

CEREAL CITIZENS
Crafting bread and belonging in urbanising Morocco*

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ABSTRACT. Hardly a meal is eaten without bread in Morocco. Despite a nutritional transition mirroring the global trend towards more sugar, fat and animal protein, cereals, largely in the form of bread, remain highly valued and the unchallenged staple food. At the same time bread is politically sensitive, for the legitimacy of the government historically rests on the provision of cheap flour and bread to its urban citizens. Notwithstanding a general tendency towards economic liberalization, the production, distribution and consumption of wheat are still controlled by the government, not least due to continuing urbanization and persistently high rates of poverty, which have contributed to political revolutions in neighbouring countries. In this context, which cereals are eaten and how they are made into bread is meaningful not only culturally, but also economically and politically. To capture the multiple values of bread and to analyze their material and symbolic entanglements, I think of poor and recently urbanized Moroccans as ‘cereal citizens’. Based on the premise that bodily practices are central to the creation of meaning and value, I argue that, in selecting cereals and making bread, recently urbanized poor Moroccans craft an ambivalent sense of belonging that celebrates their rural origins while accepting their dependence on cheap, largely imported wheat. In doing so, they assert themselves as political subjects, and their daily practices of bread-making can be considered a civic practice.

INTRODUCTION

One of the first food anthropologists, Audrey Richards (1939), observed that, for the Bemba in what is now Zambia, if there is no millet there is no food. The same can be said of bread in Morocco today: bread is the staple of the Moroccan diet and Moroccan (food) culture. Moroccans eat bread with nearly every meal. Bread simply has to be there: it is the tool to pick up food, the conveyor of a dish’s taste, the guarantor of physical satiation and the basis of caring and hospitality. But not all bread is equal: there are multiple criteria that define ‘good’ bread, most notably the cereals it is made of, their provenance, the taste and texture of a loaf, whether it is homemade or bought, and its price. Furthermore, as all the contributions in this collection make evident, bread – or the respective local staple cereal – has spiritual qualities, its preparation being a ma-

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terially and symbolically meaningful practice that sits at the heart of a complex value system. It contributes to the making and unmaking of bodies, meanings and belongings – not just at the local level and between individuals, but also, and especially, when it comes to citizenship and perceptions of the state. For Moroccans bread is the world, a Maussian ‘total social fact’.¹

At the same time, bread is deeply embedded in processes of material and social change, especially for recently urbanized poor Moroccans who are the focus of this article – a focus that only at first sight appears to be in contrast to the rural societies that are discussed in the other contributions to this collection.² Over the last three decades, economic liberalization and population growth have contributed to a rural exodus and the rapid growth of Moroccan cities, while unemployment and poverty remain prevalent.³ Gender relations have been changing due to urban women’s access to education and wage work (Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006), and families have been shrinking, as women seek financial and spatial independence from their extended families (Graf 2016a). Yet, although urban diets are also changing as a result, flour and bread remain central to the Moroccan diet and are still largely processed and prepared at home.⁴ While buying bread from the ubiquitous corner shops and bakeries is a common way of supplementing breakfast or dinner, including when hosting guests, many Moroccans consider it essential to prepare homemade bread for lunch. Even though most of my research participants went to school or worked for a wage, lunch was still the main meal of the day and, as such, it had to feature a typically Moroccan dish such as *tagine* with homemade bread to scoop it up with.⁵

Against this background, which cereals are chosen and how they are made into homemade bread are not only crucial determinants of taste and texture, but also assertions of being and belonging, similar to the contrast between rice and millet in rural

¹ See also Counihan (1999).

² ‘Recently urbanized’ refers to residents of Moroccan cities who either migrated themselves or whose parents migrated from rural Morocco from the 1960s, but especially in the 1980s and 1990s. ‘Poor’ is more difficult to define, not least because the poor themselves often have very different ways of perceiving poverty. Broadly speaking, poor families command less than the national monthly minimum wage (2500–3000 Moroccan Dirham [MAD], approximately 220–270 Euros, since 1 MAD equals 0.09 Euro [www.xe.com]) and are in less stable employment situations, i.e. are self-employed, in low-paid jobs or work as day labourers. Other important factors are the size of the flat or house, ranging from a whole family living in one room to a small flat, and the type of neighbourhood they live in.

³ Crawford (2008), Denoeux and Maghraoui (1998), Sippel (2014)

⁴ Benjelloun (2002), Garcia-Closas, Berenguer and Gonzalez (2006)

⁵ In the present article, italics denote non-English words, mostly in dialectal Moroccan Arabic, which can have either Standard Arabic or French roots, or French words. I use the Latin alphabet and follow the more established French spelling. ‘Tagine’ refers to both the cooking pot, a thick earthenware plate with a conical lid, and the dish prepared in it, a slow-cooked stew combining vegetables with a bit of meat. Although today pressure cookers are often replacing *tagine* pots, the resulting dish is still called ‘tagine’.

India or maize and wheat in rural Mexico.⁶ Drawing on the centrality of bread as the unchallenged staple of Moroccan (food) culture, I propose the notion of ‘cereal citizens’ to conceptualize how, in crafting bread, poor and recently urbanized Moroccans in particular craft a sense of belonging in their new home. ‘Cereal’ refers to the multiple entanglements that are (re)created through repeatedly sourcing and processing grains into flour and making bread, and that help define being and belonging. ‘Citizen’ refers to the ambivalent relationship of dependence that this segment of society experiences towards the government and the rest of the world.

In the following, I first introduce the wider politics of wheat and the role of the government in its production, distribution and consumption in order to guarantee urban food security despite economic liberalization. Based on long-term ethnographic research in Marrakech and, more recently, Beni Mellal,⁷ I then explore how the everyday bodily practices of making bread are constitutive of the multiple values of cereals and how these, in turn, contribute to recently urbanized poor Moroccans’ multiple senses of belonging. In the final section, I then introduce the concept of ‘cereal citizens’ to weave economic and cultural values of belonging together with political ones.

TWO WHEATS, TWO MOROCCOS?

For several centuries, wheat has been a politically sensitive food product in Morocco. Stacy Holden (2009) suggests that the Alaouite monarchy has been able to rule Morocco since the late seventeenth century largely because it provided food security in this semi-arid environment. The role of the *makhzen* was quite literally to manage the production and supply of wheat for its citizens.⁸ Especially with the onset of urbanization in the early twentieth century, guaranteeing a minimal supply of cheap wheat and flour to the urban poor has become a major pillar of the monarchy’s policies. This was reinforced through agricultural and urban reforms during the French Protectorate from 1912 to 1956 (Swearingen 1987).

Since independence, the Alaouite Kingdom – now a constitutional monarchy – has controlled flour and bread through flexible import tariffs, subsidies and price controls. Although the Moroccan economy has been liberalized since the 1980s due to inter-

⁶ On India, see the contributions by Peter Berger and Roland Hardenberg in this collection; on rural Mexico, see the contribution by Anja Bohnenberger in this collection.

⁷ I conducted one year of fieldwork in Marrakech between 2012 and 2013, focusing on food preparation, as well as regular shorter fieldtrips since then, which since early 2017, have also included the city of Beni Mellal and focussed on wheat cereals. For this recent research, participant observation and interviews with roughly twenty families in both cities were complemented with visits to and observations of urban and rural markets, mills and bakeries, as well as interviews with farmers, vendors, millers and bakers. Monia Alazali facilitated this recent project.

⁸ ‘Makhzen’ literally translates as ‘granary’, but it more generally refers to the monarchy and its political allies.

national pressure, wheat remains a controlled commodity (Akesbi 2014, Arrisueno *et al.* 2016). The government's current wheat policies thus incarnate a long-term social contract binding the government to its citizens through the provision of food security. Indeed, especially for recently urbanized poor Moroccans, citizenship is largely based on state-guaranteed access to cheap flour and bread.

But not all wheat is equal. Behind the politics of wheat and recent material and social change lies a distinction between soft and hard wheat, the two main cereals that Moroccans mix to make bread, as well as a distinction between commercial and home-made flour and bread.⁹ For a start, soft wheat is cheap, tends to come in the form of industrially refined 'white' flour and bread, and is considered to have low quality, a bland taste and few health benefits. Hard wheat, usually wholemeal and coarse, is more expensive, yellow or light brown, tends to be associated with locally sourced grains and homemade flour and bread, and is considered nourishing, healthy and tasty. This contrast appears more straightforward than that between maize and wheat, especially sweetbread and cake, in Mexico, or between millets and rice in central India, which seem to co-exist in more established ways.¹⁰ Part of the explanation for this contrast lies in the relative novelty of soft wheat in Morocco and its strong association with political intervention to bring about agrarian and rural change.

Soft-wheat grains are referred to as 'farina', while industrial and refined flour made of soft wheat is called 'fors'. As the French name suggests, *farina* was only introduced during the French Protectorate, and its production has been supported through government programmes ever since this decision, which was politically rather than ecologically motivated (Swearingen 1987). Its production in Morocco's semi-arid environment usually requires irrigation and additional inputs such as high-yielding commercial seed varieties, chemical fertilisers and herbicides, and it is typically grown on large-scale farms in the fertile plains – and still, it is produced at more than double the world's most competitive production costs (Telleria Juarez and Dhehibi 2017). If it is imported – and on average imports account for roughly fifty percent of all soft wheat in the Moroccan market¹¹ – the government-controlled import tariff tends to cover the difference between domestic and global market prices in order to protect domestic soft wheat production.

While the production and distribution of soft wheat is heavily controlled, the majority of hard wheat consumed in Morocco is produced domestically and distributed following market principles. The generic Arabic term for wheat, 'gmeh', denotes its grain and, if homemade, also its flour. 'Fino' denotes industrially produced hard-wheat flour. *Gmeh* is grown on both large and small fields that are mainly rain-fed in both the fertile

⁹ Barley, historically the companion to hard wheat (Davis 2007), is still occasionally used for human consumption, although its production is largely destined for animals.

¹⁰ On Mexico, see the contribution by Bohnenberger in this collection; on Central India, see the contributions by Berger and Hardenberg in this collection.

¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization (2017). Speaking of an average is slightly misleading in this case, since the figure can vary significantly depending on annual domestic production.

plains and the mountains. Although it is better adapted to Morocco's drought-prone environment and has been cultivated in the country for at least two millennia (Davis 2007), irregular rainfall still leads to variable harvests and levels of availability. Thus, in contrast to the prices for *farina* and *fors*, which are kept artificially low and stable, the prices of *gmeh* and *fino* fluctuate and are generally higher. In November 2017 the price of a kilogram of *fors* ranged between 3 and 5 MAD in both Marrakech and Beni Mellal, depending on quality and brand, while the price of a kilogram of *fino* ranged between 6 and 8 MAD.

Although the price of *gmeh* is not controlled, its production often benefits, just like that of domestically grown *farina*, from subsidies to support the acquisition of high-yielding seeds, chemical fertilisers, herbicides, agricultural extension and mechanization. However, in contrast to *farina*, *gmeh* is also produced in agriculturally (and economically) marginal areas. Here, the former colonial distinction between Maroc utile and Maroc inutile remains significant. Since the early twentieth century, agricultural policies have systematically favoured the more fertile Moroccan plains (Maroc utile) and agricultural production for export, while the more peripheral mountain regions (Maroc inutile) and subsistence agriculture have been largely bypassed by these policies.¹² Despite repeated reforms, this selective modernization has created a dual agriculture, which persists to this day (Akesbi 2014, Davis 2006).

CRAFTING BREAD AND BELONGING

Crafting good bread

The duality of Moroccan agriculture is also manifest in practices of bread-making and finds expression in the heightened attention paid to the provenance of wheat and its transformation into flour, as well the taste and texture of the bread made from it. Despite the ready availability of bread in the shops, my female research participants made the characteristic Moroccan flatbreads at home nearly every day.¹³ To make dough, they mixed water, yeast and salt with both handmade wholemeal hard-wheat flour and commercially refined soft-wheat flour. The preparation of homemade bread does not stop there, however.

¹² Pascon (1986), Payne (1986), Swearingen (1987). Agricultural production for export, mainly to the European Union and especially of citrus fruits and garden vegetables, competes directly over scarce resources such as arable soil and water with cereal production for domestic consumption (Sippel 2014, Swearingen 1987).

¹³ Food preparation is gendered in most of Morocco. In so far as generalization is at all possible, women tend to be in control of processing and cooking food, whereas men tend to help in sourcing and transporting foods, e.g. by taking grains to the mill or bread to the oven (Graf 2016a). See also the contribution by Jeanine Dağyeli in this collection.

For most of my research participants, making bread also included the sourcing and processing of grains into flour. Which grains were sourced and processed depended, in turn, on the respective ecologies surrounding Marrakech and Beni Mellal. Like the majority of Moroccan city-dwellers, most of my female research participants migrated from the agricultural hinterlands to the regional centres where they now live.¹⁴ Their corresponding regional origin partially determined their bodily skills and practices and, by extension, the ecology of their home region (*bled*) was embodied, resulting from routine bodily practices attuned to the given local ecology, including subsistence farming and food preparation (Graf 2016a).

Marrakech lies in the foothills of the High Atlas, called Haouz, an area too arid to grow *farina* without irrigation, and too costly with it. Traditionally, therefore, the Haouz only produces *gmeh*. Beni Mellal lies at the heart of the Tadla Plains, which lie in the more humid foothills of the Middle Atlas. Here, *farina* is grown on an industrial scale and often also with the help of irrigation, thanks to one of the biggest water dams in Morocco. These grains inevitably reach Beni Mellal's bi-weekly local market (*suq*) together with *gmeh* grains, which are equally abundant in the Tadla region. Given these respective ecologies, it is not surprising that *gmeh* is widely available in both cities and that the knowledge and skills to process the grains into flour are accordingly widespread among Marrakchis and Beni Mellalis, while only the latter have easy access to and process *farina* into flour at home.

Consequently, my Marrakchi research participants sourced soft wheat only in the form of *fors*, either in 10 kg or 25 kg pre-packaged bags from the *suq* or, if very poor, in small quantities from one of the many neighbourhood corner shops. This soft-wheat flour was industrially milled and marketed through a number of well-known brands. My Beni Mellali research participants also bought *fors*, by far the cheapest ingredient of bread, as well as the unprocessed grains of *farina* – comparatively easier to process and cheaper than *gmeh* – and processed it into flour, just like *gmeh*, as I describe below.

To source unprocessed grains, both my Marrakchi and my Beni Mellali research participants relied on active ties to their rural kin, since grains from one's *bled* were usually perceived to be better than those from other regions. Thirty-five-year old Sanaa reminisced about such *beldi* grains,¹⁵ 'They taste of my hometown, my childhood'. Because sourcing grains in one's *bled* was not always possible and because all families I worked with consumed so much bread, many also relied on their rurally imparted knowledge to choose among unstandardized grains at the *suq* and to process these into flour at home.

¹⁴ See also Crawford (2008).

¹⁵ All names in this paper are pseudonyms in compliance with the "General Data Protection Regulation" (GDPR) of the European Union (www.gdpr-info.eu). The term 'beldi' literally translates as 'from the home', but here it means 'home-grown'.

Thus, even in urban markets, identifying good-quality cereals required bodily and agronomic knowledge, acquired through years of practice growing up in rural Morocco.¹⁶ In the *suq* prices are rarely indicated or fixed, requiring shoppers to engage bodily through all the senses with what's on offer. My research participants visually compared colour and size, rubbed the grains between the fingers, smelled and often also chewed the grains to assess their qualities. As they did so, moving from stall to stall, they engaged in conversation with the vendors, often the farmer himself, to enquire: 'Where are these grains from?', 'Are they irrigated?', 'Have they been cleaned?' While some localities are renowned for their grains, season, climate and weather mattered equally when it came to determining quality and price. For instance, shoppers were generally aware that prices drop during harvest time in the early summer or when it rains.¹⁷ My female research participants then cleaned the grains at home and, with the help of their husbands or sons, brought them to the neighbourhood mills for grinding, which, as in Central Asia,¹⁸ were considered better than the industrial mills. Once back home, the women sieved the flour to separate the wholemeal flour from the bran, which was used to coat the bread loaves after combining, kneading and shaping the dough.

Most people I spoke with declared that they did not like the bland taste of *fors* and were suspicious of its provenance.¹⁹ Fatima, a grandmother from Beni Mellal, wondered: 'Who knows where [*fors*] is from, Midelt [a commercial brand], Spain or America? Nobody knows where it's from!' Many were furthermore convinced that *fors* has no nutritional benefits and also wondered what kind of additives were used to make it so suspiciously white.²⁰ Nevertheless, people still used it to mix it with their homemade, coarser wholemeal *gmeh* flour in order to ease the kneading and to increase the volume of the loaf. Fatima explained, 'If you don't mix it, you don't eat' to explain her ambivalence towards *fors*. Like others, she stressed that the much cheaper *fors* was necessary to stretch the more expensive *gmeh*. At the same time, too much of it in bread was thought to cause indigestion and constipation, at least by adults.²¹

In contrast to the negative connotations associated with *fors*, my research participants considered the more expensive and homemade *gmeh* (or, to a lesser extent,

¹⁶ For more details, see Graf (2016b).

¹⁷ Rain is erratic and unpredictable across Morocco. According to the farmers and vendors I interviewed, when it rains at the right time of the year, during sowing and the early period of growth (November to March), farmers are more willing to sell their grains from the previous year because they envisage a good new harvest.

¹⁸ See the contribution by Dağyeli in this collection.

¹⁹ The exception were children under the age of 16 to 18 years. They tended to prefer soft-wheat store-bought breads, especially the commercially produced baguette-style loaf. However, in those cases where I have known adolescents for several years, I noticed that with age this bread becomes less appealing.

²⁰ Cf. Bobrow-Strain (2012). According to most packages and, where available, websites, most commercially sold soft-wheat flour claims to be enhanced with vitamins.

²¹ However, cakes and most sweet specialties were often prepared with *fors* only.

also *farina*) to be tasty and a determinant of good, healthy bread. *Gmeh* was said to be nutrient-rich and good for digestion due to its wholemeal and fibres. Most argued that only hard wheat satisfies hunger, whereas pure *fors* bread makes one hungry, like the perceptual difference between millet and rice among the Dongria, where less of the former is considered more satisfying.²²

Related to this is the notion of 'baraka'. *Gmeh* was said to contain *baraka*, which generically means God's blessing or blessed, but in the case of bread also means 'wholesome' or 'substantial'. Bread containing *gmeh* is considered more filling and satisfying, keeps hunger at bay and nourishes both body and soul. At the same time, as the name suggests, it is hard (*qash*) to process and difficult to knead and chew, which additionally bestows *baraka* on to homemade flour and bread, quite like the spiritual valuation of strenuous agricultural labour in Central Asia.²³ To alleviate this hard daily work and to save money without compromising the material and spiritual benefits of homemade flour, almost all the women I interviewed added *fors*. Finally, how bread was baked also mattered to making good bread. Even when they owned a gas oven – as most of my research participants did – husbands or children usually brought the loaves to the nearest wood-fired oven in the morning and collected them on their way home for lunch. The neighbourhood oven was said to impart a crustier surface, a unique smell and a better taste to the bread. Overall, the urban infrastructure is surprisingly attuned to these bread-making practices and is a material testament to women's hard work in particular.

The cost of making bread

For many of the recently urbanized poor – and in contrast to the rural societies that still practise agriculture described in the other contributions to this collection – price can outweigh other values of bread and constrain its preparation, since processing grains at home rather than buying the finished product, whether flour or bread, was more expensive. Although most interviewees were acutely aware of the higher costs incurred in making flour at home and adjusted their practices accordingly, the cases of two very poor Marrakchi families reveal the fault lines of urban bread-making and belonging in the broader context of economic liberalization and urbanization. Neither of them could afford to buy grains, since these were only available in larger quantities, and they rarely had enough money even to make their own bread from store-bought flour. In contrast to families with a daily food budget of up to 50 MAD, these two families had to get by on only 20 MAD.

Malika was a single mother in her late twenties who worked as a day labourer. When asked what she thought about bread prices, she replied promptly, 'Flour is ex-

²² See the contribution by Hardenberg in this collection.

²³ See the contribution by Dağyeli in this collection.

pensive, not bread!’ She did not need to think before calculating: ‘I pay 5 MAD if I buy five small bread loaves which last for a day and 8 MAD if I make a similar amount of bread at home, including yeast and paying the neighbourhood oven’. Except once a week when she made her own bread from a kilogram of *fors* and *fino* bought at the corner shop (‘Because I miss it’), Malika bought the cheapest bread, made of *fors* in the same nearby public oven-cum-bakery where she would bring her own loaves for baking. Although she was aware of the bakery’s poor standard of hygiene and dubious of the bread’s quality, she stressed that one such loaf costs only 1 MAD. This allowed her to buy half a litre of milk for her six-year-old son as well.

Saida, a single mother with a ten- and a twenty-two-year-old son and a day labourer like Malika, recounted a similar story: ‘If I earned a bit of money, I make bread; if not, I buy bread [...]. You do the maths and you realise that you can’t afford to make bread at home’. In contrast to Malika, however, she walked fifteen to twenty minutes most mornings to buy bread that contained *gmeh* and that her family considered tasty and fulfilling. Although a large loaf of this bread cost 4 MAD and was rather expensive, Saida argued, she still spent only 8 MAD on her family’s daily bread, rather than 12 MAD if she made a similar amount of bread at home. When she was really short of money, Saida stressed, ‘I prefer to make spaghetti rather than buy *fors* bread! I get bellyache from it’. For her, even a foreign dish such as spaghetti was better than eating cheap *fors* bread.

The price of these cheap loaves is controlled, and most interviewees, like Malika and Saida, were convinced that to make such cheap bread, bakers had to cheat by using the subsidized and low-quality flour in circulation across Morocco – a suspicion shared with other urban consumers across time and space.²⁴ According to official reports (Royaume du Maroc 2014), a million metric tonnes (mmt) of such flour, called ‘*farine nationale*’, is produced annually and distributed directly to Morocco’s poorest citizens, both urban and rural.²⁵ According to my research participants, including my interview partners representing industrial mills processing *farine nationale*, much of this flour is diverted illegally somewhere along its complicated distribution channel. Two interview partners even spoke of a ‘flour mafia’ that benefitted commercial bakers, who, it is widely assumed, are under pressure to produce bread at the government-controlled price of no more than 1.2 MAD per 200 g loaf.

My research participants also assumed that these bakers add sugar to inflate the size and weight of the loaf and to make the ‘grey’ flour turn golden and visually appealing. Yet, when I asked commercial bakers whether they add sugar in producing this cheap bread, they rendered it positively as a practice that enhances the work of the yeast and the flavour of the bread. In the commercial oven-bakeries I visited, staff

²⁴ See e.g. Bobrow-Strain (2012) and Kaplan (1996).

²⁵ In 2017, this amount was reduced to 650,000 metric tonnes (mt). Total national consumption is ca. 10 mmt (United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service 2017). The Moroccan government opts for a general rather than a targeted subsidy, as is common in other countries such as India or Egypt. Cf. Hardenberg (this collection), Schewe (2017).

willingly showed me round the premises, allowing me to step into the musty, dimly lit rooms where flour was kneaded in the open by large machines and shaped into loaves by two or more assistants. A commercial baker told me that the bulk of these cheap loaves were sold to restaurants, confirming the general opinion that government price controls benefit businesses more than poor individuals, who, by virtue of their poverty, can only afford small quantities. Indeed, one operator of such an oven-cum-bakery, to whom I talked while he was rapidly but delicately placing and removing hundreds of bread loaves in the wood-fired oven, concluded our interview by saying, 'There's money in it (*fiḥ al-flouss*)'.

Not surprisingly, then, most of my research participants steered clear of the government-controlled cheap *fors* bread, which, despite the official discourse, was not actually produced for their benefit. Of course, in the context of women's wage work and their reduced time for food preparation, all families bought bread regularly, but they still applied similar values in judging its various qualities.

Crafting situated belonging

The different material values ascribed to *gmeh* and *fors*, including but not limited to price, also have symbolic relevance and are closely related to my research participants' broader values and, by extension, their senses of being and belonging in the context of urbanization. Thus, the bodily practices surrounding the processing and preparation of homemade flour and bread are themselves as important in crafting value (Graeber 2001) as is price, if not more so. By crafting bread, Morocco's recently urbanized poor are crafting not only local and regional, but also national, international and even transcendental belonging. Importantly, their multiple senses of belonging are highly relative and rarely refer to a fixed social entity (Graeber 2001:86–87). Different cereals make for different Moroccans.

Generally speaking, the highly valued *gmeh* is associated with Moroccan soil and the small-scale farms that are considered typical – although nowadays these can hardly account for the bulk of production. For my research participants, *gmeh* represents Morocco and how they perceive themselves as Moroccans: a rural society still partially based on subsistence farming, where everyone is firmly rooted in a place and community, and where one's food and neighbours are known, as is the case amongst the Dongria and the Gadaba in India or the Tepehua-speaking community in Mexico.²⁶ Good wheat contains a sense of rural belonging, which many urban poor pride themselves on in response to a rapidly urbanizing society and to what for them is a growing mass of anonymous poor.

²⁶ See the contributions by Berger, Bohnenberger and Hardenberg in this collection.

Of course, in an urban context, the locality or region that qualifies as one's *bled* differs for everyone. For Sanaa *gmeh* from her hometown embodied the taste of her *bled*, and she considered it better and tastier than wheat of unknown provenance. Yet this *gmeh* only became *beldi* for her in the context of migrating to and living in Marrakech. When I asked her visiting mother whether she considered this to be *gmeh beldi*, she only replied, 'It's *gmeh*'. Nor did Sanaa's husband consider this to be *gmeh beldi*. For him, the wheat of his parents' hometown in southern Morocco was *beldi*. Indeed, this *gmeh* was *beldi* only for Sanaa, and as such it contained the taste and texture of her past, linked her in the present to her family, and reflected her relationship with her husband and the urban space of Marrakech. Crafting belonging through cereals is thus inherently situated in a person's particular life history and place.

Gmeh retains its respective *beldi* quality better if it is processed into flour by hand. This is particularly relevant for those Marrakchis and Beni Mellalis who no longer have access to *gmeh* from their rural kin and source grains exclusively from the urban *suq*. In this case, *beldi* also refers to grains processed by hand, irrespective of where they come from, as long as they are not imported. Indeed, Moroccan cuisine as a whole is associated with handmade foods as well as labour- and time-intensive dishes (Graf 2016a). By processing and ingesting wholemeal *gmeh*, recently urbanized Moroccans can materially and symbolically recreate, at least partially, this local and regional sense of belonging: a way of being that, ironically, is gradually disappearing as rural populations no longer derive a sustainable income from farming (Crawford 2008, Sippel 2014). Making *gmeh* bread allows one to hold on to this lost home, the *bled*, in the new home, the city. Depending on where you came from and where and who you are in the present, the meaning of *beldi* thus ranges from 'local or regional' to 'hand- and homemade' (Graf 2016b) and contains within it a nostalgic longing for a rural Morocco that perhaps never really existed (cf. Seremetakis 1994).

Nevertheless, a shared sense of belonging does exist in Morocco, albeit on a more spiritual level. Bread is considered the essence of all foods and the primary gift of God to his people. Yet, while all bread is sacred, only homemade bread can acquire *baraka*. As described earlier, such blessed bread is considered to quench hunger best and to sustain the good Muslim materially. By extension, only cooks who invest their bodies and time in making homemade flour or bread can acquire *baraka*. In this Muslim-majority country, making and eating blessed bread serves to assert a shared sense of belonging with all Moroccans, including their leader. For the Moroccan king is not only the head of state, he is also considered the 'commander of the faithful', the spiritual leader of all Muslim Moroccans. This also points to a sense of belonging in the afterlife, for every good Muslim seeks to acquire as much *baraka* as possible in his or her daily life in order to be given a place in heaven. Preparing homemade bread thus affirms not only national, but also transcendental belonging.

Finally, the consumption of soft-wheat flour and bread extends notions of belonging beyond national boundaries – albeit ambivalently so, resembling the conception of cosmic transformation among the Tepehua-speaking community in Mexico described by Bohnenberger (this collection). Soft wheat is firmly associated with the former colonial power, the French, and, since the emergence of the so-called free market, the global economic powerhouses of North America and Europe. Its very name, ‘farina’ (from the French for flour, ‘farine’) makes it foreign and inherently unknowable. What is more, refined soft-wheat flour smacks of large-scale industrialized farming and neoliberal agricultural policies; or, worse still, of international imports and thus dependence on the global market.²⁷ Fatima’s comment about the obscure provenance of *fors* is emblematic of the suspicion that most of my research participants felt towards foreign food. Indeed, when it comes to food, most of them thought that, while Morocco exported quality foods to the rich North, it imported cheap and low-quality wheat for its own citizens, who are, by virtue of their poverty, obliged to consume this food despite its negative connotations.

These discursively – if not actually – rejected foreign foods are commonly labelled ‘rumi’ and form a pair with *beldi*.²⁸ Soft wheat reminded my research participants of the still felt distinction between Maroc utile and Maroc inutile, already mentioned. Most of them have origins in Maroc inutile – although they would not refer to it as ‘useless’ or peripheral land. This contrast resonates with what Hardenberg (this collection, citing Gregory) distinguishes as ‘imperial’ versus ‘subaltern’ crops, whereby rice is associated with the state and millet with lower castes and tribals in India. It is precisely because economic liberalization has led to the neglect of traditional rural economies in Morocco and driven them into the cities that many poor Moroccans reject Maroc inutile’s counterpart, Maroc utile, and its association with modernized agriculture and the industrial production of *rumi* foods that compete with and increasingly outperform the small-scale and artisanal production of *beldi* foods for *beldi* people like themselves. When food is produced for export in this Maroc utile, the terms should be reversed: it becomes ‘useless’ for feeding Moroccans like themselves.

Although processing soft-wheat grains into flour by hand represents a form of appropriation through culturally meaningful practices – and of rescuing some food from becoming *rumi* through industrial processing – soft wheat remains imbued with everything symbolic of Maroc utile. Eating soft wheat in the form of *fors* thus amounts to diluting one’s Moroccan being. Yet, for Morocco’s urban poor it is still a material necessity in everyday life.

²⁷ See Friedmann (1982) and Payne (1986).

²⁸ Graf (2016b), Rachik (1997). Literally, ‘rumi’ means ‘Roman’, but, depending on context, it refers to foreigners or foreign, industrial or mass-produced objects.

CEREAL CITIZENS

In light of the long legacy of government wheat policies and the more recent processes of economic liberalization and urbanization, the practices of sourcing, processing and making cereals into bread not only acquire meaning in the everyday life of recently urbanized poor Moroccans. They also express how seemingly disenfranchised Moroccans actively shape their being – literally and symbolically – and are, in turn, shaped by a government that, despite its cheap wheat policies, often overlooks the plight of its most vulnerable citizens. The political thus inevitably underlies bread's cultural and economic values, and bread-making can be considered a civic practice. To capture how the sourcing, processing and preparation of cereals into good bread comes together to craft political subjects, and drawing on the centrality of bread as the unchallenged staple of Moroccan (food) culture, I propose to conceive of recently urbanized poor Moroccans as 'cereal citizens'.

Although there is widespread interest in civil-society movements in Morocco (e.g. Hegasy 1997, Sater 2007), not much attention has been paid to how civic engagement is manifested in everyday life and beyond the public sphere. Speaking of Asian immigrants to the United States, Aihwa Ong's (1996) 'cultural citizenship' is an early attempt to link individual experiences to institutional practices and reveals how citizenship is often a dual process of self-making and being made. Kaela Jubas (2007) similarly argues that social relations in democratic societies are simultaneously cultural, economic and political. Her 'citizen-consumer' challenges masculinized accounts and theories of citizenship that tend to overlook women's roles especially and allows us to attend to both material and symbolic processes. Similarly, Rachel Newcomb's (2013) application of this concept to middle-class consumers in the Moroccan city of Fes shows how urban women especially can be conceived of as citizens in the context of economic, but not necessarily political, liberalization, where consumer choice becomes a stand-in for 'true' democratic participation (cf. Maghraoui 2002): 'For Moroccans more generally, the vision of an ideal citizen has become that which has been referred to as "citizen-consumer" [...] defined by one's ability to consume, that is, to purchase products' (Newcomb 2013:111).

Yet essentially, this conception limits citizenship to consumers' finances and thus to the relatively small urban middle and upper classes. Instead, conceiving of the recently urbanized poor – the majority of Moroccans – as cereal citizens allows us to understand how poor women's daily choices and practices around bread-making in particular not only mirror their experiences of material and social change, but also bespeak their role as citizens beyond consumption. For the government's cheap wheat policies effectively slot into the high value that poor Moroccans place on domestically produced hard-wheat grains and homemade flour and bread.²⁹ The 'stretching' of homemade flour with cheap soft-wheat flour allows recently urbanized poor consumers in particular to

²⁹ See Graeber (2001:86).

maintain their ideals of controlling the source and transformation of grains through their own bodily practices, despite their tight budgets and their equally real dependence on the government and global wheat imports for their food security, thereby enabling them to reproduce their deeply held values in the face of food insecurity. The social contract binding the state to its cereal citizens is still in place.

Of course, the existence of cereal citizens is inherently vulnerable and marked by subtle nuances of poverty. Poor urbanites like Malika and Saida especially were least able to deploy cereals in their daily crafting of cultural, economic and political belonging. Not only did neither of them have any connections to the rural hinterlands, but their limited food budgets constrained them further in their choice of cereals and largely prevented them from making bread at home. Without cereal connections within and beyond the city, their daily food security rested almost entirely on cheap bread provided by the state. In the context of a growing reliance on food imports, this effectively becomes a dependence on the global food market, exemplified by Saida's comment about making spaghetti rather than buying cheap bread. When cereal entanglements are limited and, crucially, rely on values not of one's own making, such as price, cereal citizenship implies reduced cultural agency and reveals the economic vulnerability and political marginality of a growing part of the Moroccan population.

At the same time, the cases presented throughout this article illustrate that even the most disenfranchised share values with their urban neighbours, not only by virtue of being Muslims, but also as bread-makers and eaters. Through their emphasis on homemade and wholesome bread and the *bled* as the origin and ideal of Moroccan society, cereal citizens are also shaping values that are shared across socio-economic groups. Although the notions of *beldi* and *rumi* are relative and depend on the temporal and spatial situatedness of bodies, they are Moroccan-wide categories that distinguish between local and global, homemade and mass-produced (Rachik 1997).

The recent addition of *beldi* bread to the supermarkets that target the urban middle and upper classes is emblematic of this. In this case, *beldi* refers to wholemeal bread as opposed to bread from *fors* or *fino*, thus referring to the greatest common denominator of what *beldi* bread can mean, despite being industrially produced and packaged. Wholemeal is the only material characteristic it shares with 'real' *beldi* bread, but through it, it seeks to evoke the other meanings of *beldi* materially and symbolically: grains of one particular locality or region and homemade flour and bread. The adoption of *beldi* bread in supermarkets hence denotes a form of validation of recently urbanized poor Moroccans' sense of belonging and of a shared appreciation of rural Morocco, homemade foods and more wholesome being in the face of change.³⁰

³⁰ This appreciation coexists with seemingly opposed values held by the middle and upper classes, who simultaneously associate *rumi* with everything they desire: modernity and European culture, including the industrialization of food production and consumption. See Newcomb (2013) and Rachik (1997).

The notion of the cereal citizen is an expression of such shared values and self-representations, including their many dissonances and ambivalences. It implies relative belonging similar to how *beldi* and *rumi* are used to distinguish between local and handmade (food) products on the one hand and foreign and industrial ones on the other. Depending on who you are, what your personal life trajectory is and where you are located in the present, the bread you make and eat can be *beldi* or *rumi*. At the same time, *beldi* cannot exist without its counterpart, *rumi*: the local or regional only makes sense in relation to the national or the international and vice versa. Cereal citizens, in crafting bread from grains and flour of various sources and through various processes that involve sometimes more and sometimes less bodily engagement, thus create cultural, economic and political belonging across geographical scales and in relation to an ever-changing understanding of the society they live and act in.

CONCLUSION

The concept of cereal citizens implies that belonging cannot be abstracted from the bodies and practices of political subjects. In preparing bread with both hard and soft wheat, recently urbanized poor Moroccans simultaneously reaffirm their rural origins and their contemporary belonging. As cereal citizens engaged in the civic practice of bread-making, they both resist and acknowledge the inevitable mechanization and modernization of agriculture and, consequently, the gradual transformation of the rural life they have left behind when moving to the cities.

However, the combination of hard- and soft-wheat cereals in Moroccans' daily bread is not only a material expression of their fraught but historically contingent sense of belonging. Cereal citizens' everyday practices also highlight how the seemingly disenfranchised urbanized poor contribute to making and unmaking deeply held social values as bread-makers, and how in doing so they craft a meaningful place in which to belong in a rapidly urbanizing nation. Even those with very limited possibilities to craft their own bread retain the bodily knowledge and desire to do so whenever possible and carefully balance cultural values against economic constraints. At the same time, their practices are indicative of the limiting effects of poverty, both in everyday practice and as political subjects, and of their heightened dependence on national and international provisioning of cheap wheat. This points to their growing vulnerability in an increasingly liberalizing and globalizing economy.

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