

Quest migrants: Trajectories of French people in Morocco searching for elsewhere

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THERRIEN, Catherine, 2013, "Quest migrants: Trajectories of French people in Morocco searching for elsewhere." In *Contested Spatialities. Lifestyle Migration and Residential Tourism*, edited by Michael JANOSCHKA and Heiko HAAS. London, Routledge: 108-123.

In the writings about contemporary migrations, research presenting Morocco as a country of emigration and France as a country of immigration seems to envisage mobility exclusively from the South to the North. Even if it cannot be compared to the migratory flow of Moroccans to France, a migration from the North to the South exists, too. Indeed Morocco is a destination appreciated by many Europeans and especially by the French. The opportunity to have an experience offering a change of scene, without feeling out of their element, is the main reason why French people are attracted to Morocco. Morocco is an Arabic-French-speaking country, a few hours flight from France, with a nice climate and political stability. It therefore fulfils a desire for 'nearby exoticism' by providing French people with an experience of differences within reassuring colonial reference marks. The French can freely move between France and Morocco, easily build their migration project during their different stays and even leave France without a definite project. It is possible for them to settle in Morocco with the only objective to search for a better quality of life. Indeed, the migration channels of some French people reflect the views of some writings about lifestyle migrations: The key motivation for those migrations has been the search for something intangible, encapsulated in the phrase 'quality of life' (O'Reilly 2007).

Nevertheless, as my interest for the French living in Morocco increased during a three-year cross-country study of transnationalism funded by the European Commission¹, I found the existing migration categories do not reflect the trajectories of some migrants interviewed during our fieldwork. Although the 'lifestyle migrants' category seems to be the most relevant one to categorize them, yet some differences in migration trajectories exist between them and British retirees settled in Spain (Gustafson 2008; Casado-Diaz 2006; Rodriguez 2001), Quebecers settled in Florida (Tremblay and O'Reilly 2004) or French people settled in Marrakech (Petermann this volume; Boustia 2007), for example. That is what led me to create the particular category of 'quest migrants' which allows us to deal with the specific trajectory of these migrants.

This chapter, based on data collected through the above mentioned European research consortium, proposes to clarify this innovative concept of quest migrants, arguing it can encompass the migration trajectories motivated by lifestyle rather than economic factors (McIntyre 2011; O'Reilly and Benson 2009) as well as the quest for well-being (spiritual or existential). By relating the concept of quest migrants to other migrant categories which were created to explore similar trajectories, I will first show its capability to encompass these different categories and to nuance the category of lifestyle migration. Next I will give some contextual elements concerning the French presence, I will indicate the methodology used to collect the data, and I will describe the different migration trajectories of the French interviewed. Then I will explain how my analysis led me to create and propose the new and original category of 'quest migrants'.

Quest migrant: an all-encompassing category

If some other migrant categories have been developed to throw light on similar phenomena, the quest migrant category has the advantage of being fully-inclusive, which is not the case of the other categories. The *mobile lifestyle migrants with Bohemian aspirations* Korpela (2009) met in Varanasi, the *global nomads* D'Andrea (2007) followed between Spain and India, the *existential amenity migrants* discovered in Pucon (Chile) by Hidalgo and Zunino (this volume), the *seek refuges* depicted by Hoey in rural Northern Michigan (2009), the *spiritual migrants* established in the Canadian Rockies highlighted by Locke (2006) and the *spiritual* and *hedonistic-expressive expatriates* interviewed by Giguère (2010) in Rishikesh and Goa (India) can all be defined as quest migrants. On the contrary, the French quest migrants I met in Morocco are not all committed to a spiritual quest or bohemian ideal (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). As I will argue in this chapter, this category also helps refine the lifestyle migrant category by introducing a significant distinction: if lifestyle migration can be defined as an escape *from* somewhere and something, while simultaneously an escape *to* self-fulfillment (Benson and O'Reilly 2009), a distinction has to be made between the different meanings given by migrants to this self-fulfillment: are they looking to *live* better or to *feel* better? As we will see later on, the specificity of quest migrants' narratives can be found in a common search for well-being made possible through a quest for 'elsewhereness'.

Some contextual items concerning the French presence in Morocco

In the present context, when Moroccan emigration to Europe is drawing the attention of media and the academic world, it seems necessary to recall that Morocco was a country of immigration in the early twentieth century. From 1912 to 1956, the centre of Morocco was under French protectorate, the North and South under Spanish protectorate. In that colonial era, a lot of Europeans (particularly French and Spanish) started to migrate to Morocco. The settlement of French people in Morocco grew steadily during the whole colonial period. In 1955, the year before Morocco gained its independence, it was the reverse: departures started to outweigh arrivals. When Morocco became independent, more and more Moroccans were appointed in the administration, which urged a good many French people to leave. In the 1960s, departures slowed down (Cassaigne 1964), but in the early 1970s they again gained momentum when more and more agricultural lands became Moroccan (which put an end to the last remnants of the colonial period) and Arabic became the language used for teaching in schools.

Since the end of the protectorate, the relations between France and Morocco have been based on cultural, scientific and technical cooperation (Picod-Kinany 2010). Various bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries in such domains as development, tourism, the tax system and laws concerning the family. It is also worth mentioning that France is the first customer and the first supplier of Morocco and ranks first industrially and commercially with more than 1,000 French firms and 520 subsidiaries presently in Morocco (Picod-Kinany 2010). All these historical, economic, and political reasons explain why the French presence in Morocco is still fairly important today. According to the website of the French Embassy in Morocco, over 42,000 French people reside in Morocco², mostly in Casablanca and Rabat. It is the most important foreign presence, followed by the Spanish. And yet very few researchers in social sciences focus on this contemporary French presence.

It is rather easy to summarize the contemporary works on French migration. In Germany,

Petermann and Escher (this volume) revealed the neo-colonial paradise of French migrants in Marrakech. In France, Picod-Kinany (2010) in her PhD thesis in sociology dealt with European migration to Morocco, and more particularly French migrants. In Morocco, Bousta (2007) made a connection between tourism and migration in the case of residential tourists settled in Marrakech and the work of Mohamed Berriane (2010) focuses on the new migratory dynamics and specifically, in recent years, on the European migration to Morocco. Our study within the framework of the European research project dealing with transnational links in the Franco-Moroccan space (Virkama *et al.* 2012) has contributed to an exploratory description of various courses of migration taken by the French in Morocco. In my PhD thesis in anthropology (Therrien 2012, 2009) I studied the migration and identity trajectory of foreigners in mixed couples living in Morocco; 10 out of 31 couples in the sample were Franco-Moroccan. As far as we know, it is the only research tackling French contemporary migration to Morocco.

Research methodology

For the initial European research consortium on transnationalism we (the Moroccan team) did semi-structured interviews in different cities (Fez, Meknes, Rabat, Casablanca, Mrirt, El Hajeb, Temara, and Karia Ba Mohamed) with sixty French persons³ and twenty-one Moroccan returnees. A year later (in 2010), we collected the life stories of twenty one of them during a second phase of the research. My personal reflection about quest migrants emerged at the end of this research. The analysis of the collected interviews from a new viewpoint has made it possible to create this new category of quest migrants. I selected ten out of the sixty French interviewees (five men and five women) corresponding to the category of quest migrants. We had only mentioned them in the research report for the consortium (Therrien and Harrami 2010), so I went more deeply into the biographical analysis to grasp the reasons why I had created such a category. To what extent and how were the quest migrants different from the others? What were the points these various migrants had in common whose motivations first looked so diverse? These are some of the questions which structure this chapter.

I would like to emphasize the importance of the narrative approach which gave rise to this new concept of quest migrants. The narrative approach 'is now seen as one of the fundamental ways in which humans organize their understanding of the world' (Cortazzi 2001:1). Life stories give the possibility to grasp the meaning each person gives to his or her course of life while a close relationship is created between the researcher and the interviewee. Without that trusting relationship and the freedom of expression made possible by the narrative approach, I could not have had access to some essential biographical elements whose analysis gave birth to the concept of quest migrants.

The migration trajectories of French people

For the majority of French interviewees, the departure for Morocco had been stimulated by a professional challenge, either with an expatriate contract⁴, a local job or a plan to create a business. Morocco offers a lot of financial and fiscal advantages to foreign investors, which enables them to create a company at low cost with limited expenses. Work conditions and regulations which are not as restrictive and stressful as they are in France attract businessmen, too. For some young French people, their mobility to Morocco was connected with a training period and consequently regarded as an experience likely to give them a professional opportunity to fit into the international job-market. We therefore met some of them who, after

a training period, were working in local or international organizations. The Mediterranean climate, the gap between the standards of living in France and Morocco and the fiscal advantages offered to foreign senior citizens are the main motivations for retired French people as they know they can afford a comfortable way of life in Morocco. However, it is important to be careful about the category of retired people because the collected empirical data confirm what O'Reilly (2007) noted in her study on the British in Spain, where many of those officially retired people were working or engaged in informal labour activities. Marriage was also a ground for migration in some cases. Some French people had followed their French spouse for the time of their contract as expatriates. The fact of being in a mixed couple had also been a stimulant for many of them to go and live with their spouse in Morocco. Some trajectories can be considered as following the history of family migration. We met some people born in Morocco of French migrants, who had grown up in Morocco, then had lived in France for some time as adults, and were back in Morocco.

To feel better, not to live better

A characteristic of all the migration trajectories followed by these French people can be summed up in the search for a better quality of life and/or a strong desire for 'elsewhere'. If in their stories the quest for a better life goes with a kind of weariness due to the social, economic, political climate in France, 'elsewhere' refers to a desire to live an experience out of their element (synonymous with adventure and exoticism for some, and with 'otherness' and/or a possibility to live in another way for others). What makes the peculiarity of quest migrants is precisely the combination of these various elements. If for most French people settled in Morocco the motivation for migration mixes the search for a better quality of life with the desire for an exotic change of scene, the migration trajectory of quest migrants would rather sound like a quest for 'otherness' and/or a possibility to exist differently. In their case, the improvement of their quality of life is not the motivation for their migration, but it follows from their quest for 'elsewhereness'⁵. Their priority is not to settle in an environment likely to allow them 'to live better', but to live an experience expected to make them 'feel better'.

Unlike the majority of the French migrants interviewed, quest migrants do not assess this better quality of life according to the climate, the acquisition of social capital, or a better standard of living. They appreciate their life in Morocco because it corresponds to the meaning given to their migration, which is the pursuit of a quest. Moreover it is important to specify that over half of the quest migrants were living in Morocco in modest conditions and some had a professional and economic situation relatively more stable and comfortable in France than in Morocco. They were ready to live 'worse' in order to feel 'better'.

Some parallels between quest migrants and travellers' trajectories

In her thesis about western expatriates settled in India, Nadia Giguère (2010) identified the main motivations for departure mentioned in travel literature. The Canadian anthropologist rightly stresses that travellers' motivations (personal quest, search for differences and desire to transform one's identity) are not dealt with in the writings about migration which focus on social motives and collective efforts to achieve a migration project rather than on migrants' motives and individual trajectories. This thesis allowed me to draw parallels between the quest migrants' trajectories and those of travellers.

A migration trajectory stimulated by an inner quest

The first parallel we can draw is due to the fact that both migrants and travellers pursue a quest. The analysis of the quest migrants' narratives shows that their accounts were structured around an idea of an inner quest.

'I was in a kind of quest (...) not spiritual, but (...) I was somehow in search of something else, in quest for the Orient on different levels: philosophic, human, political and artistic.'

(Benjamin)⁶

Beyond his plan to improve his interpretation of Arabic music, Benjamin wanted to escape in order to live a life that did not suit him anymore. Another biographical approach from Elizabeth also reveals that, beyond her project of a 'salon de thé', Elizabeth pursued the dream to live in a colonial house, symbolically related for her to the quest of a family identity:

'In fact, the choice of the house (...) it was to give life again to what I imagined about my grandparents. I ensured the continuation of the family (...) which I didn't know in France, since I have no true roots as my mother was of mixed origin. My biological father is not my father (...). My biological father was mixed, too, as his mother was born in Pondichéry (...) I am the pure product of French colonies. (...) When you have mixed origins, you have no sense of belonging. You are neither eastern, nor western, and anyway, even when you wish for a perfect integration, it is not possible. Or at least it is rather exceptional. And you are always in search of your origin. So that's that, that's right. It is the reconciliation between myself and the past.'

(Elizabeth)

The search for her origin and the desire for a symbolic reconciliation with the colonial past of her grandparents (both on her father's and her mother's side) express the quest for identity of this particular French woman who feels *no sense of belonging*.

The idea of a quest also appears in the choice of a narrative vocabulary which gives them the possibility to represent the immaterial aspect of their migration trajectory and which reflects the feeling of an inner call they had to follow. These quest migrants mention 'a call', 'progress', 'chance', 'destiny', or 'intuition'. In some cases the stories look like initiation rites. For example, Benjamin begins the story of his departure as follows:

'I don't even remember which day I left. At one point I had to go. Anyway I was already in a kind of void, travelling, socially disconnected. So, at one point, after a beer or something else, well, I had to go. (...) I think I went to Bure as an activist against burying nuclear waste, then I went to the Drôme to play eastern music, I found myself in the Cevennes for a fortnight, bathing naked in the Tarnon, then in a medieval village with a shaman, then I walked on the road to Compostelle, and after that I found myself in Fez. It was a sort of initiatory transition.'

(Benjamin)

Sara, who spent over ten years travelling round the world before settling in Morocco, regards destiny and intuition as the driving force of her mobility:

‘I was predestined to travel whatever might happen, it’s what I wanted, and nothing else. My mother knew that quite well, so she never tried to keep me back, she said: anyway I could not stop you. I go where I feel I have to be. It’s very simple. When I feel I have completed all that I had in one place, another place calls me automatically, it’s out of my control, it’s like that. It’s my feeling. I finish what I was doing, and I start something else.’

(Sara)

Aïcha, a French Muslim convert and member of a Sufi fraternity located in France, explains her departure to Morocco as part of her spiritual progression:

‘I always say that, in fact, I follow my master. Wherever he goes, I follow him. (...) In a way I was prepared for that, for a spiritual life. Since I was a child, I used to speak to God. (...) Man proposes and God disposes. We can propose, we can say I will be this, I will be that, but (...) it’s God who decides.’

(Aïcha)

She came to Morocco with some members of her fraternity during the Festival of World Sacred music in Fez, and then she met a man and settled in Morocco.

‘I met a man (...) that’s it, a man from Fez, and then (...) we got married. We can say that things are made concrete through marriage. Because in a way, I feel my life is in Morocco more than in France.’

(Aïcha)

Unlike spiritual expatriates (Giguère 2010) who were attracted by the myth of India and pursued a quest for a spiritual experience (an inner transformation), Aïcha was a Muslim convert and member of a Sufi fraternity before going to Morocco. If she decided to live in Morocco several months per year⁷, it is because settling in Morocco and getting married allow her to feel closer to God in her everyday life. Her quest does not mean a search for an inner space, but a desire to fulfil herself as a Muslim every day.

These three narratives present migration as the answer to an inner call: ‘I had to go, I follow my master, another place called me.’ By following such a road, they were guided from one place to another which led them to Morocco, mostly in search of a kind of ‘elsewhereness’ which seemed to be required for the pursuit of their quest.

‘Elsewhereness’ as a central element of the quest

When we analyze the common elements in these different quests, we can see all of them are rooted in a kind of ‘elsewhereness’. This ‘elsewhereness’, indispensable for the quest, allows them to be in harmony with an inner call. For the vast majority of these migrants, it meets their desire for ‘otherness’ and their need to exist in another way. Although they did not come to Morocco by chance (all these migrants mentioned some ties established with the

country before settling), it is important to point out that it is not Morocco alone, but 'elsewhereness' that offered them the possibility to live their quest.

An experience of 'otherness'

Although a predisposition to mobility seems to be relatively common in the trajectory of the French individuals we met in Morocco (Therrien and Harrami 2010), quest migrants' specificity is actually to be found in their motivation for an 'elsewhere'. Just like travellers, what they search for is not a comfortable life in different scenery - as desired by a lot of French people we met in Morocco - but an experience of 'otherness'. By looking back on their migration trajectory, several of them explained it by their keen eagerness for cultural differences and intersubjective encounters. Through 'otherness' what these quest migrants seek is also to be confronted with themselves:

'Maybe I wished to discover something else. To raise questions about myself too, about religion as I said before, a sort of introspection. When you are elsewhere, it is easier to see yourself.'

(Aurélien)

The 'Other' as a reflection of oneself seems indispensable for the quest. As in the case of travellers, to keep their distance from their usual reference marks makes it possible for them to be in contact with other people, but also with their own selves. This desire to question themselves in contact with cultural differences is probably not to be separated from an attraction to some forms of spirituality evoking a kind of 'otherness'. Nathalie did yoga, Sara had joined Buddhism, Benjamin, Aïcha and Aurelien had found their way in Sufism (two were members of a fraternity, and two were Muslim converts). For Father Etienne, a Franciscan priest, 'otherness' was integrated in his project to announce peace. By sharing his daily life with Muslims, he was confronted with his own religion and led to discover that 'the relation of believers to religion is the same for everyone'.

Other signs of this desire for 'otherness' appear in the language and places of residence of these migrants. Unlike the large majority of French people who do not speak, or hardly speak, dialectal Arabic and think it is of no use to them, nearly all the quest migrants really want to have a good command of that language. I realized during the fieldwork that the quest migrants of Fez knew each other because they had attended the same lessons of dialectal Arabic given by one of them. The fact that six of them lived in medinas and Benjamin had built an adobe house in a small village was related, in the narratives, to their wish to meet local people. Unlike the migrants Giguère (2010) met in India, who define themselves as expatriates and live in touristic border-zones, the quest migrants dissociated themselves from 'the yellow number plates'⁸, that category which, for them and for Moroccans, refer to individuals 'living in a bubble', in reference to the headline of Fetcher's article (2007). When they stand out from expatriates, 'those French people in SUVs who don't give a damn, want to get money and ask themselves if they will have the possibility to go to New York or Madrid next year' (Benjamin), what these migrants emphasize is their different relations with the 'others'. They are not in Morocco for money, a status, or adventure. Most of them really experienced genuine encounters with local people. Benjamin could speak dialectal Arabic, some of his best friends were members of the Sufi fraternity he had joined as a musician; Elisabeth had been elected in the local elections of her area; Father Etienne's religious community was

located within modest surroundings where he was in permanent contact with Moroccans; Aurelien and Nathalie were in a mixed couple and had close relations with their in-laws; Sara was continuously visiting far-away rural communities in order to find hosting families for her enterprise of responsible tourism; Aïcha felt more comfortable in the practising Muslim community. The desire of a genuine encounter with local people is clearly one of the major points that makes quest migrants different from other French lifestyle migrants who, as I could notice through my observations⁹, are rather in a social configuration of keeping to themselves.

A distance to exist in a different way

As it is related in travel literature, the impression of distance when one is far away from his/her familiar references, offers a possibility for an identity transformation. The quest migrants declare that their migration to Morocco allowed them ‘to start afresh on new bases, to start a new life, at last to be acknowledged, to give a meaning to daily life, to explore a new style of being’. In their point of view, ‘elsewhereness’ gives them the possibility to exist differently. They explain their feeling of well-being through this identity transformation. Benjamin’s narrative is a good example:

‘To live with Moroccans enables you to escape from your own culture in a certain way. It allows you to get out of those particular circles operating around you when you are with people of your own culture. You enter into another culture so you can build yourself again... (...) I have quite frankly found a place where I feel better (...) and moreover with the possibility to re-create myself, to consider myself, to exist in a new different way.’

(Benjamin)

His immersion in Morocco has transformed him, even in his body language. It is striking to see that, when he speaks with a Moroccan, all his body is transformed, his hands start dancing, he becomes very expressive, whereas, when he speaks to a French person, he drops his hands and his body language becomes more discrete. If Benjamin says he feels better in Morocco, it is because ‘elsewhereness’ (i.e. Morocco when we met him, but it could be anywhere, except in France) enabled him to start afresh to build his life on new bases, with a new way of seeing himself, and so feeling as if he had re-built his identity.

A closer analysis of the accounts shows that ‘elsewhereness’ allows quest migrants to distance themselves and be transformed, giving them a sense of improved well-being. For Guillaume, his project in Morocco brings him ‘an inner peace, a balance, some reasons for getting up in the morning, acting, doing things in a positive way’. Benjamin talks about a ‘blossoming experience, relief and relaxation’. Elizabeth is ‘reconciled with herself’, Aïcha tells of her ‘true reason for living’, Sara mentions her ‘inner development’, for Sandra and Aurelien it was ‘a new start’. This search for an improved well-being can certainly be related to a sense of weariness before their migration, as mentioned in several interviews.

‘I came to Morocco for very personal reasons. A kind of weariness with life which was not necessarily linked to France, it was rather a problem with myself. I needed to go away, far away, alone, to progress in myself, in my life, in my choices, to find out who I am.’

(Guillaume)

Sandra, who had lost her father and her husband in a car crash and had no more contact with her son after a conflict, explains her migration to Morocco as a means to escape from painful memories:

‘We cannot forget our pain, we cannot forget our life, or the past, but with a certain distance, even if we miss different things, it is less difficult, less heavy to bear. It’s a new start (...) a little less difficult.’

(Sandra)

So the analysis of collected data shows that quest migrants and travellers have common interests: a personal quest (which in the case of the quest migrants refers to a quest for well-being), a desire to experience cultural ‘otherness’ and a need to transform one’s identity. However their trajectories are different on some points. While travellers come back home at the end of their journeys, quest migrants have no plan to return and, in addition, they have considerably modified their representations of home.

Absence of plans to return and uncertainty about a definitive settlement

It is striking to see that only one of the 10 quest migrants had moved to Morocco with the intention to return to France, which is not the case of French expatriates and trainees since their stay in Morocco is a temporary step in their trajectory. It is easy to see the connection between their weariness with life in France and the absence of plans to return. Sandra who escaped her painful past, as already mentioned, had absolutely no intention of going back to France. Nathalie went to Morocco to live with the man she loves, but she says she could have made the decision to live out of France if she had not met him. In France she felt she had not found her place.

‘I was living a life that did not suit me; that did not correspond to me. That’s why I made a big bet on my departure for Morocco where I could achieve something both personal and professional.’

(Nathalie)

France did not suit neither Benjamin, Guillaume nor Sara who felt a gap between their way of living and thinking and some cultural references shared by most French people:

‘Professionally I cannot manage. I cannot find my place. I love my country, my relatives and my friends are over there, I like the language, I like the culture, I like all that. But I could not live there the whole year, no. I am much closer to all that is (...) the Indian mentality, or let’s say eastern mentality, not eastern (...) all that is Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on, and in France, the way of thinking, working, living.’

(Sara)

So the absence of plans to return is intrinsically related to the motivation for their departure: breaking off social and family networks, professional difficulty to find their place, cultural incompatibility. It is relevant to mention that life stories reveal that most quest migrants, just like other French migrants interviewed for our research, had gone through a hardship some time before their migration: divorce or separation, expropriation, redundancy, economic difficulties, bereavement, etc. As pointed out by Hoey (2009), Lifestyle migrants relocate at seemingly turning points in their lives. For a majority of quest migrants a return to France did not make sense because they did not feel they had really left France. As they were free to

travel and maintained transnational ties (Glick-Schiller *et al.* 1996) with France and create new attachment bonds in Morocco, several considered they had two homes. Just like some other contemporary migrants, quest migrants felt as if they had several homes. Nevertheless, the absence of an idea of return is not due only to their desire to escape a life that no longer suited them, to their transnational lifestyle and to the possibility to have a pluri-local home (Lucas and Purkayastha 2007), but also to their identity transformation related to their experience of 'elsewhereness'. If the quest migrants did not wish to return to France, it is because their experiences of mobility and migration had considerably transformed their representations of home.

A feeling of home connected with well-being

First of all, their feeling of home, in accordance with their inner quest, was linked to something immaterial (spiritual or existential). This feeling of home was connected with the impression of being in accordance with their inner project:

'It's an inner feeling which is difficult to describe. It is not a place, it is not a period. Rather such moments of life that at a certain moment, if you are where you must be, you feel at home.'

(Sara)

'I consider my homeland is more inside me. (...) There is a saying by Saint Augustin you probably know: My God, I searched for you outside for a long time and I did not see you. Then one day I came back home and you were waiting for me. (...) Our homeland is the same for every man whether he is Muslim, Christian, or atheist. It is not here. If there is a passage, it is here, not just Morocco, but the whole earth. I deeply feel I am in God's hand.'

(Etienne).

If all of them told me they felt at home in Morocco it is because their representations of home were connected with that sense of personal fulfilment they said they had encountered through their migration.

'I had not definitely decided to settle in Morocco for ever. I knew I wanted to stay for a long time, but the gradual sense of home came by steps. As your network of friends grows larger, as your house is being built, as your professional situation gets more steady and stable, after some time you look back and you say: It is here I want to be. All that I have built as a man, I have built it here. That journey which was likely to last one year turned out to be a complete course of life.'

(Benjamin)

When Benjamin states all that he has built in his life as a man was built in Morocco, in fact he does not really mean his professional life, as he had left a stable job as director of a music school and a comfortable life in France. What he has built or re-built in Morocco gives him a feeling of home in this country, and this is his own identity, a more suitable identity, which gives him a positive social image. Some of them also associated their feeling of home with France, but rather in terms of memories and emotional ties. Even though they defined themselves as French (Virkama *et al.* 2012) these quest migrants did not connect their home to a national territory. It should be mentioned that some of them had a stronger feeling of home in Morocco than in France.

‘In France, it is I who found myself different. In France in fact I did not feel (...) at home. I have never felt at home in France, I think. My experiences of life in other countries made me deeply realize that in my heritage, in my past lives, I must have got a sense of things that was much more eastern than western.’

(Guillaume)

Aïcha, who had strong ties with France through her fraternity, felt more at home in Morocco because she could more easily and completely practice her faith in a Muslim environment.

‘Why do I feel more at home here than in France? Well, listen, it is true that when you are in a Muslim country, maybe you can feel fulfilled much more easily, you see. When you are in France, it is more difficult for a Muslim. (...) I mean a French Muslim convert (...) in fact Islam is misunderstood most of the time. (...) Whereas here you really live it.’

(Aïcha)

It is important to point out that, if they had no plans to return to France, they had no plans to settle definitively in Morocco. At the time of our meeting, they all told me they felt good living in Morocco (for some, better than living in France). They might one day want to leave, but they would not return in France. As pointed out by Korpela (2009: 22): ‘The ideal location is always somewhere far away from one’s country of origin’. As I mentioned before, it is not Morocco in itself, but ‘elsewhereness’ that offered them the possibility to live their quest. For them, to give up that ‘elsewhereness’ would mean giving up the essence of their quest.

These representations of home connected with a strong desire of ‘elsewhereness’ is confirmed by the answers quest migrants gave me about the place of an imagined funeral. Since some did not feel at home in France and some felt they had several homes, it is not surprising that it was far from evident for them to consider being buried in France. Cremation was more often mentioned than burial because it may take place anywhere and in more the one place:

‘In Morocco, in France (...) in another place, if in the next ten years I live a very strong experience in another country, it might be there, I don’t mind.’

(Benjamin)

‘It’s not a definite place. For that too, it’s a question of feeling. A place where I’ll feel well.’

(Aurélien)

What is meaningful concerning their answers about the imagined burial place is again this persistence of ‘elsewhereness’. The excerpts of interviews show that the nomadic aspect is intrinsic to the quest migrants’ life. However such mobility is not a specific feature limited to quest migrants. It has been underlined that the course of life of several French migrants

interviewed was often a set of experiments with mobility. The specific characteristic of quest migrants, another time, has to be found in the sense they give to this 'elsewhereness' which refers to a feeling of well-being.

Conclusion

Since the existing migration categories do not reflect the trajectories of some French migrants interviewed during a study on transnationalism carried out in several different countries, the analysis of their narratives led me to create a particular category, the 'quest migrants'. In this chapter, I claimed that the specificity of these migrants' narratives is to link the improvement of their quality of life with their quest for well-being and not, unlike the majority of the other French lifestyle migrants I met, in accordance with a better standard of living, a new lifestyle or an exotic change of scenery. Comparing their trajectories with those of travellers allowed me to point out that their nomadic way of life is connected to a personal quest, not so much for living but for *feeling* better, rooted in a kind of 'elsewhereness' where they can live in accordance with their inner call (their quest) and, essentially, exist differently. However, I also argue that some significant differences exist between the trajectory of travellers and those of quest migrants: though travellers return home after their experience of otherness, for the French quest migrants' a return to France is not even considered. First, because they connect their feeling of well-being with their experience of 'elsewhereness' and then, because their experience of otherness has considerably transformed their identity and therefore their representations of home. In conclusion, the quest migrant category, thanks to its inclusive and all-encompassing quality and the fine shading it contributes to lifestyle migration studies, can shed new light on the field of lifestyle migrations.

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1 Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism' (TRANS-NET), a three-year cross-country study of transnationalism funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Research Programme in Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities.

2 It is important to specify that this is an approximate number. Our fieldwork shows that French lifestyle migrants are not necessarily registered at the Consulate, which was the case of several quest migrants interviewed.

3 In this text the word 'French' refers to people of French origin. The Moroccan migrants who have adopted French nationality and the French natives of Moroccan origin (second generation) are not included in that category. As concerns Moroccan authorities, anyone on Moroccan territory who has Moroccan nationality (even the binationals) is considered Moroccan.

4 French administration considers expatriates are all the French living abroad, whereas in Morocco, expatriation corresponds to a particular status: They are people working for France in Morocco (teachers, diplomats, people working for French cultural services or enterprises, etc.) with an expatriate limited contract. Most of them had applied for a position in other countries, but they were sent to Morocco. Many French teachers have a resident or local contract. They are not expatriates and do not get comparable pay and benefits as such.

5 Whereas the word 'Elsewhere' is used as a noun referring to an actual place, the neologism 'Elsewhereness' is rather an abstract notion which makes it possible to approach the different motives for migration in the case of lifestyle migrants in general and that of quest migrants in particular.

6 All the extracts of interviews have been translated from French into English.

7 Aïcha is still officially residing in France where she gets a RMI benefit (income support), which allows her to live as a painter. She lives in Morocco with a tourist status for several months per year.

8 The number plates of foreign diplomats' cars on the Moroccan territory are yellow.

9 Canadian, I have been living in Morocco since 2001.