Chapter 6
Guides of the Atlas

> It is worth noting that no special explanation is required why there should be a village in this position at all: Zawiya Ahansal is not one of those places […] where religious faith and human ingenuity triumph over an adverse and unfavourable natural environment. On the contrary, the environment is favourable, indeed charming. Sidi Said Ahansal had chosen his place well, and it is in my view destined, when roads become adequate and the rise of national income in Morocco creates the demand, one of the favoured tourist centers in the Atlas. (Gellner 1969: 168)

The importance of this specific region of the High Atlas Mountains goes back to its historical importance as a religious place. When Ernest Gellner visited the area in the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s to do research for his *Saints of the Atlas*, he was fascinated by the extraordinary role of saints. Through their own kinship relations as direct descendants of the founder of the settlement and *zawiya*, they could identify themselves as descendants of the Prophet himself. Because they belonged to this *holy lineage*, they occupied outstanding social positions. Their wealth as well as political and religious authority was displayed, for instance, by the large castle-like houses (*igherman*). In contrast to similar buildings throughout the High Atlas which primarily served as communal granaries, every *holy family* owned their respective *ighrim*. These historical testaments are still admired today, as evidence of the former prestige of the saints and their supra-regional significance.

Where Gellner undoubtedly had seen saints as the striking feature of the specific socio-cultural configuration of the area, what I saw—when I started my fieldwork almost sixty years later—was tourist guides.

One, but surely not the only, reason for this was related to my own positionality. My main contacts in the beginning of my stay were working for the local NGOs and simultaneously as tourist guides and interpreters. Especially in the first weeks, I joined them in their daily routines and activities, or "went-along" as Kusenbach would have it (cf. Kusenbach 2003). They took me with them, showed me around, and explained to me the surroundings and local dynamics. They were professionals in taking care of me, having experience in working with tourists and guests. As we spent more time, however, the rather professional relationship was gradually replaced by friendship. The few people who knew about my connection with the project and the local association would immediately know how to place me. The interactions and topics of conversation where somewhat different from the ones I had with people who did not know me at all. For them I had to be a tourist and obviously was treated as such until I or my friends could elucidate the purpose of my stay and my affiliations.

On one of the very first days since I had arrived in the valley, I accompanied Ouleid to the weekly Suq. Ouleid was the main facilitator and project coordinator on our partner's side. He was in his early twenties and had just finished his bachelor's degree in English literature and cultural studies. He had then been recruited by the US American NGO ACF that was very active in the valley. Because he lived only a few houses away from where I stayed and also had relational ties to the family members, I became quite close with him. At the café above the Suq, there was a meeting of the recently founded *Association d'Alpinisme* that I was allowed to attend. In this association, people who owned guesthouses, worked as guides or were otherwise involved in tourism joined together as a collective, in order to collaboratively achieve objectives that would be difficult to achieve alone and thus benefit together from the overall tourism

of the region.[1] In total, eleven men gathered in the café's separate room on plastic chairs around two tables covered with washable, flower-patterned tablecloths. There were overlaps with some of the men who were also involved in other associations. Biscuits were served, tea poured, and after a short round of talking and joking during which Ouleid introduced me, the association's president officially opened the meeting. One of the spokesmen was Hamou, who ran a guesthouse at the end of the central village and worked as a guide. He presented an idea for a marathon event, which would run right through the High Atlas and that he developed with a well-known marathon runner from Morocco. Ouleid explained to me afterwards that although Hamou could probably organize the event himself, based on his expertise and contacts, he was determined to get the association on board. The involvement of the association would not only add more substance to the attempt to win further cooperation partners, but would also enable him to make use of the connections that some colleagues in the association had with the authorities as well as their experience with official paperwork and organizing. Hence, in the course of the meeting the members of the association discussed the feasibility of the project and what could be contributed. It was more about general questions of feasibility, i.e. which tasks would have to be carried out and distributed, and about the possibilities and the extent to which individuals (like Hamou), and the association, but also officials had to be, or ought to be, involved. One month later, at a further meeting that was also attended by the well-known marathon runner Ibrahim, the members presented the ideas—which had been provisionally agreed upon—to representatives of the local district administration.

---

1 The mission statement of the association, which can be viewed publicly on Facebook, is specified as follows:
· Establish the integration process of Zawiyat Ahansal into the rest of the world by popularizing tourism and by preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of Zawiyat Ahansal.
· Promote tourism programmes, sports, and activities in Zawiyat Ahansal.
· Develop close relations with international organizations of the same type. (last accessed, 08/01/2019)

What struck me during the meeting was the fact that all the men present wore outdoor clothing or equipment in some way. I saw sports or hiking footwear, hiking pants and fleeces or functional jackets, sunglasses and sport watches. This was remarkable enough to become an entry in my field notes by the end of the day. Especially as it significantly differed from the habitual way of dressing in the region that I had witnessed theretofore. The men often would wear either cloth trousers or jeans and sneakers, sandals or simple rubber shoes, a shirt and sweater and over it a jacket, blazer or more classical: a *jelaba*. The difference was probably so striking because the standard clothing was more in muted colours of dark blue, dark green and brown or grey; whereas the typical colours for outdoor clothing are very bright or even neon colour combinations. What became clear in the course of my stay was that those men involved in tourism did not only wear this outdoor clothing for hiking or touring occasions. Rather they wore it on an everyday basis. With a few minor exceptions, like festivities or the sporadic choice of the more classic *jeleba* outfit, I have never seen them without at least some outdoor gadget or garment—this counts for all of the guides or men active in tourism that I got to know in the region. However, I do have to make one small observation: Some people other than guides also wear outdoor clothing. These men—without limitation—fall into the category of "educated people" as Ouleid would call them using the English phrase. That is to say, they have attended a secondary school or university and they may have one of the few well-paid and respected occupations such as in local administration or as teachers. Furthermore, outdoor garments are also part of the bonus scheme, if you will, for employees of the US American NGO. As the company owner is sponsored by a prominent outdoor company, now and then clothing of that brand (second-hand and new) is given to the employees.

All this made me think of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of distinction. Distinction, thereby, is not something that has to be intended in the first place.[2] Rather, it always refers back to the social position that individu-

2 Bourdieu reminds us that "[t]hose who are held to be distinguished have the privilege of not worrying about their distinction; they can leave it to the objec-

als hold and, according to Bourdieu, is always already embedded in the demarcation efforts of different social classes.

> Struggles over the appropriation of economic or cultural goods are, simultaneously, symbolic struggles to appropriate distinctive signs […]. The dynamic of the field in which these goods are produced and reproduced and circulate while yielding profits of distinction lies in the strategies which give rise to their rarity and to belief in their value, and which combine […] to bring about these objective effects. 'Distinction', or better, 'class', the transfigured, misrecognizable, legitimate form of social class, only exists through the struggles for the exclusive appropriation of the distinctive signs which make 'natural distinction'. (Bourdieu 1984: 249-250)

I do not want to suggest all the implications of the Bourdieuan theory for this case here. However, it does not seem too far-fetched to understand the tourist guides as heralds of a new class or *mountain bourgeoise*, as should become somewhat clearer in the following. For now, I would like to take up the emphasis of the connection between consumer goods, their public display, and their feedback on questions of social stratification. Outdoor clothing is not easy to find in Morocco, especially in the mountainous areas. At the small weekly market in the area, outdoor clothing is completely absent, and is rarely to be found at the regional market in the district town. The next specialized store is a Decathlon, located in Marrakesh.[3] More expensive outdoor equipment or leading

---

tive mechanisms which provide their distinctive properties and to the 'sense of distinction' which steers them away from everything 'common.' Where the petit bourgeois or nouveau riche 'overdoes it,' betraying his own insecurity, bourgeois discretion signals its presence by a sort of ostentatious discretion, sobriety and understatement, a refusal of everything which is 'showy,' 'flashy' and pretentious, and which devalues itself by the very intention of distinction." (Bourdieu 1984: 249).

3 There were 13 Decathlon branches in Morocco, with a second store in Marrakech that was opened at the end of 2018 (https://www.decathlon.ma/c/214-nos-magasins, last accessed, 12/01/2019). In the summer of 2016, there were only four stores in Casablanca, Marrakech, Tangier, and Mohammedia, when

international brands are for the most part not available at all—and if anywhere then in the main cities of Casablanca or Rabat. I would argue that it is appropriate to interpret outdoor clothing both as an indicator of purchasing power as well as status symbol and an expression of a mimetic practice: namely the desire and aspiration to belong to a global community of travel enthusiasts and adventure seekers. As such, outdoor clothing is a publicly visible marker that either displays economic success and a certain status in that its bearers are able to afford more expensive and other-than-usual clothing. Otherwise, it functions as a uniform and, as such, as seemingly obvious evidence that one is active in the tourist sector, belongs to a certain social strata and has both a particularly open mindset as well as a certain level of education. If outdoor clothing is not necessarily a guaranteed sign of economic success, it at least reflects individual ambitions fed by the entrepreneurial promise of success in the tourism industry in Morocco. As such, it is not surprising that younger men and adolescent boys who are determined to make a career in tourism have started to dress accordingly.

This introduction to outdoor clothing as a distinguishing feature in the region serves as a preamble to the ensuing focus on the place of tourism in the High Atlas. Initially, I had not planned on doing research on tourism. Rather, I wanted to take in the situations and relevancies I would find upon my arrival. To an certain extent, I did not choose tourism as topic, but it presented itself with a certain inevitability right from the beginning. Partly, this was because of the contexts in which I found myself, being close to guides or people working in tourism who have had an experience in talking to "Western foreigners" (*iromin*, Sg. *aromi*). They also had the language capacity to do so—and of course also the intention to start a conversation in the first place, in order to gain a potential client. To begin with, arriving at my destination meant using touristic infrastructures like transportation and accommodation. Tourism after all has become a central mode of earning income and

---

Decathlon announced to open another 26 stores with an investment volume of 163 million Dh throughout Morocco (https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/07/191008/decathlon-open-26-new-stores/, last accessed, 12/01/2019).

thus an integral component of everyday life in the High Atlas. Moreover, tourism was inevitable, because of the mere fact that I was there—a visibly different *aromi*. Being an *aromi* is basically identical with being perceived as a tourist, with the exception that in certain places one may occasionally be presumed to be an aid worker. In this pre-figured situation, which Pascal Mulet calls "situation touristique" (2017: 188-192), the ethnographer is faced with the constant challenge of distinguishing themselves from tourists and of dissociating oneself from touristic practices, in order to simultaneously make research intentions plausible and comprehensible.

As my opening vignette about the association meeting shows, tourism was present—almost omnipresent indeed—from the very beginning. After the meeting I noted in my journal "this event and its organization process (but obviously tourism in general) could be really promising in understanding the reality of life in the High Atlas." Tourism is a rather recent socio-economic development in the area and it undoubtedly opens some key questions. The most important ones for me—to which I want to offer some insights and possible answers in the following chapter—are: How does tourism fit into the long-standing forms of political and social organization of the particular region in the High Atlas? What changes does tourism accompany or announce? To address these questions, I will proceed by first echoing the state's official—and rather ambitious—ideas about tourism before providing ethnographic descriptions of the varieties of touristic practices, their historical entanglement, and an in-detail account of the realization of the marathon event (following chapter), which we already encountered at the above association meeting. Finally, I will offer a way of tying those aspects together in a more generalizing analytic interpretation.

Figure 17: An older man from a "holy" lineage watching the preparations for the Ultra Trail

Tourism as Political Imaginary of State-Run Modernization

While tourism can be eye-catching and may seem omnipresent to an observer that has arrived from the outside, it also constitutes a central mode of everyday life and a basis for subsistence in the region. An increase in touristic activity—including in rural areas—occurs against the backdrop of infrastructural changes and necessary integration into the expanding global economy.

That is not to say that those changes solely created the conditions for local forms of tourism, or that they are responsible for it at all. By the same token, tourism did not trigger those infrastructural changes. But both certainly go hand in hand. Tourism is a prominent expression for ideas and plans of (economic) development and policies towards *modernization*, understood as the maxim for development projects, and which

aims at raising the standard of living. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that there are different levels or aspects of transformation: economical, infrastructural and socio-political, all of which overlap and contribute to the field of tourism. Thus, for the Moroccan government, tourism is a key industry to be managed and promoted on a large-scale level.

History of Tourism, Development and the Moroccan State

> To compete for tourists, a location must become a destination. To compete with each other, destinations must be distinguishable, which is why the tourism industry requires the production of difference. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 152)

From the perspective of national policy, tourism is a probate means for development (George/Mair/Reid 2011). In this context, tourism is promoted and supported in order to facilitate the modernization of economically weak regions, that is, regions without industries that would contribute to the overall economic strength of the country. Since the 1970s, the Moroccan state's intention to upscale their touristic offer grew. The state thus began systematically opening up and promoting tourist locations (Kagermeier 1999; Almeida-García 2018). Since then, Morocco has become a popular tourist destination. In 2015, more than 10 million tourists visited the country, more than 50% of which were Europeans. The three countries from which the majority of the tourists came were in descending order: France, the USA, and Spain.[4] In a recent IMF country report from 2019, the tourism sector is stated to contribute to about 6,5% of the gross national product (International Monetary Fund 2019: 40).

The mountainous region of the High Atlas already began to play a role as a tourist destination in the time of the French protectorate, when French people living in Morocco discovered the mountains as holiday areas. International tourism, however, did not emerge until

4 Although the sheer number of tourists is not necessarily an sufficient indicator for long-term economic growth, see Bouzahzah/El Menyari (2013).

after independence and then became interwoven with formations of national modernization. From the 1980s on, the Moroccan state launched programmes—within the framework of a Moroccan-French cooperation—which also targeted the mountain regions of the High Atlas.[5] The aim of the first programme *Project Haut Atlas Central* (PHAC) "was to create new impulses and economic foundations for improving the living conditions of the local population through the three sub-areas of livestock farming, handicrafts and tourism, thereby also alleviating the problem of a rural exodus" (Lessmeister 2008: 35, my translation). Mountain tourism was thus integrated into the very state development scheme that had a decisive influence on the work of the local association mentioned above. At the same time, this was intended to support *soft tourism* for the rural mountain regions (Boumaza 1996; Ait Hamza/Popp 1999).

Along with ongoing programmes for modernization and infrastructural development—which we have encountered in previous chapters—the Moroccan government has recently been setting new goals for the future development of tourism in the region. Regarded as an economic engine, the aim is to further ameliorate the standard of living. The goals for the year 2020 were: to reach "1.8 million tourist arrivals (against 880,000 in 2010)"; to provide "additional bedding capacity of 10,600 beds in order to reach 26,600 beds (hotel and similar)"; and the "creation of 39,000 direct jobs."[6]

Given my interest in learning about the history of tourism for the valley, I sat down with the sheikh and asked about tourists visiting the area. In front of us stood a decorated tray with a large teapot and ornate glasses, almonds, walnuts, peanuts, and homemade popcorn (*turift*). In the background, the shrill sounds of a children's show that was running

5 In his historic account, Lessmeister explicitly names "the municipalities of Tabant, Abachkou, Zaouiyat Ahansal and Kelâat M'Gouna" (Lessmeister 2008: 35).

6 According to the Ministry of Tourism as stated on their website, htt p://www.tourisme.gov.ma/en/tourism-territories/atlas-vallees (last accessed, 25/07/2018).

on the flat-screen television in the corner of the room occasionally made themselves heard. The sheikh himself had been working with tourists, before becoming sheikh.[7] He told me a story about once walking all the way from Demnate to the valley in two days, when he was younger and stronger. Usually, the route would take between four to six days at least.

His earliest memory of touristic visitors, he said, was from to the mid-1970s. A truckload full of alpinists had camped down at the river next to the village of Agoudim. They were definitely not French, he said, they were more likely to be Polish or German. He knew only that they were hiking and looking for nearby climbing spots. According to the sheikh, actual tourism only really started somewhere between 1980 and 1985. Before that there was no comparable hiking, trekking or tourism. In the beginning, basically all tourists had been French. He could not remember if in those early years other nationalities had travelled to the region. American tourists only started coming since ACF, or to be more precise, since its founder Miriam, had been active in the valley. Since then, he said, the languages spoken by tourists had also progressively changed from French to English. According to the sheikh, English is more important nowadays, given that so many tourists visit the valley from different countries.

7 Although his house included a guesthouse, it was run by his son rather than by the sheikh himself. The distinction was crucial, marked, and regularly emphasized. This resulted in a contradictory use of language. Guests or tourist groups were therefore accommodated "at the sheikh's" ("*and sheikh*"), or to be exact: "in the guest house of the sheikh's son". As sheikh, he had different business and tasks to attend to. Here, the sheikh is the highest local contact person, mediator and arbitrator. Also, to be sheikh is to represent the *taqbilt* and hence to serve the common interest of the *taqbilt* public. This means that very careful attention is paid to separating the individual and private sector areas from the sheikh's office. It would be problematic, indeed unthinkable, that the sheikh should gain advantages for himself at the expense of his office. The fair handling and equal distribution of resources are basic elements of customary Berber politics.

Tourism, Anthropology, Pilgrimage

It is not difficult to see that anthropology and tourism have a special relationship. After all, ethnographers are travellers, too. But they usually hasten to show, prove, or justify that they are neither reporters nor tourists.[8] There is one further similarity between ethnographers and tourists, which is the protagonism of own bodies and biographies in travelling. Travelling goes hand in hand with the formation of their personality. Both are interested in seeing or *learning* something. However, I do not wish to artificially exaggerate the similarities here. Although individual motives and motivations are certainly multifarious[9], each ultimately has a fundamentally different intention for their journey. For the former, it is about knowledge production, for the latter it is a question of leisure. Correspondingly, their gazes also develop differently along their respective trajectories. Most importantly, "the tourist gaze" (Urry 1990) searches for, and is seduced by, *authenticity*[10]—a category that has been frequently discussed in a considerable body of literature on tourism (see for instance Cohen 1988). Authenticity is often achieved when something appears incomprehensible (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 11).

Experiences that trigger perceptions of authenticity are, thus, frequently advertised by the tourist industry and travel agencies in commercials, brochures and on their websites. Moreover, both the tourist industry's promise and tourists' expectations imply that this is especially likely to be found within a cultural exchange and experiencing life

8 For an overview and accounts concerning the relationship between anthropology and tourism see, among others MacCannel (1976), Nash (1981), Graburn (1983), Smith (1989), Nash/Smith (1991), and Stronza (2001).

9 Needless to say, both can simply represent a kind of wage labor.

10 This is an intentional intensification. Of course, it may involve other equally important aspects that blend into an individual perception of authenticity, such as seeing and experiencing something beautiful or impressive, which contributes to being able to unwind, enjoy and above all to be amazed. For this reason, tourist travel has been analyzed in terms of religious ritual and spiritual experience (Graburn 1983).

worlds perceived as *radically other* and *different* (Bruner 2005; Cole 2008; Comaroff/Comaroff 2010; Schnepel/Girke/Knoll 2014). In this context, local cultural practices and customs—when tailored to the expectations and demands of a tourism industry—have been analyzed regarding aspects of folklorization and commodification. Or to put it more precisely, analyses of this topic have looked at the promise of commodification and danger of over-commodification or selling out of culture (Bunten 2008). More recently the focus has increasingly shifted to imaginaries of tourism and the ways these are embedded in tourist interactions (Salazar 2013; Salazar/Graburn 2014; Andrews 2017). This includes the inversion of the perspective as well, that is, the perception of locals with regard to their visitors (Evans-Pritchard 1989).

Thinking tourism together with pilgrimage is another common theme in anthropological literature (Badone/Roseman 2004; see also Turner 1973). This is important for this section insofar as the valley and its *zawiya* have always been a center of religious pilgrimage. This was due to the significance of the valley's founding figure. The founder constitutes the starting point for the sherific lineage, to which the *taqbilt* of the Ihansalen—and some descendants in particular—still claim their origins today. Pilgrims come seasonally to visit his tomb. However, tourism to the region did not precisely replace pilgrimage. Apart from its spiritual dimension and the strengthening of the religious reputation of the saintly lineage, there has always been an economic side to pilgrimage. Pilgrims have brought gifts, animals, and money. In this respect, tourism in the region has surpassed pilgrimage as the most significant economic activity with regard to income opportunities. The hypothesis of this section, which I will develop in the following, takes up the economic dimension of tourism and its importance for the local social dynamics. This hypothesis holds that touristic entrepreneurs are now able to combine the social prestige and political influence that arise from the profitability of the tourism business, something that was not possible in the past. However, the cultural capital resulting from the religious significance of the sacred line of descent is still present. In a certain sense, a fragmentation and re-stratification of local society can be observed, which no longer merely follows from its own historical

preconditions and contexts, but increasingly results from (partially conflicting) interactions with external, globally circulating influences.

We have seen that tourism constitutes a setscrew for economic development and state attempts to modernization. Tourism brings together different actors, beliefs and resources. For this particular valley in the High Atlas, it is no novelty to see people visiting from outside the valley or further afield. The difference is that today these visits occur under other auspices. There are still pilgrims who visit the *zawiya*—the tomb of Sidi Ahansal—and stay with the *holy families*. And they still legitimize the special position of those who can be located within the saintly lineage. The pilgrims contribute to the social and cultural capital that these families or persons embrace—to avail of another Bourdieuan terminology. From a strictly economic perspective, however, the relatively the new kinds of visitors, i.e. tourists, are more lucrative. To a considerable extent, tourism has given many people a chance of accumulating economic capital—to avail of another Bourdieuan term—thus accomplishing a degree of social advancement that had not been feasible in prior decades. This is based neither on religious nor historical relationships, but on one's access to—and will to avail of—mechanisms of national modernization, specifically regarding education, development, and entrepreneurial thinking. In the absence of other industries, tourism is a significant alternative for the picturesque rural areas of the High Atlas. It is not enough for a place in the mountains—as the opening quote suggests—to appear attractive, it is crucial that it becomes—or can at least be referred to as—a special *destination* in order for tourist activities there to thrive.

As we shall see over the following pages, this involves a range of scaling and media practices. The basic prerequisite and the starting capital for tourist enterprises, however, are undoubtedly the landscape and the mountain scenery. The specific sense of remoteness and the only recent connection to roads, electricity, and transregional markets function as a unique selling point in the realm of tourism. This stands in stark contrast to the aspirations and desires of the people living in the valley (as we have seen in foregoing chapters). Here, we can already identify a fundamental contradiction: while the aspiration to participate in a global Moroccan

modernity is at the center of development efforts, the perspective that Morocco, or the High Atlas in particular, has just not yet fully 'modernized' at this point represents a decisive reference to pervasively cultivated tourist imaginaries. To complicate matters even further, it is precisely the recourse to the ostensible originality of the *not-yet* that advances and successively accomplishes the connection to certain standards as well as participation in broader national and transnational publics.

Thus, in the following section, I aim at foregrounding the role and perspective of local tourist entrepreneurs rather than focusing on *the tourist* or tourist imaginaries in an isolated approach to motivations and experiences of travel. I intend to shed light on the ways in which people (try to) engage in tourism and what means, objectives and procedures they create along with it. Thereby, I seek to make tangible the opportunities, limitations, and consequences of tourism for the High Atlas community and to contribute to a better understanding of those multi-layered processes. I will start by looking at the varieties of tourism practices on the ground.

Guides, Gear and Guesthouses: Varieties of Tourism Practices

The field of mountain tourism in the High Atlas is comprised of a variety of dynamics, forms and practices. It is simultaneously constructed and emphasized on a local level, yet it links actors and materialities on different scales. Various forms of media and of relations come into play in order to participate in the touristic game. In what follows, I wish to give an overview of those situated processes by singling out four aspects.

First, I concentrate on *the guide* as the specific, performative embodiment of the touristic entrepreneur in the High Atlas. It will be my aim to shed light on his[11] way of working and their pivotal position. Second, I

11 I decided against using 'they' here for the abstract figure of the guide, to convey that guides, who operated in the touristic field of the High Atlas, had been exclusively male. Of course, women were part of the tourism sector in general, but I never encountered a female guide.

will turn to *the guesthouse*. My aim will be to show that the type and profitability of the guesthouse is to be understood in its connection to the extended network of which it is a local expression. Thirdly, I will deal with the *volunteers* who come into the valley as part of a specific tourism economy. Here I will establish a link to the work of the local NGOs and capture the contradictions between this form of tourism and its involved tourist imaginaries. Fourthly and lastly, it will be my aim to put *the others of the local touristic field* into the picture. Such individuals cannot be considered as key tourist figures but are no less central. Here, the following critical questions must be posed: For whom can tourism actually represent a viable economic option? Which exclusions does it produce and how can its local and social significance be evaluated?

Before I continue, however, I must mention one important distinction and explain how I intend to deal with it later. In Morocco, and in the High Atlas in particular, there is a difference between official and unofficial guides, as well as official and unofficial guesthouses. To begin with, the former distinction: There are two types of official guides. The *Guides des Villes et Circuits Touristiques* (GVCT) are officially certified for guiding work in cities and historic heritage sites, whereas the *Guides des Espaces Naturels* (GEN), focus on the natural environment and landscapes, like mountains, the desert and along the ocean. The certification covers all of Morocco and official guides can, thus, potentially work all over the country. In contrast to this, unofficial guides are commonly restricted to the area in which they live and the immediate surroundings. However, they may also advertise their activities and use Facebook pages and other websites. To be an unofficial guide does not imply an obligation to act in secret. This is especially true in the mountain regions, where the probability of running into an official inspector in the middle of the High Atlas—on a multiday hiking trip for example—is extremely low. The main trouble arrives if something happens unexpectedly, especially if an (international) tourist is injured while in the care of an unofficial guide. This scenario is mainly voiced by official guides, who are frequently crit-

ical of the unofficial guides.[12] I had the impression that this dislike was not related to anything economic, but to a belief that it would be dishonest—and indeed sneaky—for anyone to fool innocent guests into thinking they were a guide and expert on the region.[13] Precisely because their activities are mostly limited to their home region, these unofficial guides are, in fact, genuine experts and no impostors in the sense of *faux guides* or tricksters. They know the routes and resting places of the High Atlas, can provide materials and gear. In short, they are thus well positioned to offer a successful touristic tour.

The dynamics for guesthouses are very similar. Simply because a guesthouse does not have an official permit does not mean that a tourist can necessarily identify such a guesthouse at first sight. Most of the time there is absolutely no difference in terms of the catering, accommodation or service.[14] Concerns voiced to me about unofficial guesthouses were usually of a similar nature: if something happened—i.e. if tourists

12 Surely, their jobs depend on their good reputation. If too many negative incidences occurred where unofficial guides were involved, this would reflect negatively not only on the unofficial guides but on the whole mountain tourism sector in general and thus negatively influence the work of the official guides. In this context, one can understand why many of the guides strongly maintain the distinction as a marker of security and quality.

13 Interestingly, my own experience with touristic entrepreneurs in other parts of Morocco (especially the cities like Fes and Marrakech) was quite different from the High Atlas as far as honesty and the protection of tourists is concerned. The argument that I frequently encountered was as follows: Every person is blessed with their own mind, and it is thus each person's responsibility to use their own faculties. However, many tourists did not use their heads at all, and were instead gullible. They wanted to believe what they were told. Contrary to all common sense, they would willingly believe that they had been personally offered a ceramic bowl of Sidi Mulay, for example, where logically speaking this was clearly improbable. The problem was that many tourists acted and thought with their heart and not with their head. Nobody could be held responsible for this but the tourists themselves.

14 The equipment and management of different guesthouses varies of course but this is not necessarily related to the question of (in)official status.

became ill or were to be hospitalized because of poor hygiene—the owners would find themselves in great trouble. If the unofficial work came to the attention of the state authorities as a result of such events, there would be serious legal consequences and prison sentences for guides and guesthouse owners alike.

I will confine myself to this particular difference for the moment. While there is a clear legal distinction, being official or unofficial in the High Atlas was of very little actual consequence for the everyday lives of those working in this field. For people in the area, local mountain tourism offers a lucrative source of primary or additional income to official and unofficial guides alike. Any such, there is no analytical value in maintaining the distinction: it is of no use in the argumentation of the following chapter or in understanding local touristic practices more generally. In fact, both official and unofficial tourist entrepreneurs have largely the same approach and engage in the same kind of work and practices.[15]

The Guide

"For the year 2015, 2,759 official tour guides were recorded in Morocco, of which 78% were guides for the *villes et circuits touristiques* (GVCT) and 22% for the *espaces naturels* (GEN)" (Observatoire du Tourisme Maroc 2015: 35, my translation). To obtain the qualification as a mountain guide, which is carried out in the valley *Ait Bougamez*, it was mainly men from the surrounding region that were initially trained.[16] They often knew the region

15 This does not mean to sweep under the carpet or naively gloss over the fact that the access conditions and risks for the various actors and tourist entrepreneurs are not identical.

16 Even before the official state-run certification programme started, some people did work as guides. With the introduction of the certified course, an educational level (*lbac*) was also defined which was to be used as an entry criterion. This constituted an insurmountable obstacle for older guides, who had already been working in tourism, but had never been to secondary school and were thus excluded from the possibility of achieving the newly introduced official certification.

very well anyway and had a special connection to their homeland, which was a touristic resource and which often gave a feeling of authenticity to hiking tourists. In 1992, the *ANGAMM*[17] became the first professional mountain guide association in this field. Later, the number of participants as well as their educational level increased (Lessmeister 2008). This led to a steadily growing number of guides and an increase in competition among them, which even resulted in a temporary suspension of the official programme in order to limit the number of graduates and guides.

Guides incorporate different roles into their professional personality. They are translators, instructors, teachers, cultural brokers, and entertainers at the same time. They are in close contact with tourists, often spending several days or even weeks together with their clients, and are thus the actual faces of mountain tourism—for some tourists probably even the faces of Morocco.

Being a local person from the region and a good cultural broker is a true resource. In this context, I was struck again and again by the extremely important role of Ouleid, a guide and one of my main interlocutors in the valley. Ouleid was a crucial figure in mediating, translating and building bridges between different worlds through his know-how, experience, and language abilities. On one occasion with a tourist group, I noted down in my research journal:

> He seems to me to be a central hinge, invaluable to the valley and tourism there. He talks to the women in French, then translates it for the girls into Tashelhit. From time to time he also switches to English with other students at the tables in the other corner of the room. And then on the side explains things to me, too, using English or Arabic. (field notes, 23/03/2018).

However, guides struggle to fill this role without any assistance. They are professional service providers who are embedded in a nested set of cooperation relations. Above all, they depend on intermediaries, particularly

17 Association Nationale des Guides et Accompagnateurs en Montagne au Maroc.

travel agencies and tour operators. They work in a diverse field of activities, which results from the cooperation they engage in. As such, they may be hired by an agency to guide and take care of package holidays that include various sights or tourist destinations throughout Morocco. They may work together with local partners who book them mainly for hiking or skiing trips in the area or on Morocco's highest peaks. They may participate and oversee humanitarian or development projects. In this context, they primarily guide groups of high school or university students from the Global North in the local form of volunteering tourism—a mixture between educational work, community service, and intercultural encounter. As experts for adventures, they may also provide hiking or climbing gear, information and maps about available climbing spots, or accompany visitors on climbing tours.

Many guides try to maintain contacts with previous clients and tourists, especially through social media. These individuals could spread word of their touristic experience[18], and this could well pay off for the guide in that he might eventually win new clients. As such, social media practices can be relevant for a guide to further improve personal income opportunities. For this purpose, the following other possibilities are available, all of which aim to exclude one or even several intermediary key functions or to fulfil these functions for oneself. On the one hand, a guide can establish and open up his own guesthouse. He may try to integrate this into his ongoing work, to recruit guests during his activity as a guide. It is also possible, after consultation with the tour operator or the travel agency, to adapt the touristic programme so that the guesthouse becomes part of the programme.[19] Under certain circumstances, it may be possible to plan hiking tours of several days through the High Atlas in such a way that accommodation in the guesthouse can function as a starting or finishing point, or at least as an overnight stay for a

18 A tourism experience as *authentic* experience of an *other* culture.

19 Usually, the tour operators or travel agencies are in charge and are hire the guide. With competition in the field of guides, there might not be too much leverage on the average guide's side. However, this largely depends on the guides personal contacts and cooperation network.

stage of the tour. A guesthouse also offers an opportunity for former guides, a kind of retirement provision, in order to be able to continue to earn an income if the required physical strength is no longer available or if it is no longer possible to lead tours independently due to illness. On the one hand, the guide can set up his own travel agency in order to come into direct contact with tour operators and take over a larger part of the organizational and coordinative work. However, the most lucrative option in this respect is to avoid all intermediaries. This means that if the guide coordinates individual tours or programmes directly with tourists and takes over the complete organization by themselves, the whole endeavour will be more profitable.[20] Furthermore, these different possibilities cannot be strictly separated from each other. While for some guides these opportunities are not available, others have the possibility of combining them quite pragmatically.

Guides can increase their market value and improve their salary by standing out from the competition and earning a language qualification. Completing the certification course to become a mountain guide requires a thorough knowledge of French. If the guide can speak other foreign languages fluently, it is a unique selling point. English and Spanish are especially in demand, while languages like Russian, Japanese or German are becoming more and more relevant due to the increasing differentiation of tourists.

The point of language qualification also touches some of my personal experiences in the valley. After meeting a younger man several times at the Suq, he asked me if I would teach him some German, now that I was obviously staying for longer. He was a guide and worked all over Morocco and as he told me, he regularly led groups of German-speaking tourists. I did not hesitate in answering that I would, of course, teach him if he was interested. We met once a week for an hour in a communal room used to tutor school children. I would write down German words or phrases on a piece of paper and give a translation (mostly into *darija*). He would copy

20 This is of course something that takes a lot of experience, many resources, and reliable partners.

what I had written down and add some remarks for proper German pronunciation. He wanted to be able to at least learn some basic phrases and important expressions during the period in between the main tourist seasons. After a week or two, other interested people that had learned about the "new offer" of a German crash course, and joined in. Thus, for several weeks, I taught a class of three to four students, all of whom were involved in the field of tourism.

The Guesthouse

In order to examine the institution of the guesthouse, I would like to invoke once more the above distinction between *location* and *destination* regarding tourism. I will use these categories to classify two different types of guesthouses in the region of the High Atlas Mountains where I conducted my research. Ultimately, when it comes to tourism, location is paramount. I thus perceive of *destination* as referring to a place whereby a specificity and difference are expressed that single the place out from others, perhaps rendering it unique in some regard.[21] For our purposes, this feature derives largely from the geological formation of the mountain landscape. By contrast, with *location* I designate a tourist site that lacks this specificity and difference that serve to single out. However, this does not imply that the place cannot be beautiful or that there cannot be a certain uniqueness and/or authenticity to it. Still, the destination has somewhat more to it, and perhaps this something is its *genius loci*.

The strategies and practices that make a guesthouse at a tourist destination touristically successful are not the same as those that make one at a tourist location successful. It is against this background that the distinction between the two categories gains analytical value. By presenting two different, the effectiveness of this analytical distinction will become more palpable. One is located in the village of Taghia, the other in the center of the valley. As a form of textual representation, I will present the

21 It is not decisive at first what causes this specificity, it may be the phenomenology of the landscape, the sensed environment, personal or cultural characteristics.

guesthouses as an ideal synthesis of the distinctive characteristics. This does not mean that these are fictional accounts, but that the description is condensed to one somewhat ideal-typical guesthouse at a time.

First let us consider the similarities. While guesthouses[22] are increasingly being upgraded, offering double rooms with en suite bathrooms and western toilets, the standard is still more simple and more akin to mountain cabins rather than bed and breakfasts or hotels. Dormitories are common, in which several single beds are placed, each with its own bedding. Shared toilets and showers can be found in the corridor. There is typically a large lounge which serves as a living and dining room. In addition to the typical regional breakfast, consisting of tea, bread, oil and butter, jams, spread cheese and eggs, the guesthouses offer dishes such as tajine, bean and lentil stew, or omelets. There are regional products for sale, which are either produced by the owners themselves or by relatives and neighbours. These include, in particular, various types of carpets and some typical souvenirs. The owners of the guesthouses organize transport mobilizing and utilizing their respective cooperation networks into which the guesthouses are integrated. Since the guesthouse owners themselves or their sons are active as tour and mountain guides, they also keep some materials and gear available for camping on multiday hikes or for climbing tours. In the absence of such, they can make arrangements accordingly.

Taghia is a hotspot for rock climbers. The village is situated at the southern end of the valley, behind a gorge. The terrain reaches an altitude of as much as 300m in the middle, with almost vertically sloping rock walls. This outstanding scenic and geological feature alone is the attraction par excellence and what makes Taghia a definite tourist destination. There are few, perhaps no comparable places in the world. The routes are very long and challenging and draw an enthusiastic international community of semi-professional to professional climbers. Taghia has no supermarkets, pubs or bars, and only a few establishments offering accommodation. It can only be reached by a one-and-a-half-hour

22 The guesthouses are locally called *gîtes d'étape*, most of which also hold a logo of the *Grand Traversée de l'Atlas Marocain* (GTAM, see Ait Hamza/Popp 1999: 197).

walk, for which pack animals are typically used to transport supplies. The place radiates an authentic, honest and adventurous charm. Due in particular to the somewhat laborious journey to Taghia, day trips are the absolute exception and almost impossible for people who go there to climb. This increases the need to stay overnight. There is no elaborate tourist infrastructure nor *sights* to be seen. The vast majority of tourists who stay in Taghia hang on the rock face during the day and stay in the guesthouse in the evening. Although there is a certain number of Moroccan tourists who come to Taghia during the summer months, who are not interested in climbing, the vast majority are international climbers.

The first, for lack of a better term, ideal-typical guesthouse focuses on the climbers. Commonly they are quite relaxed and do not look for a high degree of comfort or anything luxurious. The target group of international climbers is not very large, but there are regulars and enough visitors such that the guesthouse need not worry about elaborate publicity campaigns. It need only ensure that it can be physically found. The guesthouse is run by a family, the father is in charge while the extended family is involved. Women of the family prepare the food; sons, nephews and friends are involved in transportation with pack animals and accompany tourists to the climbing routes or on climbs. It is the son, Hassan, for example, who is more active on Facebook and tries to promote climbing and hiking trips. For this, he tries to approach a different market segment, if you will, and appeal to a broader range of people interested in sports and outdoor activities. The professional climbers that come do not usually need climbing partners or guides, as they can both read the route maps for themselves, and typically bring their own equipment. They are also usually less interested in several day long hiking trips through the surrounding mountains. As such, they are quite lucrative for the guesthouse, but not a good or reliable resource for Hassan, who will soon make a name for himself as a guide and earn more. At the same time the work in the guesthouse is not so adventurous and promising for Hassan. And there is a lot of work to do, especially in the months of the high season. Sometimes the distance between Taghia and the Suq has to be covered daily, sometimes even several times a day with a mule, in order to receive tourists or to get food and supplies.

The center-valley does not have a comparable pull for international tourists. While the High Atlas is wonderfully picturesque and can certainly be perceived as a tourist destination, touristically speaking the valley is a place like many others. If it serves any tourist function, it is that of being a tourist *location*. This does not mean that no tourists visit the area, however, but those that do are predominantly only passing by on their way through the High Atlas with their caravans, 4x4 vehicles, or bicycles. Alternatively, they pass through the valley as part of a multiday hike that traverses the High Atlas, in which case they prefer to camp in the mountains, rather than spend their nights in villages. Tours such as these are organized centrally by a travel agency or a tour operator and do not employ external touristic operators unless it is absolutely necessary as this of course reduces their own profits. A such, the guesthouse in the center of the valley must devise something to achieve regular occupancy.

In terms of the owner of this second ideal-typical guesthouse, the first and most important point is that he is not only the owner but also a tourist guide. He opened the guesthouse after accruing several years of experience working with tourists and accumulating the necessary financial resources. As with Taghia, the guesthouse in the center-valley is mainly a family business, with only a few sporadic helpers, most of whom are members of the extended family. Through his activity as a guide, the owner has formed cooperative partnerships with individuals who in turn send tourists to his guesthouse or recommend the guesthouse to others. Regular guests who come back periodically are of greater importance still, however. On the other hand, he also plans tours—on his own or in partnership with other tour operators. These include the standard multiday hiking tour through the High Atlas (for which the equipment and gear is kept in the guesthouse itself), desert tours or canyoning and rafting tours that are provided together with partners who then supply the materials. Such tour programmes then also include some overnight stays in the guesthouse or place the starting or end point of their trip there. In other words, the guide can include the accommodation costs in the flat rate for the programme and is paid in his function as a guide at the same time. All this involves more intensified publicity work. Additionally, it is crucial to maintain good

contacts with travel agencies and tour operators. If the owner of the guesthouse were to simply wait for tourists to appear at his doorstep, he would most likely be unable to make a regular and sufficient income. This is the case because there is significant competition and he does not hold a monopoly over the activities concerned. Thus, the challenge for touristic entrepreneurship in the High Atlas is not only to master French or other foreign languages, acquire specific guiding knowledge, or diversify touristic offers, but to actively shape the conditions of the touristic encounter.[23] This is especially true if one is not associated with a national or international travel agency, or if one is not—as they are—operational throughout Morocco, having instead only one guest house in a particular locality. Ultimately, the local guesthouse cannot simply be transferred to other tourist destinations in the same way that travel agencies can shift their focus and redirect tourist flows.

One recent and quite lucrative way of attracting tourists is to team up with the NGOs of the valley, who engage in intercultural exchange programmes that often include volunteering or community service. For those programmes, accommodation for their groups is required, and they are reliant on the existing guesthouses. Being part of cooperation networks thus raises the question as to who can set the terms. If the guesthouse is exclusively booked by other tourist entrepreneurs who organize and manage programmes, the latter a strong position in negotiating the terms of their commitment vis-à-vis the guesthouse owner. It is at the same time an expression of what is most pivotal but most challenging to manage and consequently what is reflected in the financial share: to reach and attract potential clients and make them come and stay at one's guesthouse. Not surprisingly then, I once heard the owner of the guesthouse complaining to a guide and friend of his that he was not quite satisfied with what he received for the accommodation of a volunteer group. He would have liked to increase the prices

23 Not many tourists (at least in comparison with the flow of mass tourism that is present at Morocco's major sights and locations) arrive to the mountains by chance. If they visit the High Atlas, they often do so as part of a touristic programme or guided travel group.

for his cooperation with the respective NGO. However, because prices had been the same for a very long time, he was not sure how he could approach the responsible persons of the organization, particularly as they were unlikely to be very enthusiastic about the idea. Thus, he did not engage in any direct conversation on the topic. After all, he did not wish to jeopardize the relationship from which he profited.

The Volunteers

Remaining with the distinction of *location* and *destination* for a moment, it would be reasonable to say that volunteering is a specific way of attracting visitors or clients to a location, that is not yet a destination—or that is supposed to become a destination due to the cultural experience and community services it offers. In this sense it is a specific form of tourism, a volunteer tourism or *voluntourism* (see Garland 2012). Thereby voluntourism, combines aspects of humanitarian and community work, but at the same time constitutes a touristic business model. Moreover, for the valley an overlap is produced between an NGO's non-profit orientation and the former's focus on profits. As I have illustrated above, this is also reflected in the organizational structure of the NGOs involved. Two crucial aspects arise with the endeavour of organizing and offering volunteering tourism programmes: First, volunteering involves a hierarchy. To put it bluntly, it mostly means that volunteers from the Global North or from otherwise economically solid milieus of a particular country come to the Global South or to regions of countries that are economically weak and often perceived as *backward* and in *desperate need of help*. If it is a question of coming into contact with potential clients from the Global North or from well-off segments of a particular society, international agencies have an advantage. Second, such international agencies cannot simply begin a volunteering programme arbitrarily in whichever location they see fit. They rely either on trusted cooperation partners on the ground or must themselves be on site. Here in the High Atlas, both are true.

When the US American NGO, ACF, began offering volunteering programmes, they were only able to do so because of their previous commu-

nity work and because of the respectful relationship that they were able to forge with the local community theretofore. In addition, the volunteering programmes usually go hand in hand with community work or, at least, partially refinance it. For example, the construction of a bus stop or work on the multi-purpose building of the local association, which was decided upon by the participating organizations was accompanied from time to time by volunteers. However, this work would always be embedded in intercultural learning and exchange programmes in which the groups were brought into contact with pupils. In doing so, an attempt was made to provide an insightful and appreciative perspective on the differences and cultural characteristics of the High Atlas. This was especially the case for school classes from private schools in urban centers in Morocco. These often included pupils who had never visited the rural mountain regions before, and one has to acknowledge the high relevance and importance of this awareness-enhancing and multi-layered exchange.[24]

The types of volunteering also depend on the group. Logically, a school class with teenagers takes on other tasks than those of a group of university students. Especially in the latter case, the focus is usually on joint learning. Mostly, the volunteers then teach some French or English to the school children. This also reflects the focus for the local associations, for which the tutoring programme is central, because education is regarded as essential for the future of the children of the valley.

The programme for the volunteering group is determined beforehand and may also be coordinated with the other institutions involved, such as schools or universities. This allows an individual focus to be set.

24 The groups from other parts of the world were more problematic as they sometimes gave the impression that the programme and the High Atlas served only as a backdrop and template for reflecting on one's own privileged position. The programmes presented selected aspects of local life *pars pro toto* for general inequality and poverty. Sometimes the programmes on the ground were also connected with attempts to make the most of this special experience and use it for personal growth. For instance, one group decided to integrate into their week in the valley a *digital detox*. They wanted to use the period to abstain from their usually abundant use of smartphones and media technology.

The multi-purpose building (*maqar*) of the local association in Amezray provides an important location for teaching activities. It was in this building that I took part in various activities involving a group from the United States. The programme took place in the approximately 40 square meter room. The organizers of the programme, that is, the accompanying guides and staff, set up four group tables in the room and placed white plastic chairs around them. For this purpose, they used the building's usual furniture. If the tables were not enough, additional ones were occasionally carried over from the neighbouring association building, which was a great deal older. At each of the group tables there was a group of volunteers. The pupils from the valley then also spread out to the corresponding group tables. Most of the local students came from Amezray, some from Agoudim and some from more remote settlements, who lived in boarding schools or with relatives because of their time at school. Every thirty minutes the groups of pupils would rotate. One of the two guides who supervised the programme recorded the time.[25] In between, there was a common break after half of the planned time, in which tea, biscuits, and peanuts were offered. That afternoon, the first group of volunteers painted and worked on small projects with the children, while the second group explained the planets in the solar system in English and showed small pictures about geographic topics. The third group held playful vocabulary training using games like charades or hangman. The fourth group used the existing media technology in the multi-purpose building. Here the pupils were asked to type a short introduction of themselves into a word processing programme on laptops and tablets.[26]

25 Sometimes, two different activities on the scheduled programme occurred simultaneously. Gardening would occur in the community garden while language lessons with schoolchildren were taking place. The volunteers were then divided between the project work, with the guides and supervisors also split up accordingly.

26 Here our own research and cooperation project between the University of Siegen and the local NGO was integrated into the existing working formats, including the volunteer tourism (see chapter two).

Ouleid, one of the guides who was also working with the computer club project had introduced the programme and media technology: "This, the cameras and computers is very new for them [local pupils]. It is part of a new project we included in our tutoring activity. The kids really like it. They like to take pictures and use the tablets and computers. Learning how to type is not only fun, it is also very important for them." A little later, when the activities in the groups began at the respective tables, a (nonlocal) supervisor of the group instructed those who were at the technology table: "Remember that you should not expect so much from the children. They don't know that much about it yet. The best thing is to explain everything to them as you would explain it to your grandparents."

Due to their experiences in working with local craftsmen on construction sites as well as teaching and playing with school children, the volunteers were usually very enthusiastic and moved by their time in the valley. The typical ceremony for last evening, whereby the organizers would usually hold a farewell party (*lhefla*), contributed a lot to this. The celebration consisted of a dinner and a combination of different typical Berber cultural activities. The female volunteers could have their hands decorated with henna[27], and there were various typical clothes that they

27 After one evening I noted down an interesting side note in my research journal. It speaks to the contradictions of such an intercultural programme and display of culture. It also puts myself, and the understanding of my own positionality at the time, into context: "Some of the teenage girls, perhaps between 16 and 18 years old, pull out their smartphones and google (image search) for henna motifs. They then show them to the young woman from the valley who is doing the Henna and ask her to do the same for them. I find this both amusing and absurd. Instead of learning from the young woman (so to speak, an expert in henna and definitely of the local custom and culture) and asking how henna works and seeking to learn and understand how to behave towards her, the girls instead ask for a reproduction of a google image for aesthetic reasons; the whole *painting the volunteer's hands with Henna* seems to become very shallow (which to some extent already has a folkloristic and culture marketing character to me). Where there could be a situation of intercultural understanding or interested exchange, the situation seems to become a mere service relation between customer and service provider, similar to showing the hair-

could wear. Clothes were also provided for the males. Sometimes two people were chosen from the group to mime a couple of lovers, so that a typical wedding procedure could be performed. The evening culminated in a musical performance by a local *ahidus* group, which ended in a lively joint dance. Although I myself did not take part in the whole volunteering programme of the groups, the organizers would always officially invite me to the last big party. By no means was it confined to the group of volunteers alone. Many people from the village would come by to join in or watch the lively hustle and bustle, arriving when the evening had progressed further—at the latest, when the guests were dancing *ahidus* together. For many, it was a welcomed opportunity to indulge in the *ahidus*, which was otherwise only excessively danced at weddings.

The Others of the Local Touristic Field

Certainly, other people are crucial for a successful touristic programme. This includes cooks, or muleteers who accompany guides for hiking tours, as well as merchants or suppliers for the guest houses and people working in passenger transportation. Besides, different guides have different networks of co-workers or contract workers, who are often part of the wider network of relatives. However, as Hassane Monkachi (1994) has shown for a neighbouring valley in the High Atlas: the families that successfully engage in tourism are those that were better off to begin with. Poorer segments of society do not necessarily benefit from tourism, often not at all.

During one tourist activity which involved hiking through the High Atlas landscape, I found myself alongside Sidi Rachid, ambling along on his mule some distance behind the main group. We started to chat about living in the valley and about his family. Rachid told me that he had five

---

dresser the latest trendy hairstyle, which you want to acquire and wear just as well as the model in the example you provide. Probably I am too judgmental with my observation, after all it is certainly very nice to have your hand painted with something you like. However, the apparent lack of interest in the actual activities of the young woman painting the Henna overshadowed this for me."

children and asked if I could take him to Germany sometime. "*Mrhaba bik*" I answered, that he was welcome any time. He wanted to know whether there was work there he could do, such as gardening. "Sure," I said, "there are gardeners. The problem is usually getting a visa and working papers to be able to travel and then to find a job in Germany." I wanted to know if he earned enough by working with tourists. It was okay, he replied, but also very unsteady and insecure: "Sometimes you work a week, then you have to wait another month (*bqa ayur*). In winter there was no work at all, only in spring and summer."

He preferred to live and stay in the valley he was born. After all, I knew that being from a formerly saintly family he enjoyed a certain social and religious prestige there. He said he liked it there and we both agreed that it was nice and more beautiful than many other places. I concluded from this that he would prefer a seasonal or migrant job, it seemed to me he would want to earn money in Germany, then return to his family and home.

A phrase a guide had told me shot into my head: a "fixed salary is the obstacle to actually getting rich." With his qualifications and as a certified guide, he could well allow himself to think like that and even question his fixed salary in favour of self-employment as a guide. A fixed salary—at least this was my interpretation in that situation—would offer exactly the security and consistency that Rachid wished for. Tourism appeared as a complex and contradictory field. As an member of the holy lineage, Rachid still owned some land in the area, which neither he nor his immediate family worked on themselves. In the *ighrim* of the family, they stored grain and it was partly used as a stable, or sometimes as accommodation for pilgrims when they came to the tomb of Sidi Said, Rachid told me. While talking, it became apparent that he could not make great economic leaps on his own, or through individual initiative—despite his family name and social reputation. After all, he was addressed in everyday life by everyone as *Sidi*, a remnant and marker of the holy families as well as expression of respect. But his heritage did not guarantee a regular income that would contribute to a wealthy position comparable to former descendants of the saintly lineage decades ago. He was dependent on other touristic entrepreneurs to work as muleteer.

Volunteer tourism also gave rise to economic opportunities for other actors that were not directly working in tourism. A most illustrative example concerns the playing and performing of the typical *ahidus*, which involves music and dancing. One *ahidus* group came from the village of Amezray and was supported by the local association Amezray SMNID. The association helped the foundation with providing financial aid for some of the main equipment. In order to become a professional folkloristic[28] group, instruments (usually handmade) together with typical festive clothing and accessories are important. At the same time, the association became the main client for the group. Thus, the group was hired for touristic programmes, most importantly the farewell parties of volunteer groups, or other festivities such as the official opening of the new multipurpose building or in the context of the tutoring programme for the local children. The groups for such performances usually consisted of around eight to ten men,[29] and were offered food

28 Here I do not wish to imply that these performances were a mere virtual cultural display geared towards tourist expectations. In fact, whenever I asked people from the ahidus group or outside of it, they would insist that there was only one ahidus: ahidus itself. If one plays it, beating the drums shoulder to shoulder in a circular formation, it was the same wherever it was performed and whoever participated. Still, embodied skills and practice were necessary playing a crucial a part in the end result. Also, there were different degrees of beauty to the ahidus that had to do with participation and commitment as well as the variety of songs that were sung.

29 There is a core group of responsible persons for the ahidus group as well as some additional persons who sporadically join the team. This is because not all members of the ahidus group are present in the valley at all times, due to own working arrangements or travel. However, the men are all from Amezray. Historically, people mastered masonry and crafts while also playing and dancing ahidus. This is especially the case in Amezray, and not in Agoudim.The reason for this is that Agoudim was the village of the main lodge and saintly houses. In the past, the saints did not dance and not work on construction sites. This is the source of the work ethic emphasized by many people from Amezray. It was a special point of identification that they claimed for themselves and still regarded as distinguishing them, to some degree, from their neighbours. In a certain way, opinions or knowledge in the two villages differed as a result of historical reasons: In Amezray there was knowledge and expertise on construc-

upon finishing in addition to their payment. It was good extra income doing a job that could mostly be very entertaining.

Not surprisingly, such a group was also formed in Agoudim. As a result, the allocation of performances became more complicated. Of course, the group from Amezray had priority if the volunteer groups were organized by the local association. They were the first choice unless the members were absent. Sometimes, however, the other group was also employed, such as when the US American NGO, ACF—whose activities were mainly in Agoudim—took over the organization of a group. To some extent, it was a question of carefully navigating between expectations and obligations. The assumption that the NGO could be deliberately benefitting certain actors and excluding others could become problematic for successful community work. Given the limitations of the resources available, including everyone as much as possible becomes rather complicated and there is a constant possibility of friction and conflict. Thus, it was in the interest of the NGO to avoid giving this impression. This they can do by involving different actors and integrating them as cooperation partners.

This also applies to tourism entrepreneurs who try to adapt or essentially copy programmes such as volunteering, which shows its effectiveness in attracting tourist groups and generating income. One guesthouse operator, for example, tried to do just that and ultimately had to ask the established players to run the programme for him. He simply lacked the expertise and the resources to realize such an undertaking on his own.

Let us now examine some more general questions concerning competition in the valley. Although tourism is a lucrative field of activity, different stakeholders benefit differently from it. This may seem a trivial observation, but it is a central question in a region with only few job

---

tional procedures and working techniques, while in Agoudim had a reputation and knowledge for dealing with religious, legal and political issues. Nevertheless, this is not to be understood as a strict absolute separation, but only a general tendency. Nowadays, it has clearly become more differentiated, even though there are still more master craftsmen to be found in Amezray.

prospects and where tourists are therefore a limited resource over which conflicts may well arise. This is all the more relevant because tourism is at the interface of individual initiative, social network relations and recourse to local customs and environmental circumstances. The questions of tourist business relations and competition throughout the valley are also addressed by the following remarks made by a guide named Hamou. Sitting in the lounge of his guest house, I interviewed him about his experiences and assessments of the tourism sector in the area:

Simon: Do you need a permit in order to run a guesthouse?

Hamou: Yes. There are, in fact, two different ones. If you don't have an official permit for your guesthouse, this can—besides difficulties if something should happen to the guests—cause problems with the other competitors. For example, if one of your rivals knows that you don't have a permit, there may be a dispute. He may say: 'you don't have a permit but work and take away my rightful guests and clients'. However, this is not a problem for Zawiya. The whole valley is like a family ("bhal l'aila whada").

Can you talk a little bit more about competition?

There is not much work-based competition or disputes here at all. In [a neighbouring valley], on the other hand, it's different. There are many minor conflicts and problems among the different guides and guesthouse owners. The difference is communication. Here, for example, you talk to each other every Monday on the Suq and continue to dialogue with one another. Here, it is like friends, like a family ("imdukal, bhal l'aila"). Therefore, there is no real envy. In comparison, the neighbouring valley is also larger. And the people are generally a little more mean and envious of each other ("khaiba shwiya").

Taghia is a good example. There are two Gites that have permits. However, a total of 6 different Gites work side by side. Four Gites

> have no official permits. Nevertheless, there is no problem. The competition ("munafasa"), which exists in Zawiya Ahansal, is good and productive ("zwina, ihla"). You have to try to bring the tourists here and attract them. This is possible, for example, if your rooms are good and the food is especially tasty. Then someone else either has to be better already or become better. That's good. It's not like bad competition ("ikhkhan") where untrue rumours ("tbergig") or other campaigns are used to discredit people and ruin the business. That is not the case here. This is about having a good relationship—also with your colleagues. You help each other if someone has many tourists and needs equipment like chairs. Here you can borrow it from each other.
>
> So, if you work well and sincerely, there will always be work for you ("deba, ila nta nishan, ghadi tkhddm").

Here it becomes visible how Hamou is evaluating the work in the valley. There are always differences of opinion and scepticism, of course, or cases where people become jealous. However, perhaps above all two comments from the interview are crucial. On the one hand, the field of tourism entrepreneurs is quite bounded and fairly manageable. Different actors have each found their own niches for themselves, or cooperate on larger endeavours, so that there is no glaring competitive situation in which touristic actors seem to be existentially contesting over another's resources or even threatening one other. On the other hand, the reference to being one big family at the same time emphasizes harmony. Of course, it may also be the case that Hamou refrained from talking negatively about other people. While the possibility that Hamou was hiding certain grudges against competitors cannot completely be ruled out, the parallel to what has been described as characteristic of Berber politics is present nevertheless (cf. Gellner 1969; Kraus 1998; Rachik 2016: ch. 15). Namely, this alludes to a Berber aspiration to ensure equality on various levels, which may well be present here. In fact, the *taqbilt* of the Ihansalen is much smaller than the surrounding ones, and is also historically rather bounded towards a common center that links everyone closely together.

In this light, it also seems plausible that competition in the valley is kept to a minimum, and alliances are foregrounded.

The topic can be summarized as follows: The variety of tourism in the High Atlas relies on social relations, political regulations, and media-technological innovations. All of which are collectively produced in continuous negotiation. Regarding local tourism practices, it becomes clear that tourism cannot be understood as an isolated entity; hence, it is helpful to consider it in a larger context. Tourism can function as goal for aspiration and a space for possibilities that had not existed in prior decades given that people are now creating and shaping the conditions to make a living in unprecedented ways.

Saints of the Atlas?

Having proceeded through a detailed account of the field of tourism in the High Atlas, let us now return to the initial observation and comparison: "Where Gellner had seen saints, I saw guides." What role do the saints play? My argument is that the religious and historical components of Zawiya Ahansal are central. The *igherman* of the holy families and the pilgrims who regularly come to the valley are still vivid expressions of this.[30] I do not wish to give the impression that the guides have replaced the saints. Rather, I suggest that we understand the undisputed supremacy of the saints as having been somewhat differentiated and

30 The arrival of these pilgrims has meant an increasing importance both in terms of how this arrival is presented in the media and in terms of how immaterial heritage is administrated according to *modern* working methods. At such an occasion when pilgrims arrived in the valley and visited Sidi Ahansal's tomb, for example, I was asked by an *agurram* to take pictures for him because I was on the road with my digital camera. The pictures were meant for his own documentation of the pilgrims' arrival and at the same time also for an association, which had been founded by representatives of the *holy families* for keeping of *traditions* and the promotion of their spiritual and cultural heritage.

transformed.[31] Also, in the eyes of many local people, there are no more saints, but only the remnants of the importance and power of bygone days. This refers mainly to the practicing saints, so to speak, in political office. For it is indisputable that their descendants are, after all, representatives of an important sacred lineage. But whereas the saints previously accumulated all three Bourdieuan forms of capital in their special position, today their particular cultural capital is no longer a sufficient guarantee that they also stand out economically.

What does it today mean for someone from a saintly family to comply with the obligation of one's lineage? In order to show one's exceptional position, it may be equally important to be successful in tourism or, of course, in other economic sectors. Success is always considered an expression of having a particular divine blessing, or *baraka*. Economic success may even be more desired and needed because the pilgrims are no longer the primary bearers of resources. Other resources have emerged. Foremost, it is the secular visitor, in the person of the tourist—and the region's advancing integration in an interconnected global economic sphere—that bring resources. But while some conditions have changed, others remain: One example is the institution of the sheikh, who belongs to a holy lineage and still functions as arbitrator, handling disputes or different kinds of public and private issues. He is also a moral institution as a deputy of state authorities. Not surprisingly, however, he has a very close relation to the American NGO, his brother is a guide and his son owns a guesthouse.

Apart from the organizational structures that had not existed in Gellner's time, the difference between now and then is that guides are considered *educated* and *wealthy*, having achieved respectable social positions. They even function as arbitrators, complainants or plaintiffs against grievances or abuses, such as in the unlawful use of building

31 Besides the respectful address with the name prefix 'Sidi' that is common for members of the saintly lineage, I only witnessed a handful of situations where someone was directly addressed as *agurram*. It was more frequent to hear it stated as a sort of joke, suggesting rather a sentimental evocation of the term and not necessarily a respectful awe.

land owned by the community, or structural changes to public buildings that violate traditional construction methods.[32] This was an area of responsibility that was once reserved for the saints not only with regard to religious matters, but also for everyday political questions. It now appears that the guides may also be addressed in matters that concern a general public.

I do not want to imply that religion or kinship is not important anymore. I also do not want to be misunderstood as making a kind of Weberian argument about secularization and rationalization in the region. I do want to stress in this brief analysis, however, that the opportunity for more individualistic approaches to making a living have changed, as have opportunities to creatively devise ways to modify the conditions for staying in an otherwise demanding environment. Whereas in earlier times, one's own role and options were mainly determined by family ties, today the foundations and options that allow upward mobility are changing—perhaps even in the sense of a dawning new *mountain bourgeoisie*, although only the future will tell. Again, this is not to say that it is possible for everyone. Yet, for some, the possibilities are entirely new and this is accompanied by a slight shift in what counts as valuable and desirable.

To sum up, one could say that religious heritage is not a guarantee for economic success and political influence anymore. Still, economic success becomes the primary means for gaining social status and political influence and tourism, in turn, is the expression of this shift. The exceptional socio-political position *qua* birth right (saints) has been challenged by examples of individuals rising to comparably influential socio-political positions due to their work in tourism.

32 That is, to name just two instances that I have experienced first hand.