or funerals. Inhabitants of the Drâa Valley pass criticism on others only in indirect, subtle, and subliminal forms. However, as research revealed, especially older people have resentments and feelings of envy or thoughts of revenge towards people of other ethnic groups. The change in local power relations is evaluated very divergently: positively by the formerly disadvantaged groups that view the recent

situation as "compensating for suffering from injustice", as one informant puts it; negatively by some Arabs that "yearn for the good old days."

6.1 Identity narratives and ethnic boundary making

Power relations and the social order as a historical, yet changing product, shape identity constructions. MARTIN (1995) defines identities as narratives or stories that people tell about themselves and others. Even though these narratives are fluid, contested and constantly changing, they are clustered around some hegemonic constructions of boundaries between 'us' and 'them' as well as 'self' and 'other'. In times of crisis and power struggles, "identity narratives which, in different circumstances, may simply stress the particularities and beauties or riches of a group's culture, become ideologized in such situations. Myths of origin are instrumentalized to produce fantasies of purity and to postulate racial differences between people" (MARTIN 1999, 195–196).

In the case study, both groups contest legitimate belonging, but only one group can claim autochthony. The identity constructions of the dominant ethnic groups – Arab and Draoua – can only be understood in contrast to each other as they were shaped in drawing boundaries in view of the specific historic situation in the Drâa Valley. Arabs as well as Draoua and Haratin developed their own constructions of identity, belonging and mechanisms of differentiation that see the own group as superior in terms of origin or morale. Arabs feel superior due to their nomadic descent, their ability to trace back their genealogies to the Arabian Peninsula, their way of living and their lighter skin colour (RADEMACHER 2009). They looked down to the sedentary, dark-skinned population in the oasis that was tied to the soil. Surprisingly, they deny the Draoua's claim of originating from the Drâa Valley, thus their autochthony, and state that Draoua and Haratin came from Sub-Saharan Africa. As a consequence, according to the Arab perception, both groups immigrated into the region *much before* the Arabs. This "fact" serves as a legitimation for denying the Draoua's autochthonous status and their soil claims. What first seems a paradox, namely that the nomadic group that oppressed the sedentary population claims *al-asl* via land and water rights possession, can be interpreted according to MARTIN (1999) as an instrumentalisation of the myth of origin in order to claim rights and resources. What started with conquest was later legitimised and 'historicised' claiming

origin. Interviews demonstrated that the incorporated social hierarchy was later questioned.

"Draoua formerly had no value. At that time, Draoua were subordinate to Arabs. They had worked as *hammas* for the Arab land owners and only ate after them. They had served our forefathers because they were poor and needed something to eat." (Own interview with Arab dignitary)

When all citizens got equal civic rights, Draoua and Haratin "were determined to use this chance and get rid of old bonds" (own interview). Migration offered them the chance to cut old bonds and earn money elsewhere. Most Arabs acknowledge that Draoua achieved a lot via migration. They are characterized by their fellow villagers as 'hard-working' and 'patient', which helped them improve their standard of living (own interviews). On the contrary, Arabs characterize themselves as 'spoiled', 'lazy' and 'proud' (own interviews). This negative self-characterization is at the heart of HERZFELD's concept of cultural intimacy. HERZFELD describes it as "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality (…)" (HERZFELD 1997, 3). My own research revealed that in secret many Arabs suffer from the changed situation or loss of the "formerly perfect social order" as they "cannot forget their proud past" (own interviews).

The relationship between Draoua and Arab is normalized in everyday life, but a border is drawn when descent and marriage come into play. Marriage between Draoua and Arab is not permitted and regarded by Arabs as shameful. An Arab dignitary revealed the hidden feelings of superiority some people still have: "In spite of migration a Draoui remains in my eyes always the same person. Even if he accumulated a lot of wealth, in the eyes of an Arab he always remains only a Draoui." (Own interview)

Draoua on the contrary invoke a rhetoric that is opposed to the Arab one to justify their contradictory ideology and actions. Draoua see themselves as the autochthonous population that suffered from Arab conquering and power struggles. Draoua depict themselves and are depicted by others as peasants that are strongly attached to the land favouring to work in agriculture. They accordingly have the image (and self-image) of being 'good farmers'. Contrary to the Arab version of history, which states that Arabs only legally purchased land and never forcibly took possession of it, a Draoui dignitary reported the compulsory acquisition of land through Arab conquerors. In his citation, the satisfaction about recent changes is

prominent: "The Arabs took possession of the land in a bad way and this is why they are faring badly today. Everybody has to pay for his actions and the wrong that he has done to others. This is the curse of God." (Own interview)

Through successful migration, group solidarity and strategic investments in land and water rights, the Draoua regained influence, social status and political power. Draoua feel morally superior to Arabs as they stress their important role in community development and welfare. Draoua emphasize that despite the injustice they endured, they are cooperative and appeasing. In their perception, they work for the community's good and the development of the village, showing generous behaviour. This performance lays the foundation for the moral superiority the Draoua claim.

The third ethnic group, Haratin, developed a similar identity to the one of the Draoua. Both groups stress the suffering of their parents and forefathers, and dissociate from the former Arab landowners by emphasizing their own positive characteristics such as diligence, patience, solidarity and willingness to make sacrifices for their families and the village community (own interviews).

Only with independence and equal rights for all citizens did the inferior groups find ways to end the established patron-client-relations and were enabled to gain ownership of private land (SILVERSTEIN 2010, 91). A prominent means for upward mobility was migration, and investments in agriculture centred on irrigation wells, the use of better crop varieties, fertilizer etc. It remains a question to what extent this behaviour was a conscious effort to change the existing order or if it was more internalized, following normative regulations. Following BOURDIEU, in each social field the actors involved develop a relationship to the field, called *illusio* (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT 1998, 142). A group might thus attempt to subvert the power relations within the field. However, this very purpose shows their implicit recognition to the logic of the field – their recognition of the basic essentials. In times of conflict, a group aims for the improvement of its own status, thus only reversing the power relations, without challenging the prevailing social order.

This goes in line with WIMMER's concept of *ethnic boundary making* and especially the *repositioning strategy* (WIMMER 2008). The strategy of the Draoua is to reposition themselves vis-à-vis the Arabs. As such, they do not contest the principles of hierarchy or the boundaries drawn, but seek to improve their social position within the existing hierarchical boundary system (WIMMER 2008, 988). At the same time, Draoua follow a "*transvaluation*" strategy in which they re-identify

themselves with a new, positive image in contrast to the dominant oppressor. Draoua and Haratin re-interpreted their historical subjugation into a struggle against injustice and domination (cf. WIMMER 2008, 1038). This attempt to re-interpret the normative principles in stratified ethnic systems is also labelled "*normative inversion*". The concept of *normative inversion* implies that "[t]he category of the excluded and despised comes to designate a chosen people who are morally, physically, and culturally superior to the dominant group" (WIMMER 2008, 988). Draoua see themselves as morally superior as they are working for the good of the community. According to WIMMER, actors always choose the level of ethnic distinction that will best support their claims to moral worth, prestige, and political power. Until nowadays, actors in the small oasis communities seem not to think that there is a possibility to reverse the existing order that explains why presumably they opt for improving their status within the existing social order via migration and investment in locality. In doing so, they have continued to uphold local means of assessing prestige and power, namely land tenure and water rights.

6.2 Local fields of conflict

Ouled Yaoub suffers from a range of conflicts, such as institutional, generational and political conflicts between neighbouring communities around water resources. The analysis of conflicts shows that not only questions of power and authority are negotiated, but in some cases they are intermingled with notions of age, descent and identity. Interestingly, national and international returned migrants are involved in most of them.

An institutional conflict arose between members of the village council and the development association that was founded by younger educated returned migrants. Despite the commonly shared wish to work for the wellbeing of the community, questions of power, authority and age led to breakdown of a previously well functioning development association. The ruling elite that dominates the village council comprising of peasants disliked sharing power with the younger educated generation even though they had new skills that the older generation was lacking. The older generation managed to occupy more positions in the development association, causing internal conflicts and in the end ruled out the foundation members. In consequence, no new projects were realized and existing projects not well maintained or even stopped. Since that time, the educational migrants do not interfere in village affairs any more.

The following verbal exchange that was put in the mouth of women is embedded in an old conflict. It gets to the heart of the social construction of descent, power and authority that different ethnic groups developed. It is women who are portrayed of having said this, as men are not supposed to openly show emotions and disclose sore points. An Arab woman is alleged to have said that her Hartani opponent (that theoretically could have also been a Drawia): "You and your family have been *hammas*. You have no right to speak up." The reply of the Hartani women was said to be: "Even though we were *hammas* we are wealthier and better than you. You cannot order us to be quiet anymore. Now it's your turn to work as *hammas* for us" (own interview).

This verbal exchange links *hammasat* and descent to status and power transformations that took place during the last decades. The Arab woman belonged to the former elite which engaged several *hammas* for work in agriculture, whereas the Hartani family became wealthy through successful migration and renowned for active engagement in community development. The Arab side stresses their historically grown position in the hierarchical village system as a legitimation for current claims to power. The Hartani side on the contrary accentuates the new sense of superiority building on successful migration, charitable work for the community and morale. She makes clear that the social order is turned upside down by saying the last sentence that delicately hits the Arab side and is perceived as a revenge for suffered injustice. As mentioned before, the way conflicts are normally dealt with is subtle and hidden. Here, the 'lose tongue' of women reveals the underlying wounds, thoughts of revenge and gloating. Again, physical and symbolic capital are raised – *hammasat* standing for a lack of physical capital (land) that is linked to the inferior, silenced status. In the view of the Hartani identity narrative, successful migration, local investments in land and water and charitable action renders them in a position to speak up.

7 Conclusions

Identity narratives, notions of belonging and claims to resources are embedded in and shaping power relations. This paper has explored how the social construction of order, status and power is created and negotiated in an oasis community, using BOURDIEU's theoretical framework. The complex interrelations between migration, power contestations and the making of an accepted social order are illustrated in a simpli-

fied scheme (Fig. 4) that shows the underlying closely interwoven structural mechanisms for the past and present situation.

Status and power in this oasis community are dependent on different kinds of capital: physical capital in the form of land and water rights possession, social capital by means of membership in the community, and symbolic capital as discourses of belonging. What becomes evident is that symbolic capital is linked to land possession as a legitimizing object for those in power. In this social-political context where power is exercised, the social stratification operates as an unquestioned 'social truth' – despite recurrent conflicts. The Arabs, Draoua and Haratin altogether do not question the necessity of hierarchy; however, the Arab lineages' hegemony is contested by Draoua and Haratin. Each ethnic group invokes specific factors in their construction of social identity that serve their interests, namely their nomadic ethos, a locatable descent (i.e. Arabia) or autochthony, skin colour, or the membership of a religious group, social organisation and charity. This belief profoundly constitutes their social identity cementing the social order. Through migration, however, this order is partly challenged since the external input of capital (e.g. remittances) leads to investment in land and water rights which in turn leads to upward social mobility within the given order along ethnic boundaries. Conflicts arise as a consequence of some actors' or groups' attempts to reposition themselves within the hierarchy, thus challenging the oth-

ers' privileges and identity narratives of belonging. The Draoua more than the formerly dominant Arabs have invested in locality and in doing so have continued to uphold local means of assessing prestige – namely land tenure and water rights. In addition, through the integration of the market economy, new values have emerged. A Moroccan saying state: „*Qad li andek, qad li tsua*"(Arabic: "The person who has money is the one who is listened to"). Status and influence are thus also dependent on financial power.

From the case study of Ouled Yaoub it can be see that on the one hand, migration has potential to fuel conflicts. On the other hand, in particular for the disadvantaged ethnic groups, migration served as a means to escape the oppressing social order and to create a space for changes.

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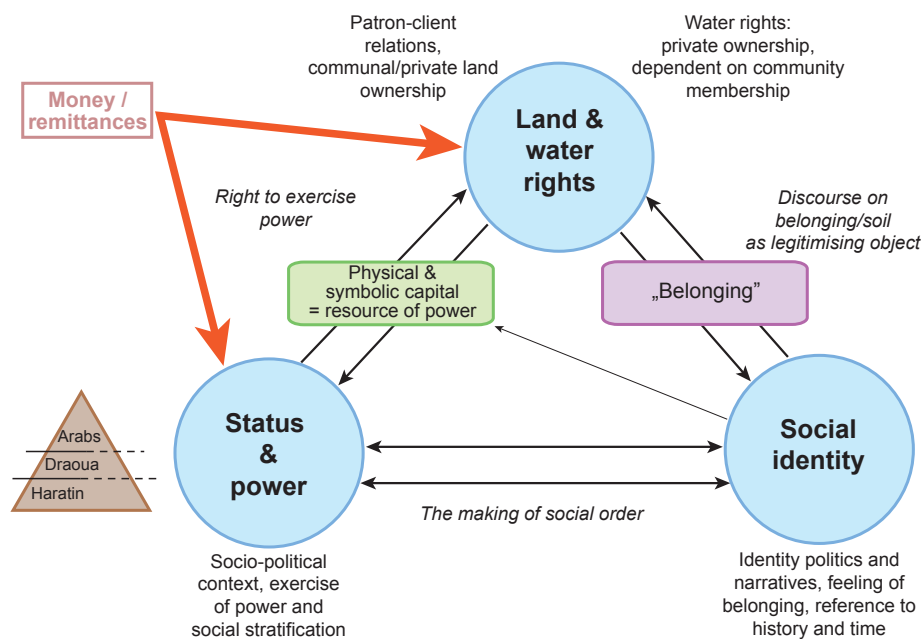
Fig. 4: The making of social order in Ouled Yaoub. Design: ʀᴀᴅᴇᴍᴀᴄʜᴇʀ-ꜱᴄʜᴜʟᴢ and ʀᴏꜱꜱᴏᴡ 2012

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