Opened in 2007 at the closest point between Africa and Europe, the Tangier Med Port is a logistics infrastructure built to support both physical and metaphorical connections between Morocco and the world. Physically, the port is transforming Morocco’s historic crossroads on the Strait of Gibraltar into a global logistics hub, where goods movement is mediated between multiple vessels, cargoes, and destinations. Metaphorically, the port is viewed as the most compelling public symbol of the current King Mohammed VI and his efforts since 1999 to build a more "global" and "modern" kingdom. Indeed, the mega-port has already altered Morocco’s connections to the larger world of commodity circulation and how commodities move in and out of the Mediterranean. This impact is quantified in Morocco’s rising rank on the UN Liner Shipping Connectivity Index of countries by number of maritime connections. From the time Tangier Med opened in 2007, Morocco has risen from 82nd place on this index in 2007 to 16th place in 2015. In this talk, I ask how this quantifiable impact of rising port connectivity is mediated through the everyday aspirations and practices of Moroccan actors.

Based on ethnographic research conducted at the port and its related industries between 2008 and 2012, this talk draws on a larger, book project about (1) how local logistics actors shape global commodity circulation and (2) how an historic port region is reshaped by logistics. In so doing, this project advances the ethnographic study of both the transnational processes of economic life in the Middle East and North Africa and the logistics infrastructures changing the shores of the Global South more widely. In conclusion, I describe my agenda for an anthropology of logistics that can contribute an ethnographic voice to public debates on the future of freight movement.

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