Objective

Spirit possession cults puzzle Western observers, particularly when they appear in supposedly secular urban environments. Muslim migrants from North Africa, seeking to establish new lives in Southern Europe, have to negotiate the continuity of such ritual practices with the constraints and expectations imposed on them by their new social contexts. But the legitimacy of these cults is contested also in their homeland, where they face increasing pressures by religious fundamentalism. Space and its organization, especially in urban settings, play an important part in these disputes. In Morocco, spirits are thought to reside in particular places, such as tombs, sanctuaries, or street corners. How do possession cults continue to be practiced when spirits’ spaces of residence have to be abandoned or undergo demolition? This
research compares the continuities and ruptures in cult performances as the spaces that host them are affected by both forced displacement and voluntary diasporic migration. I will observe the resettlement of a slum in Casablanca, and compare it with two Southern European neighborhoods where Moroccan practitioners of spirit cults struggle to maintain their specific version of Islam in multicultural, post-colonial and post-secular urban settings, exposed to disruptive processes such as gentrification. By applying an ethnographic methodology to comparative urbanism, I aim to shed light on how different spatial transformations affect ritual performances that are meant to protect communities from social disintegration. I argue that different urban policies on both sides of the Mediterranean mutually reinforce, resulting in an overall transformation of cultural practices in transnational communities. Examining how migrants adapt localized ritual practices such as spirit possession cults to increasingly transient urban settings, furthers our understanding of the spatial and cultural dimensions that enable or prevent integration.

**Fields of science**

- medical and health sciences > clinical medicine > psychiatry
- humanities > philosophy, ethics and religion > religions > islam
- social sciences > sociology > anthropology > social anthropology
- social sciences > sociology > ideologies
- social sciences > sociology > demography > human migrations

**Programme(s)**

- H2020-EU.1.3. - EXCELLENT SCIENCE - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
- H2020-EU.1.3.2. - Nurturing excellence by means of cross-border and cross-sector mobility

**Topic(s)**

- MSCA-IF-2016 - Individual Fellowships

**Call for proposal**

- H2020-MSCA-IF-2016

See other projects for this call
**Funding Scheme**

**MSCA-IF-GF - Global Fellowships**

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Activity type

Higher or Secondary Education Establishments

Links

Contact the organisation  Website  Participation in EU R&I programmes  HORIZON collaboration network

Other funding

€ 0,00

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**Partners (1)**

**PARTNER  **

**PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE**

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Other funding

€ 172 130,40

EC signature date 17 March 2017
Last update: 23 August 2022

Permalink: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/752547

European Union, 2023