

Sub-Saharan migrants in Fez. A presence in the margins of a city in mutation

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The city of Fez, with its historical role in the economic exchange in the trans-Saharan space, a role it is still playing in the geography of the sacred among the west African sub-Saharan populations, as well as with its appeal to students from francophone west Africa, remained for a long time away from the circulatory journeys of the new migrants. However, this has changed in recent years with the arrival of sub-Saharan migrants who are neither students nor pilgrims to the Zawia Tijania. Fez has indeed become a destination for migrating sub-Saharan populations. The idea these migrants have about Fez is based on historical, spiritual and mercantile factors it has assumed for centuries. In fact, this is why sub-Saharan migrants see Fez as a city where they can go to without any legal documents and keep their African culture and identity.

So, what justifies the presence of these sub-Saharan migrants in a city in possession of a strong cultural identity but lacking in terms of its economic performance? What kind of relationship do these migrants establish with the local population? Are these relationships closely related to basic needs such as food or rent, or do they extend to religious, cultural and sports activities? Has the sub-Saharan presence in Fez given rise to exclusive territories? These are questions I will address in my paper in the analysis of the role of the city of Fez in the polarization of the sub-Saharan migratory movements; my aim is also to see whether the city of Fez is able to go beyond its symbolic status and respond positively to the expectations of this kind of population whose main reason to migrate from their countries of origin is purely economic.