



**Khalid Madhi.- *Urban Restructuring. Power and Capitalism in the Tourist City. Contested Terrains of Marrakesh* (London: Routledge Studies in Urbanism and the City, 2019), (Riccardo Rotini) 206p.**

Madhi Khalid's book, *Urban Restructuring, Power and Capitalism in the Tourist City* (Routledge Studies in Urbanism and the City), published by Taylor and Francis in 2020, is presented as an anthology on the urban transformation of Marrakech in recent times. The author does an important job of analysing the many and varied aspects of the city of Marrakech, defined in its title as a Touristic City, dwelling on the examination of

the balance between economic and political, urban and suburban powers.

The book surprises positively for two main reasons. The first is the attempt at a comprehensive work that seeks to encompass both the macro phenomena already analysed by the various researchers (Marrakech's intangible heritage, the gentrification of the Medina, etc.) and the various aspects linked to them: the dissemination that the local media provide of the city of Marrakech, the narrative created by the real estate agencies and the numerous interviews that the author reports on the conception of the red city. The second aspect that emerges is undoubtedly the degree of capillary knowledge of the city, its institutions and the external agents that operate there. Between the author and the urban space, the object of the analysis, a clear and assiduous relationship is created that leaves no room for misunderstanding; the organisations, bodies and actors that have participated in this exceptional urban transformation are indicated.

Madhi Khalidi provides an English-language work, departing from the usual francophony when it comes to Morocco, analysing the link between the city of Marrakech and the tourist sector and showing the social and economic fallout in the former imperial capital of Morocco. Through an interdisciplinary approach that ranges from geography to sociology to economics and history, he guides us in a careful reading of what has led to Marrakech becoming, in his opinion, a "laboratory for the development of new modalities of government, social control and political domination." From this quotation we can see that the author also explores aspects that go beyond the city's now overt gentrification, highlighting two main factors linked to it: social control and power relations within the city.

The author speaks about social control, refers to the material level of surveillance and then dwells on a more general type of control to which the economic aspect is closely connected and to which he dedicates the first two chapters of the book: "Institutional control: state/market interactions" and "Ideological control: (re) branding the city."

The first chapter places the Moroccan royal administration as a central political subject in the urban transformation of Marrakech and the antithesis of the volume becomes the neo-liberal approach of the Moroccan government towards the global market. The Moroccan government's openness and capitalist extraction of foreign capital linked to

tourism, according to Madhi Khalid, dictates the line of Marrakech's positioning within a globalised world and its (re)branding at the expense of the local population.

The second chapter starts from this last assertion to demonstrate how the phenomenon of tourism, narrated as the only economic possibility for the city through the patrimonialisation of its heritage and the creation of a luxury market for westerners (festivals, etc...), has led to an idea of the city completely detached from the reality that today has somehow become truly real: the narrative carried out to promote tourism in Marrakech has contributed to the redefinition of a city that is now tourist-based.

The following three chapters deal with the observation of the spill-over into urban planning of what the author has previously explained. He analyses the urban transformation and the social mechanisms, describing the various aspects of the division between the space destined for the western world, increasingly emerging in the city of Marrakech, and the local population, explaining how the latter is completely excluded from any decision-making process.

An example of the analysis carried out by the Moroccan researcher is the chapter devoted to the world of housing in Marrakech: the distinction between public and private space within neighbourhoods has always been a fundamental characteristic capable of guaranteeing a social proximity for every city of Arab/Islamic matrix which today, especially in the Medina of Marrakech, has been definitively compromised by gentrification and the transformation of the riads into tourist accommodation. All this is happening at the same time as new neighbourhoods are being created where real estate ads, despite the Arabic writing, feature images of Western families on the posters. The author transports us with his words into the contradictions and madness of Marrakech's new urban redefinition.

The book concludes with an attempt to identify an alternative to the dynamics of urban transformation in Marrakech. Madhi Khalid reports, through his numerous interviews, the local population's discontent and opposing stances with respect to the "Touristic City" even though it is clearly visible that the city today still wants its transformation into a European metropolis.

Of all the material focusing on contemporary urbanism in Marrakech, this work is certainly the most recent and comprehensive found in English. Madhi Khalid has been able to examine every aspect that links the economic system to the urbanism of Marrakech, always putting in the foreground the social effects of this link. The dense bibliography used by the author, ranging from the great twentieth-century classics to the most recent works on the city of Marrakech, Moroccan cities and Western cities, makes it possible to observe the city from several points of view and to contextualise it in the global processes underway.

A fundamental work to approach the study of today's Marrakech and the practices linked to the tourism "machine." The volume, created by the author during his collaboration with the University of Chicago, demonstrates once again the scientific avant-garde of the latter, especially when it comes to sociology and urbanism, and the great potential of the author Madhi Khalid.

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