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Constructing the space of the social.
The multiple mediation figures at youth centres in Casablanca

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Constructing the space of the social. The multiple mediation figures at youth centres in Casablanca

Yasmine Berriane

In recent years, many spaces constructed by state institutions and granted to private actors organized into associations have made their appearance in Morocco in the field of the 'social'. Among these 'spaces of the social' are citizens' centres, cultural centres, local sociocultural and socioprofessional centres, cooperative centres and centres for pregnant women. While the links between these places and government bodies differ from one institution to another, all are run by associations, which through their activities assume responsibility for that 'affair of state' which has now become the 'social question'.¹ Thus private intermediaries (leaders of associations) find entrusted to them not only spaces belonging to the state but also the responsibility for proposing and implementing services and actions that fall within the state's remit.

This way of discharging the state's duties (that I will refer to as 'discharge' henceforth) recalls the modes of 'privatization of the state' described in other regional contexts.² But, unlike situations in which the delegation of public service means that the state becomes invisible,³ the process of 'discharge' here involves making the state as visible as possible. The state openly exhibits its presence and its closeness while delegating its responsibilities through both the external signs displayed on the building's exterior and the link that connects these establishments to their supervisory institution. This way of increasing visibility through establishments dedicated to the social is particularly interesting when it occurs in domains (e.g. youth) or territories (e.g. urban peripheries and rural areas) where the absence of the state is especially felt by the population. How is this particular type of government at a distance of the social – which also suggests a certain closeness – deployed? How has this *modus operandi*, which is far from new, changed over time? What do these new techniques for 'getting things done', which have now become commonplace in Morocco,

¹ As discussed in this working paper, the meaning of the term 'social', and thus of 'social space', is multiple and diffuse. If we start from the public policy perspective adopted in this work, the term refers to a multiplicity of domains which have now become 'a source of major political concern, or even "an affair of state" in Morocco, including the "system of education and health, as well as employment policies or even the different forms of assumption of collective responsibility for disability, old age and other forms of social accident"'. M. Catusse, 'Maroc: un fragile État social dans la réforme néo-libérale', in M. Catusse, B. Destremau and E. Verdier, *L'État face aux 'débordements' du social au Maghreb. Formation, travail et protection* (Paris: Karthala, 2010), pp. 121-122.

² I am borrowing here the term 'discharge' from B. Hibou's work on the privatization of public action, see B. Hibou, 'From Privatising the Economy to Privatising the State. An Analysis of the Continual Formation of the State', in B. Hibou (ed.), *Privatising the State*, trans. J. Derrick (London: Hurst and Co., in association with CERI, 2004), pp. 1-47 and 'La "décharge", nouvel interventionnisme?', *Politique africaine*, 73, March 1999, pp. 6-15 (translated in English as B. Hibou "'Discharge', a New Interventionism" in B. Hibou, B. Samuel and L. Fourchard (eds.), *The Spirits of Neoliberal Reforms and Everyday Politics of the State in Africa*, (Dakar, Amalion, 2016), p. 149-160).

³ This has for instance been brought out in studies of the state in America introduced and discussed by Sarah Gensburger in 'La main invisible de l'État américain', *Revue française de science politique*, 60 (5), 2010, pp. 1023-1041.

actually reveal? And finally, what can they tell us about the variant forms and meanings of the domain of the social?

I answer these questions by looking at youth centres (*dâr ash-shabâb*, pl. *dyûr ash-shabâb*), which come under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sport and are among the oldest establishments of that kind in Morocco.⁴ In 2010 there were 510 youth centres in the country, including 294 in urban areas and 216 in rural areas. These spaces contain clubs and associations that provide activities that implement government policies targeting youth. Although they have not yet been studied in their own right, youth centres appear here and there in the literature. Some authors ascribe them a role in the development of the associative sphere,⁵ others in the making of militant trajectories.⁶ However, neither their effective functioning nor the modes of interaction between the state and non-governmental actors have been analysed.⁷

To discuss how these youth centres operate, I concentrate on one centre in particular⁸ that was set up in F., a neighbourhood in the north-eastern suburbs of Casablanca in the second half of the 1950s. At the same time I draw evidence from incursions into spaces such as the neighbourhood sociocultural and sociosporting centres that have emerged more recently. These different situations allow me to compare practices at work today with those used in the past to show the specificities of neoliberal ‘distancing’, as well as the plurality of both state and non-state actors and the forms of delegation that accompany it.

My observations at the F. Youth Centre suggest that institutional delegation, as conceived and officially described by the Ministry, coexists with other more subtle and implicit forms of delegation. All delegation, whether of legal recognition, of political recruitment, or of the search for subsidies, are the result of intertwined mediation activities that help to shape the distancing, the construction of these spaces and the fashioning of the ‘social’. By ‘the space of the social’ I mean the role given to this space by the Ministry, and it is also in this sense that I understand the expression ‘dedicated to the social’ which came up often in my interviews. One of the aims of this working paper is to highlight the discrepancy between the meaning attached to these words and the actual use of such spaces. In particular, I show how these forms of delegation allow the state to create a visibility for itself where it is perceived as absent, and to relieve itself of certain social policies while developing methods of monitoring, surveillance and administration at a distance. However, I also show how these

⁴ This type of establishment is also found in other North African countries. On youth centres in Egypt, see A. Boutaleb, ‘Un lieu, deux acteurs, différentes logiques: les centres de jeunesse en Égypte’, in M. Bennani-Chraïbi and I. Farag, *Jeunesses des sociétés arabes. Par-delà les promesses et les menaces* (Cairo and Paris: Cedeg, Aux lieux d’être, 2007), pp. 223-251.

⁵ M. Tozy, ‘Les associations à vocation politique’, in M.-A. Roque (ed.), *La Société civile au Maroc. L’émergence de nouveaux acteurs de développement* (Paris: Publisud, IEMed, Socheppress, 2004), p. 102.

⁶ M. Bennani-Chraïbi, ‘Parcours, cercles et médiations à Casablanca. Tous les chemins mènent à l’action associative de quartier’, in M. Chraïbi and O. Filleule (eds.), *Résistances et protestations dans les sociétés musulmanes* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2003), p. 348 and Y. Berriane, *Femmes, associations et politique à Casablanca* (Rabat: Centre Jacques-Berque, 2013), pp. 155-163.

⁷ The few studies exclusively devoted to youth centres are mainly official literature, often produced by civil society associations. See *Dâr ash-Shabâb wa as’ilat al-mujtama’ al madani bi-l-maghrib* (Manshûrât ash-Shu’la, 2006).

⁸ In order to ensure the anonymity of my interlocutors and the neighbourhood in which the youth centre is located I have used fictitious names. The aim of this working paper is not to trace the specific memory of this place but to more generally analyse the modes of government through spaces dedicated to the social.

forms of delegation open up a wide range of arrangements and accommodation for actors pursuing individual and/or collective objectives that go beyond the mere management of the service delegated.

The case of Casablanca is certainly specific. As both an industrial and an economic capital, and as the largest city in the country, Casablanca has been the subject of special government attention over the years, which has given rise to the imposition of many administrative districts in response to the need for security.⁹ The same applies to the restructuring and local development programmes set up in several target neighbourhoods such as F. which are identified as ‘under-equipped’, ‘poor’ and ‘marginalized’. This trend gained in importance after the attacks of May 2003, whose main protagonists came from a shanty town on the outskirts of the city. But Casablanca is also a living laboratory where we can observe the effects of demographic, social and political mutations induced by such factors as urbanization, the reconfiguration of political action and the dissemination of new norms of participation affecting, albeit in varying ways, the whole country.¹⁰

My analysis is based on data collected in several different stages: research carried out since 2006 on the transformation of the associative sphere in Casablanca,¹¹ and observations and interviews conducted between 2012 and 2014.¹² In addition to the interviews carried out during my various stays in F. with actors who attended the neighbourhood’s youth centre at various periods in its history, I have also conducted occasional interviews in other more recent types of establishment with a similar mode of operation. These data were supplemented by reading press articles and archives. Finally, I paid special attention to the form and exterior signs of the building, taking an interest in what Jean-Pierre Gaudin calls ‘the “performative utterance” of the building’, i.e. the way in which the F. Youth Centre fits into the neighbourhood, acts as a reference point, and helps to make political decisions visible.¹³

⁹ L. Zaki, *Pratiques politiques au bidonville, Casablanca (2000-2005)*, PhD thesis, Institut d’études politiques de Paris, 2005, p. 81.

¹⁰ Generally speaking, on Casablanca as a laboratory that clearly displays the transformations that go beyond the changes this city is undergoing, see A. Adam, *Casablanca. Essai sur la transformation de la société marocaine au contact de l’Occident*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1972); P. Rabinow, *French Modern. Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); M. Peraldi and M. Tozy (eds.), *Casablanca. Figures et scènes métropolitaines* (Rabat: Paris, Centre Jacques-Berque, Karthala, CM2S, 2011).

¹¹ On this subject, see Berriane, *Femmes, associations et politique*.

¹² These data, compiled since 2012, are the product of a research project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Training (BMBF) and conducted as a researcher at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin. This work could then be completed thanks to the support of the University Research Priority Programme Asia and Europe at the University of Zurich, and to exchanges with members of the team led by Béatrice Hibou and Irene Bono at the CRESC, and with members of the research programme “Spaces of Participation: Topographies of political and social change in Morocco, Egypt and Palestine” (ZMO, Berlin).

¹³ J.-P. Gaudin, *Gouverner par contrat* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), p. 37.

Spaces in which the state's social interventions are made visible

Casablanca's youth centres are public institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sport. There are many signs reminding the visitor of this institutional framework: the national flag flies above the entrance door of the F. Youth Centre, which opens onto a space in which a small public garden has been set up, on either side of which is a row of cafes, small shops and dwellings. This door thus links the establishment to a space that is accessible to all neighbourhood residents, as if to signify that it is indeed a place open to all. A photograph of the King hangs on the wall of the director's office and on the façade of the inner courtyard one can read, painted in very large letters, the national motto of the country: 'God, the Fatherland, the King'.

This large complex comprises several buildings of one or two floors which include the director's office, a theatre, classrooms, a small library, a sports hall with cloakroom, a room equipped with computing facilities, official accommodation and a medium-sized sports field. During the day the establishment seems abandoned: it is frequented only by a handful of women attending classes in sewing, embroidery, aerobics or computer science. In the late afternoon it is crowded with children and teenagers, girls and boys, some rehearsing plays, others taking classes in music, sports, foreign languages or computer literacy, or having private tuition. The sports ground also comes alive with the neighbourhood teams that use it for training.

These activities correspond to the official mission of youth centres as described on the Ministry's website: to provide young people with 'the opportunity to develop through a multitude of sociocultural activities', to train and to be supervised.¹⁴ While this mission, focused on the management of free time and on extracurricular training, may seem unfocussed in shape and hazy in its objectives, reflecting the absence of a genuine youth policy in Morocco,¹⁵ the F. Youth Centre is here to remind everyone that the state cares about the young people who live in this part of the city. By highlighting the delegated bodies that represent it at different levels, the organizational chart published on the Ministry of Youth and Sport's website indicates its link to the youth centres. At each youth centre a team of civil servants consisting of a director and various facilitators oversees the activities of clubs and associations. The team's mission is to ensure that the Ministry's objectives, programmes and procedural rules that apply to all establishments of this type are respected. At the provincial and prefectural levels, each team's work is supervised by a group of local ministerial delegates composed of a representative of the Minister and heads of department, supervised by the Ministry's Department of Youth, Children and Women's Affairs, which is based in Rabat. This group has, as one of its official prerogatives, the management, maintenance and control of youth centres: it provides the equipment necessary for their proper functioning and ensures that they are kept in good condition, as well as managing their income, expenditure,

¹⁴ See the page on these establishments on the Ministry of Youth and Sport website, www.mjs.gov.ma/fr/Page-86/espaces-des-jeunes-enfants-et-femmes.

¹⁵ World Bank, Kingdom of Morocco. *Promoting Youth Opportunities and Participation*, report no. 68731-MOR, June 2012.

aid and resources. The Ministry sets out the norms that apply to all youth centres in circulars and regulations.

The Ministry's budget for carrying out all of its missions is very limited: it never exceeds 1% of the general government budget. In fact the direct subsidies allocated to the operation of youth centres are tiny and irregular. According to a report by the World Bank, in 2012 they amounted to just 3,000 dirhams (nearly 300 euros) per year for each centre.¹⁶ On top of this budget, the teams are very small; the F. Youth Centre team currently consists of only two officials. The director is trained as a sports monitor, and according to almost all of those to whom I spoke he is distinguished above all by his absence. He is assisted by a deputy director, the widow of a former director and an official at the Ministry of Youth and Sport for nearly thirty-five years, who has lived in official accommodation at the institution since the 1980s. She formerly ran a women's centre, and since the death of her husband has helped the directors in office. But she is not often present either, due, she explained, to her many family obligations as a widow with five dependent children.¹⁷

It would be wrong to generalize the case of the F. Youth Centre to all such establishments in Morocco. The situation of each depends, as I will show, on the director in office, his or her own interests and the historical context. However, the example of F. exemplifies the small number of staff members on which the Ministry of Youth and Sport can call, and in particular the lack of senior officials working in youth centres. One official at the Ministry deplored this situation in the following terms:

Before, forty to fifty graduates a year were recruited. Today this is no longer the case. For nearly ten years the Ministry has stopped hiring. Although fifty senior officials have just been recruited, this is not enough to cover all needs. Normally it would take five senior officials per centre: one director and four facilitators. But it's impossible. Very often there's just the director.¹⁸

Today it seems that at most, 846 officials work across the 510 establishments in the country: fewer than two civil servants per establishment on average.¹⁹ The F. Youth Centre clearly illustrates the role of these institutions in the 'low-cost government' of Morocco:²⁰ fuzzy targets, limited budgets and low staffing levels but clearly visible establishments that affirm the presence and proximity of the state. What are the concrete modes of implementation in this form of intervention? Before I answer this question I dwell for a while on developments taking place in the youth centres of Morocco, which are marked in particular by their progressive politicization. This brief summary of the history of these institutions sheds light on the changing modes of delegation at work within them.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁷ Interview with the deputy director of the F. Youth Centre, Casablanca, May 2012.

¹⁸ Interview with an official from the Ministry of Youth, Rabat, January 2014.

¹⁹ N. Takhalouicht, 'Les maisons de jeunes dans les politiques publiques marocaines: réalisations et perspectives de développement', September 2013, <http://farzyat.cjb.ma>.

²⁰ M. Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1999).

The transformation of youth centres: the fragmentation of social interventions?

The functions assumed by the youth centres are multiple, fragmentary and changing. Their creation in the 1940s was a response to demand from locally-established European youth movements for centres where they could meet and engage in various activities.²¹ In districts such as F., populated by workers from the countryside who have come to work in Casablanca, the Department of Youth and Sport simultaneously created centres and foster homes for disadvantaged young Muslims with the aim of promoting ‘the education of the indigenous masses’.²²

As education centres youth centres are also spaces of social control. Describing the measures introduced in the 1947 municipal reform, and then during the last phase of the Protectorate, Roger Gruner states that the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the establishments that it runs play a central role in arrangements put into place to achieve what he calls ‘collective discipline’²³ in new urban neighbourhoods. The author, a civil controller during the protectorate, describes the part played by these departments in not only supporting the activities of (European) youth movements but also the education of Moroccan children and the promotion of cultural activities such as the theatre. These activities comprised a way for civil controllers to get close to local populations and to keep them under surveillance.²⁴

Built at the end of the protectorate, the F. Youth Centre came into operation in the aftermath of independence, under the supervision of the Secretariat of State (later the Ministry) for Youth and Sport.²⁵ In line with the developmentalist ideas in fashion, between the 1960s and early 1980s the Moroccan state adopted a voluntarist educational approach to education. This policy came with the idea of ‘rapid social advancement [...] achievable through education’.²⁶ At the F. Youth Centre the teams in charge of administrative and pedagogical management included several civil servants. The facility served as a complement to the school, offering extra tuition, classes in music and singing, vocational training, theatre workshops and sports. According to various interviews, circulation of pupils between junior and high school and the youth centre was fluid, as described by Rachid, a 56-year-old teacher who started attending the F. Youth Centre as a child in the 1960s before becoming the leader of a literary club and then a member of a sociocultural association in the 1970s:

The centre was linked to the school. [...] When you came out of school the teacher brought you here. You did various activities and then he took you there [he indicates the sports ground not far from the establishment] to do sport. There was no break. From school to the youth

²¹ *Bulletin de quinzaine du service de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, Rabat, 10 March 1946, pp. 3-4.

²² ‘Vie des délégations – Casablanca. Les mouvements de jeunesse et le centre d’accueil musulman’, extract from the *Bulletin de quinzaine du service de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, 10 March 1946, pp. 10-11.

²³ R. Gruner, *Du Maroc traditionnel au Maroc moderne: le contrôle civil au Maroc, 1912-1956* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions latines, 1984), p. 183.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-185.

²⁵ Since independence, the Youth and Sport department has been integrated into different governments in various ways: as a Secretariat of State or as a Ministry, sometimes in connection with the Education Ministry, sometimes with Employment, Information or Social Affairs.

²⁶ I. Bono, ‘Une lecture d’économie politique de la “participation des jeunes” au Maroc à l’heure du Printemps arabe’, *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, 2013, 4 (20), pp. 145-166.

centre, then to the sports field. There was no time left free as far as the pupil was concerned. As soon as you came out of school, you found yourself at the youth centre.²⁷

The close links between the youth centre and the school were particularly maintained by teachers, high-school pupils and university students representing the intelligentsia of the time, anxious to participate in political life by promoting an education perceived as a vehicle for consciousness-raising.²⁸ The director of the F. Youth Centre in office at the end of the 1970s emphasized its interaction with teachers from the junior and high schools in the neighbourhood:

We must not forget that we had friends who helped us. There was H. A. and another of his colleagues who taught at the O. High School. I was with them in two associations, and they brought us their pupils. There was an important link between the O. High School and the F. Youth Centre. We had links with several schools.²⁹

Government policy targeting youth was mainly based on extending education, which was raised to the level of a national project. Implementation of the activities proposed by youth centres with limited budgets rested on their ability to build bridges with other establishments with the necessary staff, skills and resources: junior and high schools, and universities. Delegating educational activities was made possible through the use of intermediate organizations such as clubs and associations, in which teachers and students became involved because of the lack of alternative spaces for meetings and extracurricular activities.

Because of the increasingly repressive political climate, opposition movements were then developing mainly in high schools and universities, and the growing links between youth centres, teachers and students promoted increasing politicization in youth centre activities. Youth centres with multiple functions – organizing cultural activities, supervising neighbourhood life, extending teaching, and so on – became therefore also places of political recruitment. Mohamed, a former member of the March 23 Movement who was exiled in the mid-1970s, described his first contact with left-wing organizations at the F. Youth Centre in the 1960s:

I was about 15 or 16 years old. [...] At that time, when you came out of school you went to the youth centre. [...] We were very interested in literature. [...] But the second thing that interested us was the Palestinian question. [...] Our club had a political tone. It wasn't apparent. [...] It had had it from the start but I didn't know. The people who created it did know. [...] They were volunteers who worked at the youth centre. Students. We were still in high school at the time, but they were active in the youth wing of the National Union of Popular Forces and in trade unions, the unions that had youth sections. [...] Then in the 1970s the members of this association went in different political directions. Some joined the March

²⁷ Interview with Rachid, Casablanca, May 2012.

²⁸ On the social behaviours associated with the participation of young people at that time, see Bono, 'Une lecture d'économie politique'.

²⁹ Interview with a former director of the F. Centre who later became the local Ministry delegate, Casablanca, April 2013.

23 Movement. Others went to the USFP [Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires]. [...] We were all politically inclined.³⁰

In the repressive context of the 1970s and 1980s, youth centres provided alternative spaces where small political groups could meet under the cover of accepted activities such as reading clubs.

During the 1970s and 1980s we had a lot of trouble finding premises for our activities. First, we didn't have the money, but also people didn't trust us. They didn't know what an association was. It wasn't until the late 1980s that things changed. Before, spending time at the youth centre was the only option we had. [...] It was the only space where we could take advantage of cultural and sports activities to talk about politics.³¹

This testimony illustrates the porosity of the boundaries commonly set up between the 'social' and the 'political', and the unexpected forms that government at a distance can take. At the youth centres, phenomena can occur that not only go beyond the simple management of the delegated services but also oppose the regime in power. In F., these developments gave birth to never-ending conflicts between the establishment's administration, the local authorities and the organizations frequenting the centre. Through the example of the director I will return later to the customized modes of negotiation that were deployed in this context.

The 1980s marked a turning point for these establishments. Little by little the state stopped investing in youth centres. Since 1975 the construction of new establishments has fallen to local authorities. Budgets and staff have been reduced, the infrastructure is deteriorating, and these institutions are gradually losing their appeal.³² Several of those to whom I spoke agreed that this development is a deliberate strategy on the part of the state to marginalize areas that had become recruiting grounds for the political opposition. It can also be seen as a consequence of the structural adjustment programme that came into force in Morocco in 1983, drastically reducing public expenditure.³³

The principle of charge-free service, which was formerly applied, has given way to a new logic: that of a mandatory subscription. In 1984 Circular No. 162 mandated that all individuals attending youth centres must pay a subscription, and associations were obliged to pay the institution 20 per cent of the money they collected from their activities.³⁴ This circular met with strong opposition from the associations, especially national associations and those close to political organizations, and was the subject of a hostile press campaign. In response to this, in 1987 a second circular (No. 163) introduced more flexible measures:³⁵

³⁰ Interview with Mohamed, Mohammedia, May 2012.

³¹ Interview with Kenza, 55 years old, teacher and organizer of a woman's club in the 1980s, Casablanca, May 2012.

³² A. Samie, 'Les maisons de jeunes au Maroc. Faillite d'un projet', *Maroc Hebdo*, 257, 18-24 January 1997.

³³ B. Destremau and P. Signoles, 'Le difficile ajustement d'économies différenciées en rapide mutation', in A. Gamblin (ed.), *Maghreb Moyen-Orient. Mutations*, 'Dossiers et images économiques du monde' (Paris, SEDES, 1995), dossier 17, pp. 58-61.

³⁴ This circular was mentioned very frequently by those that I spoke to. Despite several attempts, I was unable to obtain a copy of it or even any knowledge of its exact contents. The information provided here was given to me by an official from the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

³⁵ According to the testimony of a former delegate of the Ministry of Youth and Sport (Casablanca, May 2013) and a senior official from the Ministry (Rabat, January 2014).

Each person benefiting from activities at a youth centre must pay a contribution adapted to the means of the local population, and must be in possession of a membership card. Associations hosted by the institution were also subject to an annual subscription of 20 dirhams. This new regulation came with the obligation of each association to provide a list of its members to the centre's administration. If these measures were aimed at making the youth centres economically more sustainable by generating an internal income, they also gave the supervising ministry greater control over this new self-managing structure through the membership lists, and allowed it to better monitor member attendance within the centres:

It is also necessary to place this Ministry decision in the context of its time. It had become difficult to control what was happening at youth centres. The youth centre is not premises as such, but provides the possibility of using its premises to conduct activities and receive mail. The associations had started to politicize themselves and gathered at the youth centres. The authorities went to the director [of the youth centre] to say to him: 'You must bring those who are creating problems to us'. This presented the Ministry [of Youth and Sport] with a major problem because the state accused it of allowing the opposition to develop in its institutions.³⁶

The 2000s marked another turning point. 'Young people' are now one of the privileged categories in human development policies and the promotion of participation and youth centres have been experiencing a revival of public authority interest, particularly since 2011 and the February 20 Movement demonstrations. They were requested to (also) become 'gateways for consultation and communication with all young people'.³⁷ However, despite the announcement of projects to rehabilitate, reorganize and restructure the youth centres,³⁸ this renewed interest has not led to any notable increase in the Ministry of Youth and Sport's budget, nor to any substantial increase in the number of staff members transferred to these establishments; instead it takes the shape of development programmes financed by international organizations,³⁹ and national projects such as the National Initiative for Human Development (Initiative Nationale de Développement Humain, or INDH), launched in 2005, which contributes to the construction of and equipment for new youth centres.

Such programmes have brought new categories of the population into youth centres, notably women. In recent years women have attended handicraft training and classes in literacy, aerobics and IT provided by associations in receipt of public subsidies. In their early days, mainly young boys attended youth centres. During that time, women and girls had access to women's centres that were introduced during the protectorate. Girls' entry into

³⁶ Interview with a senior official of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, Rabat, January 2014.

³⁷ R. Loudghiri, 'Débat national sur la jeunesse, le samedi 22 septembre. Une nouvelle stratégie pour les jeunes en gestation', *Au Fait*, 16 September 2012.

³⁸ R. Kantaoui, 'Un nouveau programme pour réhabiliter les maisons de jeunes', *Le Matin*, 21 January 2008; 'Maisons de jeunes. Un espace de socialisation en quête d'adaptation aux nouveaux défis', *Le Matin*, 1 September 2009.

³⁹ Such as the United Nations Revitalization of Youth Centres and Women's Halls of Residence (www.un.org.ma/spip.php?rubrique6) and the UNICEF Youth Programme, which plans to equip youth centres with IT equipment in a partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sport signed in 2009 (www.unicef.org/morocco/adolescence_3335.html).

youth centres coincided with the development of summer camps organized by the ministry in the 1970s. Yet, they remained in the minority for a long time.⁴⁰

At this stage of their development, how are youth centres today managed, run and supervised on a daily basis? To what extent does the way they operate differ from the past? I address these questions by looking first at the main active intermediary figures at the F. Youth Centre, starting with the custodian, who carries out a wide variety of tasks in the institution.

The custodian: the power of guarantor of security

While those I spoke to about the director of the F. Youth Centre all described him as ‘absent’, they were unanimous in seeing its custodian as the ‘true director’. Severe and uncompromising, the custodian apparently exercises full control over the institution, and is sometimes even seen as a spy knowing everything about everyone and transmitting this information to the local authorities. This perception accords with my own observations. The custodian is indeed always there: posted at the entrance of the centre, he springs up as soon as someone approaches. At first sight, the importance attributed to him contrasts with his quite unofficial status: he inherited the job from his father, and, like his father he is neither a Ministry official nor an employee officially paid by the institution. However, to a large degree it is precisely this unofficial status that legitimizes his position as an ‘in-between’ in this social space, an ‘agent of circulation’⁴¹ between the public authorities and the local residents who frequent the establishment.

The current custodian has various skills that strengthen his position. He not only grew up in the neighbourhood but has also lived most of his life at the F. Youth Centre, in a makeshift dwelling placed at the disposal of his family in exchange for the custodianship services rendered voluntarily by his father. He therefore knows how the centre as well as the neighbourhood and its inhabitants work. Such knowledge is very useful to the director who has just taken office.

As for the custodian, since he has lived here since he was a child, and his father was also a custodian, [...] he’s learned a bit here and there. He knows the rules. He inquired about the laws concerning associations, the laws concerning the youth centre. In fact, he knows all the youth centre’s secrets. He knows all the delegates who come. And that’s how the director began to hand over responsibility for everything to him.⁴²

The primary function of the custodian is to ensure security inside the establishment. A high concrete wall surrounds the F. Youth Centre and its door often stands half-closed. This quasi-hermetic enclosure indicates that not everyone is allowed in, an implicit message consistent with the discourse of the people active within (and outside) the youth centre, for

⁴⁰ On the feminization of local associations in Casablanca, see Berriane, *Femmes, associations et politique*.

⁴¹ This is the image used by Michel Vovelle to describe cultural intermediaries: M. Vovelle, *Idéologies et mentalités* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 176.

⁴² Interview with Halima, chair of an association and someone who has frequented the youth centre since her youth, Casablanca, June 2012.

whom this establishment, although public, must be a safe space where young people are protected from all kinds of external dangers. If the young people are not safe, their parents will not let them frequent the place.

The emphasis on security also legitimizes the custodian's practices of blocking and filtering at the entrance to the establishment. By taking care of the reception and orientation of any person entering the inner courtyard, the custodian contributes to maintaining institutional order on a daily basis.⁴³ At the F. Youth Centre these practices seem very common. During my two first fieldwork periods they were directed against a group of young activists from the Unified Socialist Party (PSU) who were very active in the February 20 Movement, and against certain cultural associations including one run by Halima, the members of which were denied access to the F. Youth Centre after a quarrel with the custodian. According to the latter, the members of Halima's association had damaged the centre's theatre during a performance. According to Halima this was a completely fictitious excuse to keep her off the premises because of, inter alia, old rumours about her belonging to Al Adl wal-Ihsan, an Islamist movement tolerated but not recognized by the state.

Halima's exclusion took a direct and official form: her quarrel with the custodian gave rise to an argument between her and the director of the establishment, and Halima and her association were handed a formal order, signed by a Ministry delegate, banning them from the youth centre. However, more often than not exclusion is expressed indirectly, the custodian prohibiting the use of equipment and rooms rather than access to the establishment. Meriem, who frequented the youth centre for a long time before leaving as a result of obstacles encountered there by the group of young February 20 Movement militants to which she is close had experienced this:

The custodian is not going to forbid you to go in, but he's going to say 'None of the rooms are free, the centre is full', and so he won't give you rooms when you need them. You end up getting the message.⁴⁴

The government can thus intervene in social relations in many ways by controlling a space. The ways in which rooms are or are not made available make it possible not just to hold activities but also to include 'appropriate' actors and exclude those considered inappropriate. For this purpose the custodian keeps a large register of organizations and the hours at which they may use the rooms. He also holds the room keys; without his consent, access is impossible. The rest of the time he stands guard near the main entrance, keeping a vigilant eye on all the comings and goings.

The custodian's second role is as an intermediary between the establishment and the local residents. As a native of the district he has a wide network of knowledge that enables him to disseminate information on activities taking place in the institution, and to mediate in

⁴³ On the implementation of policies at the entrance, see V. Dubois, 'Politiques au guichet, politiques du guichet', in O. Borrás and V. Guiraudon, *Politiques publiques, 2. Changer la société* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2010), pp. 265-286 and Y. Siblot, *Faire valoir ses droits au quotidien. Les services publics dans les quartiers populaires* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2006).

⁴⁴ Interview with Meriem, the young representative of a local association active in the February 20 Movement, Casablanca, January 2014.

conflict situations. The deputy director stressed the central role that the custodian had played a few days earlier during a brawl that had degenerated into a fight between youths from the neighbourhood who had come to attend a hip-hop concert. The custodian persuaded the parents of one of the injured teenagers not to notify the police, preventing the establishment's reputation being tarnished since, in the words of the deputy director, 'if the families had seen the police enter the centre they would have been frightened and would stop letting their children come here!'

As he does not receive a salary for his many jobs the custodian has found several alternative sources of income. When the youth centre is closed between noon and 4 pm from Tuesday to Saturday, on Sunday afternoons and on Mondays, he allows teams to practise on its sports field in exchange for a small remuneration. The private company that has installed a drinks machine in the centre pays him on an ad hoc basis in return for maintaining the machine. With a partner who provides him with the necessary equipment, the custodian has also apparently opened a catering service, organizing parties and receptions in the establishment. His wife uses the premises to give aerobics classes (for which she charges) for women from the neighbourhood. Finally, it is not uncommon for the custodian to ask for a financial contribution in exchange for free use of the functions room.

Various users of the F. Youth Centre described the ways in which the custodian generates an income. While some pointed out the irregularities that the custodian allows within the institution, others justified his practices by the fact that he is not paid. In fact the many strategies that he deploys are a central mechanism in the functioning of this space, which may explain why the administration prefers to turn a blind eye to practices that are common knowledge. In a context where the budget allocated to youth centres is minimal, the resources generated by the custodian ensure the security so intently sought by families and the Ministry without incurring any costs.

This way of discharging custodial duties has a price. It entails the privatization of a supposedly public space, which is eaten into by several official lodgings, greatly reducing the space available to active organizations in the field. After her husband's death the current deputy director continued to live with her five daughters in his official apartment, which is next to another, with two rooms, occupied by a retired director of the establishment. The custodian also lives at the youth centre. After the death of his father he gradually transformed the old cloakroom into his lodgings. While this use of the centre reduces the area devoted to activities for young people it is no less functional, as it makes it possible to cater for a number of other social missions. Thus the F. Youth Centre has functions beyond those officially assigned to this type of establishment: it acts as a social safety net for the widow of the former director and her five children, provides the retired director with a place to live, and gives the custodian an alternative form of remuneration as he does not receive a salary in exchange for his work.

This use of the space, however, has its limits. When I went back to the F. Youth Centre after a year's absence I was advised to get hold of the telephone number of the director or his deputy, as the facility is now often closed during the day. Several associations supporting Halima had apparently acted to have a number of the custodian's informal functions removed from his remit. In particular, Halima had threatened to organize a demonstration by joining a network of associations close to far-left organizations; articles

appeared in the local press criticizing the lack of transparency at the youth centre, and, via the intermediary of a network of associations run by Omar, who is influential and well established with the local authorities, a meeting was organized with the local Ministry delegate. This campaign finally led to clarification of the custodian's role, and the custodian, who is still living at the F. Youth Centre, now confines himself to looking after the establishment at night while working during the day at a local café. In the absence of the two officials from the ministry the F. Youth Centre's doors simply remain closed.

The marginalization of the custodian's role secured by the associations reflects a clear transformation of power relations in the establishment and more generally, in the neighbourhood. It also reveals, as I explain below, the transition from a system in which the government of the social passed through the management of a physical space (the youth centre) to a system where many social functions are delegated to juridical spaces (associations) that do not depend on a particular physical space. The reduction of the formerly central role of the director is one of the symptoms of this transformation.

The director: an odd intermediary

The current director of the F. Youth Centre is conspicuous, as noted, by his absence. However, this was not the case with all the previous directors. It is clear from my interviewees' testimony that, depending on the particular time and situation in the history of the institution, they were either very present or absent, and sometimes conciliatory, sometimes intransigent.

The director at the time did not like his views to be contradicted. He wanted only his word to count. He treated the youth centre as if it were his private property. No one could come in and ask him for an explanation.⁴⁵

And what a director he was! May God have mercy on his soul! That's what a director should be like. [...] He was a child of the neighbourhood who had gone to the Ministry's administrative school. He came out fully trained. [...] A firm director. An administrative director. An active director.⁴⁶

Some even involved themselves beyond the requirements of their administrative function: one of my interviewees broke down in tears when telling me of the death of a director of the establishment in the 1980s and 1990s: at that time the money available to organizations operating at the F. Youth Centre was so limited that it came mainly from this director's commitment and efforts. Several other stories circulate about the directors of youth centres playing a key role in the development and support of local organizations active between the 1960s and 1980s, a period commonly referred to as the 'years of lead'. The position assumed by the director depends not only on his or her personality and interests but also on the period: when the actors and organizations frequenting the F. Youth Centre are

⁴⁵ Interview with Rachid, Casablanca, May 2012.

⁴⁶ Interview with Mostafa, 64, active at the F. Youth Centre since the 1960s, Casablanca, May 2012.

politicized and conflict with the local authority increases, their relationship with the director (and other local Ministry representatives) is crucial, and negotiations can become highly personalized.

The officials knew what we were doing, but they turned a blind eye. You had to find someone you knew. Personal relationships with officials were very important.⁴⁷

Many directors are residents in the youth centre neighbourhood, or a member of an association with a job in the civil service. As their official accommodation is within the youth centre, special links can be established between the persons responsible for the pedagogical and administrative management of the establishment and local residents. Many factors strengthen these links: teams from the Ministry of Youth and Sport often run summer camps attended by neighbourhood children and teenagers. The same applies to training sessions for summer camp leaders, which are led by senior Ministry officials, often youth centre directors or organizers, and many young people who attended the F. establishment had attended these.⁴⁸

The common expression ‘son’ or ‘daughter’ of the youth centre (*weld/bent dâr ash-shabâb*) for a person who once frequented such a centre reinforces the implicit link between this type of establishment (and by extension the staff running it) and the home or base where the person acquired part of his or her education and socialization. The term *dâr* used to call these centres, literally meaning ‘house’, gives these establishments a private, family character. Indeed, *dâr* designates not only a dwelling in its concrete sense but also, and especially, a construction linked to a family, and by extension often the family itself. This reinforces the idea that youth centres are simultaneously anchored in the private and the public sectors, blurring the common distinction between the two. Rachid’s description of the director in office in the 1970s takes on its full meaning here: the youth centre becomes the private property of the director, who ran it as his own home.

The blurred lines between the private and the public domain, the use of the register of ‘family’ and the emergence over time of forms of sociability between the management team and the users of youth centres promote the development of a ‘controlled dissidence’.⁴⁹ This blurring, and the registers that come with it, can be deployed by individuals and organizations to negotiate the margins of the possible and to ‘seize freedoms’, in the words of one of my interlocutors. They also help to control any breaches of the rules within the establishment and to monitor the activities of the individuals and organizations that frequent it. As both educator and administrator, the director or official facilitator makes it possible, depending on the case, to maintain the ‘blurring in the rules of the game’ described by Béatrice Hibou in her analysis of the processes of discharge, making possible ‘not only the interference of the political and the exercise of its arbitrary whims at any time, but also the permanence of negotiations between the actors’.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Interview with Mostafa, Casablanca, May 2012.

⁴⁸ These courses provide the necessary diploma for helping to run summer camps, and offer an opportunity to work during the summer months.

⁴⁹ Tozy, *Monarchie et islam politique au Maroc*, p. 63.

⁵⁰ B. Hibou, ‘Retrait ou redéploiement de l’État?’, *Critique internationale*, 1, Autumn 1998, p. 162

These negotiations were all the more important in the past, when there were more clubs than associations. A club is a constituent part of a youth centre, and its legal recognition requires the director's agreement. Clubs are supposedly monitored by Ministry officials, but this responsibility may also be delegated to 'associative officials with expertise in the field concerned',⁵¹ as appears to apply to the youth centre in F. district.

Before, when you wanted to propose an artistic activity, for example, and went to see the director of the youth centre, he would tell you to set up a club. Once you showed the slightest interest, he would keep insisting – so a great number of clubs sprang up.⁵²

To create a club requires the approval of the centre director, which then takes care of all the necessary formalities. Once it has been accepted, the club can organize activities within the establishment. It is subject to direct control by the director and has no funds of its own: income generated by its activities such as collecting members' subscriptions and organizing a show or festival, for example, goes to the youth centre.

The F. Youth Centre now houses only six clubs; the two hundred other organizations registered on its books are associations. The transition from clubs to associations happened in stages. From the second half of the 1970s the establishment saw the birth of sociocultural associations, which have since become national organizations with local branches throughout the country. Their number gradually increased in the context of the political openness of the 1990s, rising rapidly in the early 2000s. The reform of the association code in 2002 relaxed the previous very restrictive framework and facilitated and encouraged the development of the voluntary sector, making it possible for associations to receive grants from public and semi-public organizations and from regional, provincial, local and even neighbourhood bodies. They may also benefit from private-sector assistance in the form of grants and subsidies in cash or kind. These sources of funding are supplemented by a number of limited tax benefits.⁵³

Unlike clubs, associations domiciled within a youth centre do not depend on this establishment or, consequently, on its director. With their own legal status defined by the 1958 Act regulating public freedoms, their operation depends on the Directorate of Social Affairs of the Prefecture. Although they need the director's permission to use the youth centre's premises, they do not need it to organize activities outside it. Associations can receive donations and grants, open a bank account, and diversify the spaces in which they operate. These developments indicate a clear transformation in the nature of the 'discharge', and the absence of the director of the F. Youth Centre is a clear symptom of this. The current trend, which favours the delegation of social services to associations, expresses this shift to a

⁵¹ Website of the Ministry of Youth and Sport: www.mjs.gov.ma/en/Page-86/espaces-des-jeunes-enfants-et-femmes.

⁵² Interview with Ali, 41, Chair of a visual arts association, Casablanca, May 2012.

⁵³ The major part of the tax benefits – in the form of tax deductions and exemption, and also exemption from VAT – is reserved for associations recognized as being of public interest. The conditions for granting this status are not altogether transparent. According to the regulations, they are mainly a 'favour' that the government grants to associations whose aims meet needs of general interest.

system where a legal and normative space, the space of associations, sets out to govern the social.

In the name of ‘participation’: the association, a new space in the social sphere

The number of associations active at the F. Youth Centre has increased substantially in recent years. Ali, the chair of a visual arts association, was born in the neighbourhood in the early 1970s and has attended the youth centre from a very early age; he pointed out vigorously how there has been a shift from clubs to associations:

They used to tell you to create clubs. These days they tell you to create associations. It’s the fashion. There are people who ran a club for ten or twenty years, and then turned it into an association.⁵⁴

When the F. Youth Centre was set up associations were in a minority; these days they predominate. Of the two hundred organizations on its books, forty or so are classified as ‘active’: eight national associations (many close to political parties) with local branches across the country, six sports associations and twenty-three associations with various objectives from organizing trips to social development, theatre, assistance for the disabled and the promotion of art.

The category of local and social development associations has particularly gained in importance. It has taken over the government of the social in all its diversity, and brings together multifunctional associations active at the level of the town, the village, the neighbourhood. Many such associations provide a wide range of services including several types of training, sports workshops and counselling centres, medical and clean-up campaigns exhibitions of products manufactured by association members, and theatre workshops. These associations all foster, manage and support income-generating activities.⁵⁵

Whereas these local associations previously depended solely on contributions from their members and beneficiaries, they now have access to diverse sources of funding: grants from the City Council, development programmes supported by the Agency for Social Development (Agence de Développement Social or ADS), donations from royal foundations, finance from foreign donors and occasional support from private companies. Since 2005, besides these sources of finance INDH funds have been made available to associations for local development projects targeting particular social categories, such as young people or women living in rural communes or urban areas identified as poor and under-equipped.⁵⁶

The associations take charge of running the youth centre in exchange for permission to use the premises. They undertake to comply with its rules, pay a membership fee, not engage in political or economic activities, and provide the administration with an annual programme of activities and a list of their members. Their role is not limited to running activities.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ali, Casablanca, May 2012.

⁵⁵ Income-generating activities (IGAs) aim to produce goods or services to generate income. This type of activity is particularly encouraged within the framework of the INDH as a solution to unemployment and poverty.

⁵⁶ On the INDH, see I. Bono, ‘Le “phénomène participatif” au Maroc à travers ses styles d’action et ses normes’, *Études du CERI*, 166, June 2010, www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr/ceri/files/etude166.pdf, and Y. Berriane, ‘The complexities of inclusive participatory governance: the case of Moroccan associational life in the context of the INDH’, *Journal of Economic and Social Research*, 12 (1), 2010, pp. 89-111.

Through their presence on the youth centre's council the associations are involved in the implementation of its cultural programme, conflict management and the quest for subsidies.

The institution of youth centre councils was introduced in the 1970s and became more important at the end of the 1980s. These councils are consultation bodies with the status of associations, composed of the director of the institution, representatives from associations and clubs that use the premises, a member of the district or city council, representatives of partner institutions and organizations, and a delegate from the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Using terminology that is much in vogue today, with words such as 'participation' and 'closeness', the Ministry of Youth and Sport explains on its website that this arrangement should help young people and associations to learn 'the basics of democracy', get involved in the management of the public good, and create a 'climate of constructive dialogue between the different components of the establishment'.⁵⁷

In practice the current council of the F. Youth Centre does not include younger people: the age range extends from 40 to over 60, and the older members, who have frequented the centre since the 1960s, are the most active. Association leaders play a central role, with key positions such as president and treasurer generally entrusted to them. The council functions as an intermediary between the administration and the users of the establishment. It plays a part in drawing up the centre's programmes, broadcasts information on proposed activities, and implements the establishments' renovation projects. It is also responsible for seeking subsidies to improve equipment and activities, and for building partnerships with other government institutions and private and public enterprises. This role is all the more crucial in that grants and other sources of funding available outside the Ministry must often go through the associations, the only possible recipients of such resources.⁵⁸

The youth centre council has a budget partly made up of member and association contributions and revenue generated from activities organized at the centre, plus annual grants awarded by the communal, regional and city councils. It can also file funding applications within the framework of the INDH – thanks to whose funds the previous council renovated the façade of the establishment and provided the theatre with the necessary material for association activities – and sign agreements with other ministries, private companies and national and international organizations. This potential for the diversification of partners and donors, and the subsequent competition between them, is a major resource and provides the executive bureau of the council with significant room for manoeuvre, as shown by the F. Youth Centre council's strategy to raise the necessary funds to organize a national theatre festival in the late 1990s:

The governor of the time was very active [...]. As soon as an association organized an activity, he came along. And as he came, the president of the local district had to come. Everyone had to come. As soon as they heard the governor was coming, everyone came. [...] So we went to see him, and we told him: 'We're organizing a national festival, we'd like your support. Youth and Sport have given us money. The town will provide all participants with dinner'. The governor said: 'I'll take care of the prizes'. So the Ministry of Culture said: 'I'll take care

⁵⁷ Website of Ministry of Youth and Sport: www.mjs.gov.ma/fr/Page-86/espaces-des-jeunes-enfants-et-femmes.

⁵⁸ This information is based on an interview with a former local delegate from the Ministry of Youth and Sport (May 2013, Casablanca).

of the prizes too'. Where are all these people going to sleep? In the centre that depends on the Ministry of Education!⁵⁹

Even if the official regulations for youth centres ban political activities,⁶⁰ the political hue of the centre's council can play a decisive role in the quest for funds. The success of strategies such as those described above depends on links between its associations and influential political parties. The F. Youth Centre's council was for several decades in the hands of associations close to the USFP, the main left-wing party of the country, founded in 1975 and a member of the government coalition from 1998 to 2011. In the early 2000s, when this party was in the majority in the government this closeness earned the F. Youth Centre the support of several ministers and elected local officials. However, political affiliation remains an ambiguous resource, and can even become a major obstacle when the council is predominantly composed of members close to a minority local and/or national political party.

When local elected representatives see that the chairman of the centre's council is of another political hue, this causes conflict. This is where there is no more collaboration between the youth centre and the district. [...] When you want to carry out your project, they say 'Ah, but no, they're *ittihâdiyîn* [an allusion to their closeness to the USFP] who'll use this activity for their own political interests'. So they refuse to subsidize you. [...] The same applies to the political affiliation of the Minister. The Minister of Youth and Sport. When a new minister is from the USFP and knows that most of the members of the Council are from the USFP, he'll support their projects. But if he sees that their views are far removed from his, he won't be interested in their projects. [...] There are ministers who've given the youth centre a lot of help, as it was of the same political hue, while others didn't do anything at all.⁶¹

The political leanings of the council also affect relationships between club and association representatives. At the F. Youth Centre the council's executive bureau is currently in the hands of associations close to the Istiqlal party, which have taken over from the older generation of association actors who were members of the USFP and had previously headed this body. This situation of political and generational transition has contributed to paralyze the F. Youth Centre's council.

The budget available for the council is managed by its president assisted by a treasurer, both of whom are association representatives. In addition to the signature of the director of the centre, every cheque issued by the council must bear the signature of its president and its treasurer. But the effective management of cash inflows, expenditure and transfers is the responsibility of the prefectural Ministry delegates. In this way while association officials ensure funding for the establishment, the actual management of such funds is not delegated to them, remaining instead with the Ministry, which thus retains, indirectly and more cheaply, its role as supervisor and manager of these establishments. While current developments in the world of associations provide its actors with greater room for manoeuvre, these developments do not entail a decline of the state but rather the deployment of indirect instruments of control.

⁵⁹ Interview with Mostafa, Casablanca, May 2012.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Youth and Sport, *Règlement intérieur des maisons de jeunes*, section 2, article 9.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Inhabiting the space: associations as masters of ceremonies

The present modes of government of the social via associations are based on a relationship with space different from that of youth centres. The associations have, as noted, a greater margin for autonomy than the clubs. Not only does the regularization of their status depend on the agreement of the prefecture rather than that of youth centre officials, but they can also provide activities outside the centre.

The use of alternative spaces has been considerably facilitated by the recent increase in the number of centres operating under a model similar to youth centres. Publicly funded, these centres are made available to associations that provide basic economic and social services, and services in the areas of health, vocational training, integration into the labour market, etc. In this way youth centres have been supplemented by citizen centres dependent on national social welfare centres, multi-purpose social centres created within the framework of the INDH or royal foundations, women's centres that fall under the Ministry of Solidarity and the Family, Ministry of Culture cultural centres, and new social and sports centres recently set up by the Ministry of Youth and Sport. In the case of disagreements or when they encounter too many obstacles, those active in associations can move from one establishment to another. Gihane, a woman of 24 who is active in several associations and has been a user of the F. Youth Centre since her childhood, described this situation as follows:

When it became too difficult to get rooms at the F. Youth Centre, we preferred to go to the youth centre in neighbourhood A. This was mainly because of its director at the time; he was very conciliatory and open. Even a person coming for the first time that he didn't know could get a meeting room. Now things have changed. Now there's a new director. Now it's the F. Youth Centre that's become more open. So we're starting to go back there.⁶²

This trend reflects the breakdown of both government and the form of the social sphere: from a relatively small number of establishments devoted to various different social interventions, there is now a multitude of spaces that serve mainly as a framework through which associations, as new spaces of the social, can implement their own activities. However, this new relationship to the physical space of establishments and centres devoted to the social does not mean that the latter have become superfluous. To carry out their activities and seek donors and subsidies, associations need physical spaces. It is the nature of the link between these organizations and the establishments that use them that has changed, with the physical spaces becoming interchangeable and associations more mobile. The newly-created sociocultural centres are generally led by the associations that run their activities. This is the case of the centre entrusted by a royal foundation to the youth association chaired by Omar, an association member who has become influential in F. district.

At the top of the building we have a seminar room. Associations that hold meetings, general assemblies, presentations, seminars and training sessions can use it. You just need to file an application and be known to us. Because we're... how can I put it... We're responsible to the

⁶² Interview with Gihane, Casablanca, May 2012.

authorities. For instance, it's not possible to... Like one day when a person came to a seminar organized by the human rights association. He began to say that there's no democracy in this country, there's no freedom in this country. I agree with him. But painting a completely black picture – well, there I don't agree with him, quite simply because we're already in a centre financed by a foundation chaired by the king. He delegated it to a neighbourhood association without imposing any conditions! [...] They've never interfered with our work. We're free to do what we want. [...] There's freedom, or rather a margin of freedom. Let's not say freedom. This margin isn't bad. We shouldn't paint such a black picture of it all [...]. Yes, it's true: there are taboos. There are people that can't be criticized. There are some issues that can't be addressed. But that doesn't stop there being a margin compared to other countries we know, African and Arab countries. [...] We didn't create the association to seek confrontation. We're hoping to work in concert with people. Because we believe... How can I put it? It's a conviction. We can't do anything all by ourselves. Moroccans have been opposing and confronting the regime for forty or fifty years, and where's it got us? The regime just gets more and more powerful. You see? What I mean is that the question today is how to get the two groups to trust each other.⁶³

I reproduce this long passage from my interview with Omar because it shows that the increasing number of associations and the centres that they run does not reflect a decline in the state but rather its redeployment via the associations. Omar is the president of an association created in 2002 by a group of young men from F. district who were in their thirties to broaden the horizons of the young people who live there. The association has since gained in importance and visibility. It has mounted several programmes fostering the education of young people, provides assistance for jobseekers and promotes various artistic activities. It runs and organizes the programmes of two sociocultural centres in the neighbourhood, the first created with support from the district, the second in partnership with a royal foundation. Omar plays a key role at these two centres: he co-directs the first on a voluntary basis as president of its advisory council of association members, and is the salaried director of the second, the management of which has been handed over to several associations including the one he chairs.

While the two establishments have been built and partly equipped by the district and the foundation respectively, their operation is completely the responsibility of the association, funded by the subscriptions paid by centre users and partnerships with national and international entities, including the European Union. This funding covers not only teachers' salaries but also the equipment necessary for cultural and artistic activities and the salaries of two programme coordinators and several employment advisors. Establishments such as those run by Omar ensure the implementation of state-promoted development projects, which happen, as in the case of youth centres, by means of associations. But contrary to the situation at the F. Youth Centre, the responsibility for their management and funding falls entirely to the association, further reducing state investment in them.

⁶³ Interview with Omar, 45, president of a neighbourhood association and director of two socio-educational centres in F., Casablanca, May 2013.

The association that Omar chairs plays a key role in the neighbourhood: its activities have enabled it to gain visibility and importance in the eyes of both local residents and public authorities. Its mediation allowed a meeting between the local Ministry of Youth and Sport delegate and the associations that supported Halima after her expulsion from the F. Youth Centre. The dismissal of the custodian that followed proved that the associations these days can exert significant pressure. However, Omar's remarks also indicated that the possibility of moving from one centre to another has its limits: not just anyone can enter, and not just anyone who wants to can speak his or her mind in the establishment. In particular, Omar ensures that the ideas that are disseminated by the users of the centre do not convey too negative an image of the regime, justifying this filtering in two ways: his everyday experience of relative political openness and the advantages of securing conflict-free relations with local authorities.

The associations' independence has its limits. In order to be entitled to legal status, the leaders of an association must declare its existence to the closest competent authority. This process can also be used to keep out or even marginalize certain actors and organizations, for instance actors known to be close to the Al Adl wal-Ihsan movement, and associations representing the Sahrawi and Amazigh populations, advocating the rights of unemployed graduates, or promoting the rights of sub-Saharan migrants.⁶⁴ The creation of associations is thus still largely under the control of central government. It does not rest, like clubs, on personal relations formed at youth centres, but on a bureaucratic structure that leaves less room for negotiation.

The same applies to access to the resources needed to ensure the smooth operation of such organizations. Association actors must maintain good relations with the state, favouring conciliation over opposition; for example, in the new centres that are developing in Morocco today associations, like the directors and custodians of youth centres previously, tend to take on the role of gatekeeper, ensuring that social and political boundaries are respected. However, unlike the director or the custodian, the dominance of these intermediaries is based on the normative mechanism of a participatory approach. While this mechanism makes it possible for the state to redeploy itself indirectly at a lower cost, it differs from the previous system because it can include many new actors in the government of the social sphere, renewing and diversifying the composition of the local elite.

The study of youth centres as an example of intermediary institutions in the government of the social highlights the many different modes of delegation, reference points and formal and informal actors that contribute to shaping relations between state and society. The social question of young people at the heart of their missions tends to take second place in the face of the many other functions (whether political, social, economic or security) that they fulfil. The historical trajectory of the F. Youth Centre also reveals the transformation of this mode of government of the social through space, and the rise of new mediators. In the course of

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Freedom to create associations: A declarative regime in name only*, 2009. Some organizations, afraid of being refused authorization as an association, have even opted to return to club format. But while club status makes it easier for an organization to be regularized, this is often perceived as temporary because, as shown, it does not ensure that it can benefit from the new resources to which associations now have access.

these developments a constellation of spaces dependent on a particular physical form (youth centres) has given way to a configuration of legal and normative spaces (associations) in many different and interchangeable physical forms, which assume responsibility for the implementation of social policies by organizing sociocultural activities, seeking funding and managing local conflicts.

When grasped via the example of youth centres, social intervention – often seen as a clearly-defined and coordinated policy targeting a particular population – takes a fragmented, ever-changing and diffuse form, which revolves around very different fields of intervention that are entangled but not coordinated. These establishments, entrusted with the task of providing young people with a place to meet and learn, are also frequented by other elements of the population such as women and early members of the youth centre, whom they provide with a place to meet, reminisce about the past and continue their former social and political lives, in a different form. This type of space also responds to other social imperatives such as the preservation of security, the provision of informal social protection and employment, and political recruitment. Such a fragmentation of social action indicates a breakdown of the meanings that can be attributed to the ‘social’. Over and above the provision of a particular social service and social policies, it is also a matter of building social ties, managing social conflicts, safeguarding social peace, and socializing certain populations.