



Everyday postcolonial continuities within the trans-Mediterranean migration: From colonial to subversive socio-spatial practices in Algeria

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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial Scholarship in migration studies has highlighted how North-South transnational dynamics perpetuate colonial regimes of power. Focusing mostly on transnational spaces that shared a recent colonial past in the Anglo-Saxon context, they identified forms of socio-spatial segregation of the Other grounded on the colonial imagination of the imagined geographies in the South. Privileged migrants enclose themselves in comfort bubbles (Smiley 2010), moving across the “network of expatriates clubs” (Kunz 2018) without encountering the Other, or minimalizing it to instrumental relationships. However, some Scholars showed that transnational dynamics can become a deactivator of the colonial imagination, favouring a fracture in the colonial imagination embodied in intermediate or “subversive” forms of social production (Leonard 2010; Beck 2021).

The present work, from a “Mediterranean Thinking” perspective (Zapata-Barrero 2020), contribute to de-centre the postcolonial literature bringing data from the trans-Mediterranean migration of Spaniards to Northern Algeria ranged between 2006 and 2016. From their daily life experiences, I analyse how the colonial imagination of the imagined “Other Moor” designs their socio-spatial production to identify to what extent, the trans-Mediterranean experience reinforces or fractures their colonial imagination. The results show that, even in the absence of a recent colonial past, the colonial imagination of the contemporary Spanish expatriates reinforces the colonial segregation of the “Other Moor”. Nevertheless, “subversive” narratives point out the creation of hybrid spaces where more symmetric relationships produce a fracture in the colonial imagination favouring slightly forms of “socio-cultural integration” (Kunz 2022).

1. Introduction

In recent decades, postcolonial studies have addressed the mobility regimes carried out by privileged actors from the North to the Global South. Postcolonialism is understood as a way to explain the deconstruction and reconstruction of the hierarchies and schemas of power between societies that are positioned in a world system as centre and periphery. Particularly related to imperial countries and colonies or ex-colonies, serving to attribute a structural inferiority based on race, gender (Fechter and Walsh 2010, 1204) culture, history or religion. In this imagined geography of the world, the colonial imagination is the envisioning of the “colonised lands and people made by the colonisers”, where “the West defined itself against the colonial “Other” (Korpela 2010, 1299).

Whereas the bulk of this Anglo and (Euro)centric literature (Fernández Parrilla 2018; Zapata-Barrero 2020) has focused on the Anglo-Saxon-Southern space, the geographical focus of the present

qualitative research is the global Mediterranean “where international and regional forces are intertwined in multiple threads” (Ribas-Mateos 2005). It contributes to the “Mediterranean Thinking” approach, positioning the Mediterranean region in the migration studies agenda attending to the diversity of cultures that grounds the Mediterranean identity (Zapata-Barrero 2020). This region connecting three continents and mainstream societies in the past includes Spain in the Southern Mediterranean Europe (which is not part of the privileged countries of northern Europe), and Algeria, a country of the Global South located in Northern Africa, the Maghreb. From the “Med-thinking” vision, the Mediterranean region operates as an articulator of the “Mediterranean culture” (Zapata-Barrero 2020: 2) in which Whiteness, understood as the “dominant Anglo ethnicity” (Shaw 2011), loses its explicative power to explain colonial relations and othering processes, both of which are built upon cultural differences instead.

Focussing on the transnational space articulated upon the Spain-Algeria-Morocco regions without sharing a recent colonial past, the

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colonial imagination has been forged in domestic Orientalism (López García 2016), which developed as an alternative to Anglo-Saxon Orientalism (Said, 1979). Both types of Orientalism share the characteristics attributed to the Oriental Other, or in this scenario, to the “Other Moor”, which homogenises individuals from several origins and regions, regardless of whether they are Muslims or not. The vision of the Moors in Spain has evolved depending on political interests from the Moors as friends of the regime, or as an enemy, for instance, after the end of the Muslim empire in Spain (De Larramendi 2001; Martín Corrales, 2004). Recently, the “Moors” have acquired new traits due to the last decade wave of international extremist terrorism, the link between irregular immigration and security made by the nation-states, and/or debates on immigrants’ integration in the Spanish society. In sum, the domestic Orientalism has forged the colonial imagination that operates in the othering process, in which the main marker is not race, but cultural difference. Scholars from cultural studies have analysed alterity processes related to immigration in Spain, whereas the postcolonial lens has been relegated to the study of the literature and arts legacy. In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon literature has highlighted that in the era of global coloniality (Mignolo 2002), transnational mobilities perpetuate the “coloniality of power” (Hayes and Pérez-Gañán 2017, 117) at a macro, micro and local scale with or without colonial past.

In this article, I argue that the colonial imagination operates between societies in which there is no recent colonial past, although relations of political and economic exchange exist within the framework of the prevailing global economic system. Based on the trans-Mediterranean mobility of Spaniards towards Algeria between 2006 and 2016, I will disentangle the influence of the colonial imagination articulated upon the cultural difference on the design and implementation of their transnational project from the “Mediterranean thinking” approach.

Postcolonial Scholars have pointed out that colonial imagination influences the settlement strategies of privileged migrants in the South (Fabbiano 2016; Smiley 2013), by avoiding the contact with the Other and performing a colonial use of the space. Settlement becomes an enclosure for expatriates’ in “bubbles” or “enclaves” where although they encounter the Other, there is no “intimacy”. Instead, Whiteness is reproduced in clubs, international hotels or in the streets. I analyse the space-making and local mobility strategies by focusing on the social production in the household sphere, the work sphere and the public space in Northern Algeria, including the patterns to traverse such spatiality’s avoiding cultureness within the expatriate bubble. Thus, this theoretical approach opens the way for analysing everyday racism based on cultureness derived from the cultural difference as a core marker in the colonial imagination of the Spaniards, instead of race in the shape of Whiteness, because not every expatriate fit in the Anglo White racial category (Shaw 2011). Cultureness refers here to the cultural differences imagined within a common cultural identity, such as the Mediterranean Identity (Zapata-Barrero 2020). Cultureness is modulated and shaped depending on the geographical context and the encounters with the other, who shares the Mediterranean identity, but who seeks the imagined difference to maintain colonial hierarchies of power.

Nevertheless, as some Scholars have pointed out, whether the majority of expatriates settle in the “bubble”, other contemporary expatriates perform “subversive” socio-spatial relations, configuring “hybrid” spaces after fracturing their colonial imagination. The break out the bubble by some Spaniards is grounded on “cultural mobility” (Beck 2021) that involves othering processes based on real contact instead of the colonial imagination. In this vein, I argue that transnational dynamics can become a deactivator of the previous colonial imagination, favouring the emergence of intercultural spaces where more symmetric relations can take place.

Last but not least, determining the category of analysis to study Spaniard’s socio-spatial strategies required a reflexive process (Dahinden et al. 2021) to avoid groupism (Brubaker, 2004) and the possible reproduction of neo-colonial reasoning (Schinkel 2018). At the beginning of this research, in 2012, an exploratory fieldwork revealed that the

trans-Mediterranean mobility of Spaniards to Northern Algeria was labour motivated. In Algeria, the cities of Oran and Algiers have become globalising cities in an emerging economy built on the profits stemming from oil and gas exports, invested to some extent in the reconstruction of the country since year 2000 (Cabezón-Fernández and Sempere Souvannavong 2015). It is important to note that the transnationalisation of Spanish companies promoted firstly, the increase in the mobility of highly-skilled “corporative expatriates”. It refers to those who move across national borders to work either in managerial positions in transnational companies, in the marketing sector to develop the culture of consumerism (consumerist elite), or in political institutions as globalising bureaucrats, thereby configuring the transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 2000; Robinson and Harris, 2000). They moved with advantageous bonus plans without traveling more than five hours from home, which made Algeria look as “El Dorado”. In addition, diplomats and staff of the Cervantes Institute, with a long tradition in Oran, and a few accompanying partners (usually women) perceived Algeria as a place in which to grow professionally. Finally, I also identified the movement of businessmen from different sectors, such as construction and infrastructures, who expanded their business towards the Algerian market. Nevertheless, the economic downturn transformed the vision of Algeria as an opportunity to increase profits, to the last opportunity to surf the economic and social consequences of the crisis, being 2012 and 2013 the years of mayor constraints in Spain (Cabezón-Fernández and Sempere Souvannavong 2021). Then, corporative expatriates and the other profiles became precarised migrants.

In line with postcolonial authors, the classic expatriate category is not operative for analysing the reality of people under precarious conditions who embarked on labour mobility. Instead, I stand reflexively on the category of contemporary expatriate (Fechter and Walsh 2010) which “comprises a range of motivations, skill levels and temporary movements”. They perform “different forms of mobility” according to their uncertainties regarding the future, and they often “do not have a clear idea of when or whether they will return”: some decide to settle whereas others remain mobile. Moreover, those who move to the South often built their own identity in contrast to the identity of the “Other”; “differentiated by race, class, nationality, occupation and profession”. As a result, a contemporary expatriate is a category “firmly linked to the realities of global power relations and inequality” (Leonard 2010; Kunz 2016; 2020). In contrast to expatriate mobilities within privileged spaces, regimes of mobility of contemporary expatriates are shaped by the “politics of mobility” (Cresswell, 2010). Mobility within the Hispanic-Algerian region is managed by visa requirements, as the European Economic Community imposed them on Spain in 1985 as a condition for its acceptance to manage migration from the Maghreb region, as this country was considered the “gateway of Africa into Europe” (Cabezón-Fernández et al. 2021).

The next two sections review the core aspects of the colonial imagination shaped by the domestic Orientalism in the Mediterranean region, and how the socio-spatial segregation has been theorized in the postcolonial approach. Afterwards, a brief description of the methodological toolkit implemented is presented, followed by the analysis of the socio-spatial production and local mobility within the contemporary Spanish expatriates’ bubbles. The goal is to identify postcolonial continuities, and to show whether or not the colonial imagination fractures due to the transnational experience because “space- and place-making are on-going endeavours, movements can always be re-directed and contested identities such as the ‘expatriate’ are shifting and open for re-negotiation” (Kunz 2018,115).

2. Bringing the “Domestic Orientalism” to Postcolonial studies on migrations

Postcolonial studies (Bhabha 1994; Said 1979) have addressed the processes of domination and dominated cultures in the past, it’s influence at present and the new forms of colonialism due to the expansion of

the capitalist system through globalisation. The hierarchisation of cultures is the starting point for shaping the colonial imagination towards the “Other”. This theoretical approach has been implemented to analyse the major effects of colonial processes promoted from the centre (Europe) to the periphery (Africa, Latin America, and Asia) from the world-system approach. The Anglo-Saxon literature has taken over scientific production, focusing on the dynamics of the British towards Asia, and to a lesser extent, towards Africa and the USA studies as well. From them, Whiteness is understood as “multiply expressed amalgams or relations of racialized empowerment” “and ethnicity and its association with Anglo ethnicity” (Shaw 2011).

When analysing postcolonial processes involving the Occident and the Orient, Orientalism (Said 1979) is a corpus of knowledge created by the imperial Europe of the nineteenth century to justify the processes of colonisation, to reproduce the dominant culture and to construct the identity of the “Other” from the outside, based on the linkage between knowledge and power. The Orient is a generalisation of several expressions of the “Orient” in the same way that “Occident” comprises countries from the Anglo-Saxon, French and Latin culture. In this sense, within the Mediterranean region, Spain developed its interpretation of Orientalism due to the particular relationship between Spain and Islam, in which Spain was “a place that was orientalisating and colonising (at the same time it was Orientalised)”. This complex and “ambivalent situation” created “disoriented postcolonialities” (Fernández Parrilla 2018, 229). In this context, the marker upon which the colonial imagination was (and is) articulated is the cultural difference(s) instead of Whiteness, within the Mediterranean identity (Zapata-Barrero 2020).

The colonial discourse is the mental portray of “the peoples of the colonised world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves” (Young 2003, 2). Nevertheless, the colonial imagination of the “Oriental Other” in Spanish Orientalism (Tofiño-Quesada 2003) shares the assumption that the Orient is essentially monolithic, with an unchanging history, while the Occident is dynamic, with an active history. In addition, the Orient and the Orientals are regarded as passive, non-participatory subjects of study (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 2001, 64). Similarly, the view of the Moors in Spain has been built upon the same stereotypes and prejudices (De Larramendi 2001; Mateo Dieste 2017). They that have been forged for decades of sharing spaces in Spain until the Reconquista (Re-conquest) commanded by the Catholic Kings, and later, from the historical bilateral relations between Spain, Morocco and Algeria until present. In particular, within the Hispanic-Algerian region, in the sixteenth century, the north-west region of Algeria, comprising the *wilaya* of the current Oran, was part of the Spanish kingdom and it continued to be part of Spain for almost two centuries. Nevertheless, this colonial period of history remains forgotten by Spaniards, whereas in Oran there are still historical reminiscences of their “colonial memories” (Aixelà-Cabrè 2019) and architectural patrimony. Much closer is the period when, under the colonial regime that France established in Algeria, thousands of Spaniards moved to Algeria to work in agriculture and other services due to the need of a labour force to work in the “colony”. Later, the exiles of the Spanish Civil War would renew the North-South migration flow (Bautista Vilar 1989; 2007). Since the year 2000, Algeria has become “El Dorado” (Fabbiano 2016) for transnational companies and individuals for labour reasons.

In line with postcolonial scholars, I argue that transnational migrations have become a trigger for the spread of the colonial power through the transnationalisation of the colonial imaginations towards the Global South, at a macro and micro level. Upon the colonial imagination based on the cultural difference, practices of socio-spatial segregation have been identified. British and Singaporean migrants living in China (Willis and Yeoh 2002), essentialise the cultural traits of an “imagined” China avoiding the “contact zones” where they may encounter the Other (Benson and O’Reilly 2018). In the Mediterranean region, those who were interviewed by Peraldi and Terrazoni (2016) imagine the Other Moroccan such as “incompetents” at work, and “negligent” upon the essentialization of their “poor society” (Peraldi and Terrazoni 2016,

78). Even remaining in the country for fifteen years could not change the colonial imagination as pointed out by Bolzman et al. (2021). The retired European migrants studied maintained the social and “hierarchical” distance in Morocco, even having lost some of their colonial privileges due to “a paradox of postcolonial precariousness”, acquiring a better quality of life in Morocco when their life became precarious in Europe. In Algeria, European expatriates share some of traits of the colonial imagination towards the Other Moroccan. The majority of the expatriates in Fabbiano’s work (2016) describe Algeria as “one dirty country, disorganized, poor, respectful towards women, intolerant and aggressive due violence” (Fabbiano 2016, 23). However, the findings also shown that depending on the breadth of the experience the colonial imagination could be fractured.

The literature has demonstrated that settlement strategies are designed upon the colonial imagination and, similarly, have an influence on its possible fractures. So, this paper pursues to contribute to de-centre the postcolonial production by analysing how the trans-Mediterranean experience of Spaniards in Northern Algeria influences the re-enforcement or deactivation of the colonial imagination.

2.1. Colonial imagination, and socio-spatial segregation in the globalising South

Space-making dynamics of expatriates have been approached from several theoretical lenses, highlighting that socio-spatial segregation is the result of a continuum of practices to avoid “the gaze” of the Other culturally different. Space is “always under construction, continuously being made and never finished” (Pierce 2011, 59) but refurbished by the colonial imagination, race, gender and religion. Yeoh and Willis (2002; 2005) have focused their early research on the Singaporean and British transmigrants in China. The scholars present the same representation of “expatriates’ enclaves” as segregated spaces, as regards to residential areas and “shopping, education and leisure possibilities” (Willis and Yeoh 2002, 558). They use the conceptualisation of “contact zone” where the main trend is the “tendency to ignore their “co-presence” with others in a place” that can be built as “psychological and physical barricades, or by maintaining distance in ways reminiscent of colonial cultural strategies” (Yeoh and Willis 2005, 270-282). In the same proposition, Postcolonial Scholarship have largely focused on the British expatriates’ dynamics to Dubai (Walsh 2015; 2018; Coles and Walsh 2010), and also on Europeans to Hong Kong (Leonard 2010; 2016) and Indonesia (Fechter 2007). Walsh (2015) analyses the ways of “(be) longing” within the expatriate bubbles as segregated city spaces built upon “selective consumption practices in which they choose specific bars, restaurants or cafes”; upon “their own institutional practices, with British clubs and societies available for business networking, sports and hobbies” and in segregated spaces such as “exclusive gated communities and distinct residential neighbourhoods in which migrants often live” (Walsh 2015, 246). This “network of expatriates clubs” (Kunz 2018, 114) and leisure practices reveals the imagined enclosure structured by boundaries of Whiteness, class and gender, that they actively construct, maintain and negotiate (Fechter 2007). Expatriates’ enclaves, bubbles or cages metaphors represent enclosed socio-spatial patterns of exclusion of the other imagined culture, by segregating spaces of fear and spaces of comfort.

In the African continent, Smiley (2010) analyses the space-making exclusion of European expatriates in Dar es Salaam structured upon the binary categories of “familiar/unfamiliar, safe/unsafe, and comfortable/uncomfortable” (Smiley 2010, 28). In Senegal, Madagascar and Benin, the French academic expatriates settle in the international neighbourhoods co-habiting with the high-class locals that usually work in the same companies, and particularly, in the pole of attraction of the Research Institute for Development (IRD) (Quashie 2022), while some French academic expatriates in Morocco (Quashie 2022) experiment a “cultural mobility” depending on their knowledge of the culture and traditions of the country (Beck 2021, 77). Bredeloup and Gois (2016) highlighted

several North-South flows indicating that countries in Africa are becoming “El Dorado” to some expatriates or “settlers”, whereas, for others, they are a way to overcome the economic downturn. Kunz (2022) goes a step further reflecting about the integration of expatriates in Nairobi, and showing integration means cultural immersion. Usually, depending on the perspective on social mobility within the country, integration will play an instrumental role that could promote integrated or “unintegrated modalities of living in” (Kunz 2022, 1908).

Gender and socio-spatial production in North-South dynamics have been approached by Lundström (2013) analysing the “temporary expatriate wife status” in Singapore, whereas Fechter (2007) have studied the gender hierarchies reproduced through the expatriation of the husband and the “trailing spouses” in Jakarta. Some of these women “feel trapped in a golden cage” (in Kunz 2016, 93) due to their social networks being dependent on the relations established by the husband in the work sphere. They feel isolated and enclosed in the physical and mentally space created in the minds of expatriates, the so-called “Western bubble” (Fechter 2016). Ortiz Guitart and Mendoza (2007) worked on Spanish female accompanying partners in Mexico. They concentrated on the decision-making process and the hierarchies of gender-related power which are involved in the transnational dynamics behind a move to Mexico. Terms such as “ghetto”, “mini bubble” or “crystal jail” are present in the discourses of these women to refer to a “colony” (Mendoza et al. 2016). Spanish expatriates in the Republic of Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Morocco feel a major necessity to build “expatriates enclaves” due the cultural difference in comparison with those Spaniards living in other countries in which the “cultural distance” is less (Cabello and Manso 2022).

As such, the article contributes to a growing literature on bringing a case study where the privileged migrants have become precarised, and where cultural difference(s) become the centre mark of the colonial imagination instead of Whiteness in the Mediterranean region. From this point on, I analyse the colonial relations and uses of the space from the everyday practices of contemporary Spanish expatriates in Northern Algeria.

3. Methodological considerations

Considering that the goals of this research were to analyse the daily life practices of contemporary Spanish expatriates in Northern Algeria, to identify the postcolonial continuities reproduced towards the “Algerian Other” in the trans-Mediterranean migrations, methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) was avoided in consonance with Scholars who proposed Methodological transnationalism (Amelina 2010) and methodological cosmopolitanism (Amelina and Faist 2012; Beck and Grande 2010) to address the dynamics of population interlocking in global and local spaces.

From the mobility turn, Büscher et al. (2010) collect several “mobile methods” as different ways to capture, track, simulate, mimic and shadow the many and interdependent forms of intermittent movement of people, images, information and objects. Mobile methods range from the mobile ethnography “observing people’s movement” to “social positioning methods”, where the researcher could choose to follow the subjects or participate face-to-face, walking with or “participating-while-interviewing” (Büscher et al. 2010, 7-10). With regard to the present study, due to the lack of previous background regarding Spaniards profiles and transnational strategies between Algeria and Spain, the design of a methodology to follow the contemporary expatriates (as “objects”), and which allowed me to participate while interviewing, seemed a valid approach to shed light on their everyday strategies

(Fig. 1).

The methodology was developed by performing multi-sited fieldwork¹ in several cities in Spain (Alicante, Murcia); in Oran (Algeria), and via Skype in June 2016. As such, the fieldwork was conducted between 2012 and 2016, and the range of experiences gathered ranged from 2005 to 2016. This wide timeframe allowed me to trace the evolution and transformation of the dynamics studied during the period selected.

A total of 73 in-depth interviews were conducted to Spaniards who had lived for at least, two months in Algeria due to work reasons. They were approached firstly through LinkedIn and through the snowball technique. Interviews were recorded (including explicit consent), transcribed, and categorised according to three main topics: decision making process, transnational trajectories, and otherness process from everyday practices, the subject of this paper. Emergent categories throughout the fieldwork were included, as well as the review of the literature to explain the findings.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in their habitual contexts and participating in leisure activities provided a broader view of their trans-Mediterranean experiences. The participant observation performed in Algeria, sought to share time with participants to understand their narratives, practices and the space-making dynamics in Northern Algeria at the expatriates’ network enclaves along homes, workplaces, international hotels and airports. The qualitative data was gathered in the fieldwork diary and analysed later.

A second set of interviews was conducted on-line via Skype to diversify the origin of the Spaniards (from Madrid, Seville, Valencia and Tudela) and the place of their experiences in Algeria (Blida and Algiers); and to deepen the look into the experience of the female accompanying partners.

A general overview of the participants showed that the majority of the sample population were men between the ages of 30 and 60, while women (ages 30 to 50) usually moved as accompanying partners, although a few moved for work reasons. The four major profiles were: businessmen, civil servants (diplomats and Cervantes Institute employees), corporative expatriates and accompanying partners (civil servants and corporative expatriates usually commanded French and not Arabic) (Cabezón-Fernández and Sempere Souvannavong 2021).

It is noteworthy to mention that, performing fieldwork following the contemporary expatriates across the Algerian space, facilitated the communication process between the researcher and the participants due to the sensitiveness provoked when speaking about the othering process. Such possible issues were reflected in the early stages of fieldwork design, that lead us to tackle a reflexive perspective following the feminist and de-colonial geographers’ statements reviewed by Sultana (2007), being aware and reflecting on “self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process, and researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation” (Sultana 2007, 376). In performing this complex exercise, the participants were engaged in the process of knowledge-production by being clear about the goals of the fieldwork, and by positioning myself as a facilitator of the process to co-reflect about their day-to-day in or in (between) Northern Algeria and Spain to come close to the ideal of “scientific validity” (Caretta and Riaño 2016).

As fieldwork is a process of bi-directional communication, as young female researcher I had to manage participants markers related to gender and age, as the phenomenon analysed involved mostly men. The fact of being a young female researcher resulted in paternity feelings of the men (related to the protection of a white female against the Other Algerian), curiosity about why they were of interest as research subjects, and/or positions of equality through empathy.

¹ The fieldwork performed Face-to-Face in Algeria was conducted in several short stays due to the lack of funding. For this reason, the methodology implemented was not considered as an ethnography. Stays in 2012 (exploratory interviews), May/October 2013, July 2014, May/June of 2016.

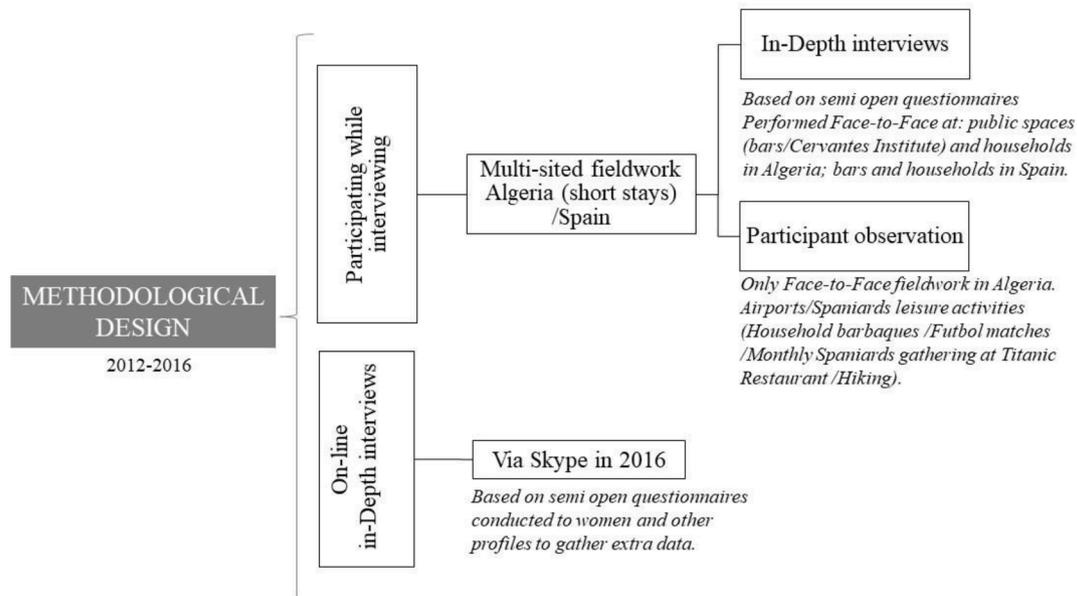


Fig. 1. Methodology toolkit. Source: Created by the author.

4. Designing a trans-Mediterranean experience under the influence of the imagined Other Algerian

Before establishing an everyday life in Northern Algeria, contemporary Spanish Expatriates design their migratory strategy. In the decision-making process, two variables are key: the colonial imagination and the work conditions (Cabezón-Fernández and Sempere Souvannavong 2021). Whereas the bulk of the interviewees were unaware about the Algerian culture, the fact of being a Maghreb country triggered the colonial imagination of the “Other Moor” learned through the historical relations between Spain, Morocco, and Algeria and, the image widespread by the Spanish media in relation with the Moroccan immigration into Spain. Insecurity, gender inequality, cultural difference, religion and the supposed “under subdevelopment” of its society and services (such as education, health assistance) (Peraldi and Terrazoni 2016; Fabbiano 2016) are considered while first deciding the mobility/(im) mobility strategy to follow within the household, and later, in their socio-spatial practices in the globalising Algerian cities.

Intertwined with the imagined Algeria and the colonial imagination, Spaniards work conditions determine the temporality in the settlement strategies in Algeria. For instance, corporative expatriates had travel expenses covered, whereas businessmen needed to ask for a visa each time they move (unless they had settled their business in Algeria, as some of them had done). In addition, cities such as Alicante, Madrid, or Barcelona have regular flights every day, whereas other cities are lesser well-connected. These differences due to work conditions will promote more or less quality contact with the Algerian other (Fabbiano 2016; Beck 2021).

To better reflect on the diverse possible effects of these two variables on socio-spatial segregation, I will refer to their particular profiles whereas all them comprise the contemporary Spanish expatriate.

5. Socio-spatial segregation in the South: The “expatriates’ golden jail” in globalising Oran

5.1. Routines inside the bubble. Social practices and public boundaries

Marta lived in Algiers from 2006 to 2015. She describes the early moments of her stay in Algeria and the “bubble rupture” moment as follows:

The first months were very hard, it is a country that you either love or hate, there is no middle ground. [It was] Very hard [...] but there came a day when I said: ‘this will not overwhelm me!’ To live in a bubble like a lot of Spanish people do, then say: ‘it’s over! I have to get on the street, I have to integrate, I have to learn the language and I have to live with the Algerians’, and that I did. I started going to a French language course with older women, learning to read and to write. And I thought that if these women could do it, so could I. And so, I started to get involved in the day to day. I left the chauffeur behind and I started taking the bus and taxis, being lost and seeing yourself forced to ask [to the locals]. First, I had a period of adaptation, learning to be able to handle myself. I did not want to take a person all day with me, I wanted my independence. To learn the language, the numbers of buses, to survive. [...] You live in a bubble, very protected, and that’s not the reality, you have to get lost, you have to rip, for me it is normal. (Marta, accompanying partner, first expatriation in Algeria in 2006).

Pau is a corporative expatriate in Algiers who moves back and forth, spending most weekends in Spain with his partner. Pau explains how life in Algiers was when he moved in comparison with other cities in Algeria as well as the facilities Algeria offered (or not) for those who move with their families:

I live in a flat. At first, I was three weeks in a hotel, but I get tired of hotels. [...]. It is ten minutes from the office by car, which is important in Algiers. We bought a company car and I move freely without a chauffeur. If we talk about a traditional family, the children can be in international schools, but the woman or who stays at home, whether male or female, has nothing to do, you do not know where to go, there are no leisure options in the ‘expatriates’ golden jail’. The foreign family members I have seen are limited to dinners at home with friends or in the Spanish colony adding activities of the French Institute, it is not a life integrated in the country; it is integrated in the colony. Not being there this weekend softens it enough and does not force you to deeper integration. Stay from Monday to Thursday and go home. In straight line Barcelona is 238 km from Algiers, this is closer to Algiers than Madrid. That distance is lesser than when I was in Madrid, when I was going to Barcelona once a month. Here psychologically, you have to stay or change your attitude in an important way or it is hard (Pau, in Algiers since 2014).

Finally, Alejandro, an entrepreneur who arrived in Algeria in 2009, (interviewed in May 2016) mentions that “We [Spaniards] are colonisers. The ones who come along and say ... ‘here I am’ ... you have to come with a plan, with goals and without thinking that you are not going to integrate”.

From these excerpts from one corporative expatriate, one accompanying partner and one businessman, we can start to sketch out how contemporary Spanish expatriates organise their daily practices in the early stages of being in Algeria. Their life takes place within the boundaries of the “bubble” or, as Pau calls it, an “expatriates’ golden jail”. This “imagination of enclosure” (Kunz 2018) of the comfort space (material and immaterial) intertwines the household sphere, the work sphere, and the public space where they transit from one sphere to another, or to the “expatriate enclaves” (Yeoh and Willis 2002; Lundström 2013) (see Fig. 2).

The household is the major comfort space, where those Spaniards employed spend lesser time. Having a job is the main motivation for starting a transnational experience in Algeria and, as such, all efforts are geared towards that goal as we could observe in Paus’ verbatim. Corporative expatriates and civil servants usually have two days off, whereas for entrepreneurs, leisure time will depend on their volume of work. Thus, the time spent in Northern Algeria is considered as time to work, not to rest, and so do is the household sphere.

However, the accompanying partners experienced a different situation as it is shown in Marta’s discourse. Most of them moved while unemployed in Spain. Nevertheless, their relegation to the household sphere increased their feeling of isolation, as they did not have social networks, even when some of them had relation with housekeepers (Fechter 2007; Ortiz Guitart and Mendoza 2007; Lundström 2013; Kunz 2016). When the struggle in the bubble is unbearable, some of them, such as Marta, later decided to work in small paid jobs at cultural institutes, through the Spanish social capital accumulated as part of the expatriates’ community. In contrast, women in charge of children decided not follow this strategy because of their perception of being the household caregivers. From their point of view, international kindergartens are scarce in Algeria, and the local supply is perceived as “non-appropriate” for their children (from the cultural deficit perspective) (Peraldi and Terrazzoni 2016). Similarly, to expatriates binary thinking in Dar es Salaam (Smiley 2010), the narrative from women about motherhood in Algeria agrees, with most assuming they will move to Spain to have their children instead of remaining in Algeria due to the “differences in schooling and health system”. Nevertheless, the activities involving the kids represent the gateway for establishing relationships with people from other sectors, who are different from the individuals that her husband was in touch with, most of whom came from his work sphere and, the infrastructure and construction sector (Beaverstock 2005; Willis and Yeoh 2005).

“Invisible” mobility through the public space

For those women and men moving through the public sphere, it represents the possibility to encounter the unknown “Other”, but also, to confront the fears about ‘being lost’, using public transport and public or private “clandestine” taxi service as Marta mentions. Mobility becomes an intensifier of insecurity in their daily life when commuting to work and other personal errands. Here, contemporary Spanish expatriates’ insecurity refers to “fear the unknown, the uncomfortable, and the unfamiliar, especially in language, culture, and atmosphere” (Smiley 2010) in the imagined North Algeria. To overcome this boundary, being driven around by a chauffeur is a way of remaining in the bubble. While moving through the public spaces of the city without catching the attention of the Algerians due to their cultureness even when the space is felt to be secure (Guitart and Mendoza 2007; Kunz 2016). In this sense, “the city itself were traversed in the comfort and isolation of their husband’s chauffeur-driven cars, while social ‘conversations’ were transacted over transnational space, through phone calls” (Yeoh and Willis 2005). Though chauffeurs, like housekeepers, represent some of the first trustworthy Algerians in their immediate surroundings, they also

represent a “shadow” (Shutt in Meier 2015; Fechter 2005), watching and hearing everything is said, and perceived sometimes as a constraint to their freedom, or “independence” in Marta’s terms.

Traversing the cities of Oran or Algiers means going around the “no-go areas”, or in other terms, places which require specific modifications to their behaviour to navigate them successfully’ (Walsh 2015, 244) where to avoid “fear” to feel “comfort” (Smiley 2013). Regular areas become “no-go areas” for women after eight p.m. At this time, foreign women feel less comfortable in the public space unless they are accompanied by a male colleague. In this vein, Luisa, a corporative expatriate with her family in Oran, says: “I miss cafeterias and terraces, there are no terraces for women, there are no [leisure] options from home to work. As soon as the night falls”. But more intense feelings were described about the cannot do practices in the public space, such as practicing sports, particularly by women due to their feeling of cultureness exposure and the operating colonial imagination about gender perspective in Muslim countries.

Luisa’s quote drives as to talk about space-making and mobility related to leisure activities. Even though Spaniards in Algeria dedicate little time to leisure, it represents another moment of postcolonial reproduction. Spaniards tend to establish social networks among other Spaniards and Westerners to feel part of the international community, avoiding Algerians to reduce the possible misunderstandings related to gastronomy, gender dimension or the Ramadan period. Leisure time is regularly spent in the network of expatriates’ bars (Kunz 2018) or “meeting places” (Beaverstock 2005), for instance, the private beaches where contemporary Spanish expatriates feel “at home” in summer. In this regard, Alfredo and Elena, corporative expatriate and accompanying partner talk about comfort related to culture (Smiley 2011): “There are public beaches where you do not see bikinis and you do not feel comfortable, so in the end you do not go. On private beaches you pay and you have everything, it is as if you were in another country: motorcycles, music... We make jokes about whether it is like being in Ibiza”. Other expatriates’ enclaves are a few pubs of the international hotels, cafeterias where to reduce their “nostalgia” (Yeoh and Willis 2005) and restaurants, such as the “Thursdays at Titanic Restaurant” in Oran, where regulars and newcomers get together to meet Spaniards.

Nevertheless, for contemporary expatriates employed, daily routines are designed around work and home, as Pau described. Leisure is seen as a kind of privilege which they prefer to spend in the company of family or friends in Spain, instead of spending their spare time with other contemporary expatriates in Algeria. These routines are intensified in those corporative expatriates who work in lower positions in construction sector. They usually perform six working days and one day off (Saturdays), in which they have lunch with colleagues from the same building, watching movies, speaking with family and friends over the Internet or playing video games.

Work sphere: encountering different Algerian Others

Socio-spatial production regarding the “Other” is directly influenced by labour hierarchies and the colonial imagination in the work sphere, where contact increase mainly in the case of corporative expatriates (Yeoh and Willis 2005; Meier 2015; Leonard 2016). Algerians work position in transnational companies vary with fewer of them in higher positions (mostly in the infrastructure sector) (Legget 2010), whereas in the construction sector, most of the Algerians occupy on-site jobs. Just as in the historical articulation of the “Other Moor” in Spain, the recreation of the Other Algerian varies depending on these hierarchical structures, such as: an “instrumental” Algerian (as the housekeeper or the chauffeur), (Leonard 2010); the subordinate Algerian (to whom to apply the traditional Moor stereotypes); or the “Algerian person of trust” or “amigo”, someone who deals with the Algerian Administration handling paperwork. In this case, the “Algerian Other” upward to a dominance position over the Spaniards, due to their administrative need. Negotiations with the administration representatives becomes a shared conflictive element in the discourse of the Spaniards, who usually criticize the Algerian state system. At this point, entrepreneurs increase

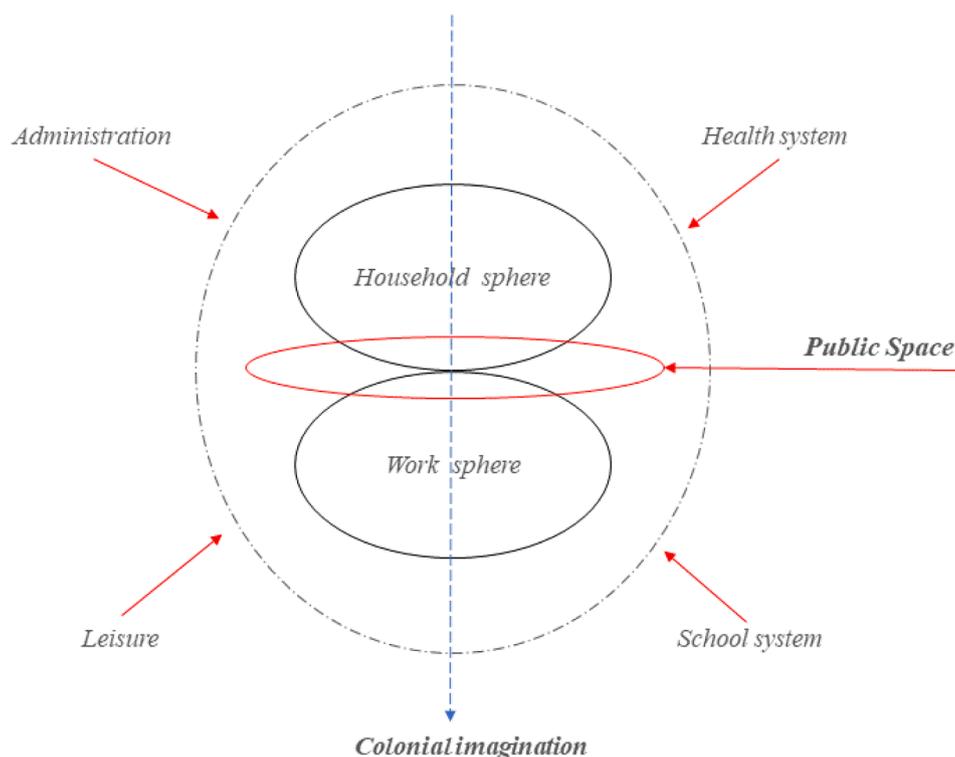


Fig. 2. Contemporary Spanish expatriates bubble representation.

their social networks with Algerians, not least due to the fact that they have Algerian clients, and also Algerian business partners². Businessman and corporative expatriates usually hire an Algerian as an administrator to be the first point of contact with Algerian clients or Administration staff. They seek to enrol the “Algerian Spanish” those Algerians who have previous working experience in Spain and command of Spanish, becoming the Algerian to be trusted as Andrés explains next:

The Algerians who had contractors worked mainly as drivers. Inexperienced people were hired to do basic work in a chain, this did not matter because what they wanted was to teach them. The most important thing is that they were trustworthy. These Algerians were contracted with a Spanish contract (before having the company), because they had had the Spanish resident permit, had worked here and also spoke Spanish. These people were hired as managers.

Corporative expatriates, entrepreneurs and civil servants transit more “contact zones” with Algerians due to their labour relations, but “intimacy” (Lundström 2013; Kunz 2016) remains inexistent. In general, the Spaniards often state that establishing personal relationships is difficult based on their perception of cultural differences (Korpela 2010), which at some point produces tensions which becomes an evasive boundary for Spanish contemporary expatriates.

5.2. Colonial imagination and postcolonial continuities in the daily-life

Notwithstanding, Spaniards’ narratives have clear tones of colonial arguments based on the binary division of societies into Occident and Orient because of the long-shared history, in particular with Morocco, and the stereotyped vision of the “Moor”. This term is commonly used in Spain for those individuals who come from an Arab country, from Northern Africa, or/and for Muslims (Aixelà-Cabré, 2020; Neila Hernández, 2020). In this sense, a set of statements, prejudices and

stereotypes conform the vision of the Algerians as “Moors” which become the grounds of the colonial imagination reproduced by the Spaniards. Whereas the Spaniards’ discourse does not contain direct mentions of the Muslim/Arab or Orient as the cause of these cultural differences, from their discourses emerges the classical binary construction of the “Oriental Other” (Peraldi and Terrazzoni, 2016; Said, 1979). For instance, Damián, at sixty-one years of age, who embarked upon his first ever international posting in Oran, affirms that:

I think that they do not want to change. Only some people who have money want to. The pace of the city is very slow, they are not in a hurry, this is something that I don’t understand. I think they do not want other people coming here to help them. People do not want to work, they are usually absent, they do not have a routine or work obligations. They have an inferiority complex due to lack of education and ignorance, like the civil engineers who do not even know how to measure work. They want to work but do not know how and do not want to at the same time. They also think that the foreigner is an entrepreneur or worker who systematically has a lot of money.

Andrea, moved to Northern Algeria and after a while, she started to collaborate with the Cervantes Institute. She married an Algerian man and few years later, they moved to Andreas’s place of origin in Spain due to her pregnancy. Her vision of the Algerian society is slightly different:

They consider that as the country has gas, they do not need to work. In Algeria there is practically no industry, everything is imported and agriculture has been largely lost as rural people have had to move to the cities. The men feels doubly frustrated because it is assumed that men have to have social status and that is only given by work (or, in my opinion, contacts), and since he does not work, he experiences anxiety and very high frustration.

The “Algerian Other” is defined as a lazy worker who tries to avoid doing his job because he³ feels “*fatigué*” (tired). This image mainly

² A foreigner cannot be the owner of the 100% of a company. An Algerian partner should have at least 40% of the ownership.

³ “He” because they usually refer to Algerian men.

applies to those who work in the construction sector in lower-responsibility positions. Contemporary Spanish expatriates in general affirm that the Algerians are not educated to develop their lives by following a life plan of achievements and developments, unlike the usual education in Spain, which they express as “us”. In the rhetoric on job positions and the performance of tasks and daily job routines, the general trend mentioned is that Algerians “do not understand work like we do”. They attribute to the Algerians a lack of commitment to their jobs regarding timetables, working days, and wasted time between tasks or during breaks. This characteristic is proclaimed as a “cultural trait”, embodied in the statement “I will do it”, referring to some indeterminate moment in the future, which, for Spaniards, is a difficult trait to get used to, particularly when doing paperwork. Another trait posited is the lack of care for urban spaces, pointing to a lack of interest in maintaining these urban areas (Yeoh and Willis 2005).

Spaniards commonly explain these cultural divergences due to the recent past of Algeria, notably the War of Independence, the socialist government system after independence from France and the Civil War that started in 1989 and finished in 1999. To some degree, these events have influenced the character of the Algerians being “untruthful”, “suspicious”, “lazy”, “disorganised”, or “arrogant” (Mateo Dieste 2017), chiming with the vision of Orientals as inveterate liars, “lethargic and suspicious” used by Cromer in Said’s text (1979, 46), or in the historical vision in the Spanish Orientalism. Similar attitudes are shown in the research conducted by Yeoh and Willis (2002; 2005) about Singaporean and British transmigrants in China. One of the main results shows how cultural traits like “unacceptable social and personal habits” attributed to the Chinese population are explained by the influence of the Cultural Revolution in China. Addressing the discourses of the contemporary Spanish expatriates in this regard, they reproduce rhetoric containing contradictions. To the bulk of the interviewees, the traits of the “Other” are primarily the result of history centred in the war periods and socialist government. The fracture produced in Algerian society by the conflicts has had as a result the “suspicious” and “arrogant” traits. In contrast, the years of the socialist system, from the seventies to the nineties in Arab and/or Muslim countries like Lebanon or Egypt, produced the “laziness” of their societies due to the supply of basic consumer goods, housing, petrol and the like by the state. The main contradiction concerns Algerians’ desire to change the current situation of their country when they speak of the slow and chaotic functioning of the Administration, including the changing parameters linked with payments under the table, “in envelopes”, or the level of education. Whereas they express their thoughts on the impossibility of Algerians changing the system and their unwillingness to do so, they also say that some parts of the population want to carry out these changes, but do not have the knowledge to manage them.

When the contact among Algerians and Spaniards is severely limited, a bulk of the contemporary Spanish expatriates reproduce the rhetoric of the cultural difference based on gender and religion (Aixelà-Cabré 2020). Gemma an accompanying partner points to it: “Not all of them are jihadists, not all of them are from Daesh, and not all of them are terrorists, but here you are talking about Islam and it is talking about the bogeyman”. Several images of Algerian women are constructed in contraposition to the dominant role of Algerian men. Algerian women are depicted as dominated in the public sphere but playing a dominant role in the household space. In this regard, Spanish men’s discourses are vague due to limited contact, restricted to some work-related exchanges with administrative assistants or translators. The general vision is that Algerian women are committed to their jobs, more trustworthy than men. On the contrary, Spanish women are the most active when it comes to building assumptions on the subject, due to their contact with the housekeepers or kids-related activities involving Algerian women. Gemma avers: “It’s all a disguise!, because at home: I’m the one in charge, the one who controls the money, the one who does what I say and you keep quiet’. In all Algerian houses it’s the same, I assure you”. They describe as “surprising” the moments of questioning and

deconstruction of their own narratives after an experience with an Algerian woman. Marta, for instance, explains that “women are a box of surprises, because of course, you have an image of the submissive Arab, submissive to the husband, submissive to the brother, but not at all!”.

However, within all these traditional elements of the negative colonial vision of the “Moor”, we find a mixture of traits of the “Moor” as a friend, as someone who have positive traits, even missed to be found in the Spanish society. Some of the interviewees mention that the Algerian society is “generous” and “grateful” when they feel that they are treated as equals. Values associated to Muslim societies like the respect to the elderly members of the families, and the positive inclination to take care of children in any situation, are values admired from the Algerian society that are felt as lost in the Mediterranean culture, and in particular in the Spanish society.

5.2.1. Spaces in between and subversive narratives

Something we hear much less about from our interviewees is the creation of social production with locals “in-between” (Walsh 2015) or in hybrid spaces (Leonard 2010). Here I refer to the created spaces in which exchanges among social groups are less instrumental but intercultural reducing the socio-spatial segregation. Some contemporary expatriates reject the spatial and discursive/social segregation of those who do not abandon the bubble and live apart from the local society. Like Marta, who decided to start a French course with a women’s literacy group where most of the students were Algerian women. Other Spaniards have decided to establish “subversive practices” (Leonard 2010) through “cultural mobility” (Beck 2021) by establishing non-instrumental relationships with the Algerians. Raul is a corporative expatriate who moved from Barcelona to Oran at the end of 2015. At the time of the interview, in May 2016, he had signed up for a local rugby team and was attending the local university to learn French. In his rhetoric, he explains he spends some of his spare time with a few Spanish good friends, but he usually gets tired of their criticisms and complaints about the Algerian society:

I usually go to the hikes on Fridays to meet people, Algerian people of all ages, young and old. I usually meet a friend from Cervantes Institute to go running and sometimes the Algerian chauffeur I had at first, also runs with us. Now he runs his own rent a car. I attend to French lessons at USTO University. Before going to Oran, I was looking for a rugby team and I found a Facebook page of a group of people who gather in Oran to play. I approached for a couple of days until I decided to talk to them. Now, sometimes I play with them. I was a coach in my city and now, they want to organize a tournament and they are waiting for my availability. When I teach something, they thank me very much. Humility is fundamental.

Some contemporary expatriates perform these ‘transgressions’ (Kunz 2018) revealing that they prefer to go dancing or having a coffee with Algerian friends instead of being constantly with Spaniards. They connect the fact of being with the Spaniards with drinking and partying at night, a kind of leisure that does not suite to them, feeling observed and judged by the Spaniards enclosed in the bubble.

Some of these interviewees, affirm that they feel a more positive predisposition from the Algerians if compared to other nationalities, such as the Chinese. The bulk of the interviewees have heard the fact of the open Spanish consulates at the Civil War period, and recognise it as a trigger to the friendly Algerian feelings towards the Spaniards. In Oran, some of the contemporary expatriates involved in the infrastructure projects mention that the positive benefits of these projects in the city have increased the good perception towards the Spaniards. Furthermore, they affirm to feel culturally closer to the Algerians due to the shared Mediterranean cultural traits, in comparison with other nationalities a priori culturally closer, for instance Argentinians or Brazilians. David, after six years running his business in Oran and Alicante, avers that: “you acquire some of their traditions, and its normal, Alicante and Oran are like sister cities, similar urban geography, and shared history.

Here I found 'monas' in the street bakery, same as in my region in Spain for Eastern".

As shown in the research conducted by Beck (2021) in Morocco, or Leonard (2010) about British expatriates in Hong Kong, some expatriates like Cristina and Raul tend to "subvert dominant racialised positioning in their interactions" and "cling on the hybrid spaces of the institutions", trying to reduce the "colonial raced relations" by living a "normal life" (Leonard 2010, 1260).

6. Concluding remarks

Since the fieldwork was performed, the transnational arena between Spain and Algeria has suffered the effects of the Algerian economic crisis due to the increase of the prices of gas, the amelioration of the Spanish economy, and later, the effects the pandemic in 2020 and the following years till present. In this period, the transnational flow of contemporary Spanish expatriates has decreased but not disappeared, because of those who have settled their business in Northern Algeria. Nevertheless, it has been shown that the historical relations and migration flows between countries are constant (for instance, Benkaakaa and Sempere Souvannavong 2021), reinforcing the colonial imagination of the "Other Algerian". In this line of reasoning, the findings of this qualitative research conducted in the global Mediterranean (Ribas-Mateos 2005) demonstrate the usefulness of the postcolonial approach in migration studies to explain the neo-colonial regimes of dominance reproduced through transnational and mobility dynamics. However, from the lens of "Mediterranean thinking" (Zapata-Barrero 2020), some postcolonial categories formulated from the Anglo-Saxon literature should be discussed to catch up with the divergences of the colonial regimes reproduced in the Mediterranean migration system (involving less white and privileged regions within the centre-periphery schema), where other Domestic Orientalism (López García 2016) operates.

The examination of the everyday practices of the contemporary Spanish expatriates in Northern Algeria showed that the majority of the trans-Mediterranean experiences reproduced colonial relations and uses of the urban space. The findings of the present research have shown that the colonial imagination of the "Other Moor", based on stereotypes from the Orient even when a "colonial" past is long past, designs settlement strategies and everyday practices.

Within the public and the private spheres, and in their transit between them, cultural difference is avoided, and the instrumentalization of the "Other" (Leonard 2010) colonizes relationships. In the household sphere, the local "Other" is present in the Spaniards' intimacy but performing service jobs such as chauffeur, housekeeper, and other instrumental tasks. In the work sphere, instrumentalism appears by hiring locals to be administrative assistants to deal with the local administration and clients, to mention some of them. In the public sphere, the same instrumental motivations appear directly or indirectly, as the contact with locals is minimal. Shop assistants, taxi drivers, owners of small shops, or service staff of restaurants and international hotels are the individuals with whom the contemporary Spanish expatriates encounter the "Other". These relationships, lacking intimacy (Lundström 2013) are performed in the expatriates' bubbles, the culture zone where cultural difference is minimized, for example meeting in bars or private beaches in summer.

However, the results have also shown a minority of contemporary expatriates who, either profit from or have less exhaustive job conditions, and access to mobility, find the pressure of their enclosure in the bubble unbearable, which becomes a trigger for them to break out the imagined boundaries of the bubble. Such enclosure leads them to avoid hegemonic practices for "subversive" ones through cultural mobility (Beck 2021), such as establishing intimacy with the "Other" in hybrid spaces. In this sense, the trans-Mediterranean practice promotes a fracture in the colonial imagination towards the "Other" that could lead to lesser asymmetric and colonial relations which promote intercultural spaces instead of colonial bubbles shown in Fechter (2016), Beck (2021)

and other scholars mentioned along this work.

Fractures in the colonial imagination transferred to "subversive practices" could be key when reflecting on the integration of the privileged but precarised migrants in the globalising cities in the South. As Kunz (2022) reflects upon the case of expatriates in Nairobi, the socio-cultural integration of privileged migrants in the South should be included in the migration studies agenda, to contribute to deactivating or at least reducing the hegemonic colonial power in the South, as this work has shown its possible.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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