Jemaa el Fna Square in Marrakech: Changes to a Social Space and to a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity as a Result of Global Influences

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Jemaa el Fna Square in the Medina of Marrakech is known for its performing street artistes: story-tellers, acrobats, Arab and Berber musicians, and Gnauwa groups and seers, who work daily before a local, regional, and foreign tourist audience in the specific form of a halqa ("circle"). In 2001, following an initiative by the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo, who sought to prevent the execution of plans to build a glass tower close by, the square was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. This proclamation and the growing popularity of Marrakech as a destination for international tourists can be seen as two global influences on the square. In addition, social changes in Morocco have influenced both the performers and the local audience in the square. This article examines the effects and the interconnection of these different global influences on Jemaa el Fna. The feasibility of "safeguarding" the oral and intangible traditions of the square, as required by UNESCO, and the difficulties this entails are discussed in light of the pressures of tourism and recent social changes.

Key words: Morocco, Marrakesh, Jemaa el Fna Square, oral and intangible heritage, local traditions, safeguarding, tourism, UNESCO, social change

La place Jamaa el Fna, située dans la médina de Marrakech, est connue pour ses artistes de rue – conteurs, acrobates, musiciens berbères et arabes, ainsi que les groupes et voyantes gnaouas – qui travaillent quotidiennement pour un public local, régional et pour les touristes étrangers, chacun formant leur propre halqa (« cercle », en arabe). En 2001, la place a été proclamée par l'UNESCO chef d'œuvre du patrimoine oral et immatériel de l'humanité, suite à une initiative de l'écrivain espagnol Juan Goytisolo, qui a voulu empêcher la réalisation d'une tour de verre dans les environs. Cette proclamation et la popularité grandissante de Marrakech auprès des touristes internationaux, peuvent être lues comme deux influences mondiales sur la place. De plus, les changements sociaux au Maroc ont influencé les artistes et le public local. L'article examine les effets et les relations de ces différentes influences mondiales sur Jamaa el Fna. La mise en œuvre pratique de la « sauvegarde » des traditions orales et immatérielles de la place, exigée par l'UNESCO, ainsi que les difficultés qui en résultent, sont traitées à la lumière des pressions touristiques et des récents changements sociaux.

Mots clés: Maroc, Marrakech, Place Jamaa el Fna, patrimoine oral et immatériel, traditions locales, sauvegarde, tourisme, UNESCO, changement social

like a spider, like an octopus, like a centipede
slithering away, wriggling and writhing, escaping
one's embrace, forbidding possession
there is no way of getting a firm grasp on it
—Juan Goytisolo, Makbara (1993, 242).

As Juan Goytisolo's metaphor suggests, it is impossible to define what Jemaa el Fna is. Between any description—whether in a hand-

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book for tourists, a literary work such as a novel, or a social geographical study such as the present article—and the multiple reality of the square, there will always be an irreconcilable difference. This applies in principle to any place, but in particular to a place such as Jemaa el Fna Square in Marrakech. The square is known all over the world, mainly because of its performing street artistes: storytellers, acrobats, musicians, and seers, all following a tradition for which there is evidence going back several centuries. Today, this square in the middle of the Medina is one of Marrakech's greatest tourist attractions. In 2001 the square was proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and, as this study will show, Jemaa el Fna played an important role in the development of the new UNESCO concept for protecting intangible heritage.

Research Topics

Both this proclamation by the international organization UNESCO and the increasing number of tourists in Marrakech can be interpreted as global influences which impinge on and modify the social space of Jemaa el Fna Square.

Besides these specific influences, the performers in the square and its visitors have been affected by general social changes in Morocco. It is still too early to attempt to "evaluate" the effects of the UNESCO distinction, but it is nevertheless possible to discern changes at particular points within the Jemaa el Fna social space that can be attributed to it. In any analysis, however, these changes must be carefully distinguished from other influencing variables (international tourism, urban developments, general social changes) to enable us to ask how these different factors are superimposed in their results and even mutually influence each other.

The main question to be asked in this article is, therefore, What are the effects of these different global influences and inherent social changes in Moroccan society on a place like Jemaa el Fna square—the square as physical place, as social space, and as discursive object? This main question can be further developed: What are the particular effects of, first, the UNESCO proclamation; second, the development of Marrakech into a popular tourist destination; and, third, the continuous changes in Moroccan society on Jemaa el Fna Square, its performers, and its visitors? In what way do these three influence variables affect or reinforce each other, or do they sometimes have antagonistic effects? In what way do the various discursive reinterpretations of Jemaa el Fna find expression in the social space and the physical place? This analysis is followed by an examination of the practical question of how Jemaa el Fna can be "safeguarded": in the face of social "modernization" and international tourism in Marrakech, is it actually possible for UNESCO to carry out its intention of safeguarding the square's oral and intangible traditions? (see Popp, Spittler, Scholze, and Schmitt 2003, 103). The answers to this question are potentially relevant for other local intangible traditions that have been proclaimed "masterpieces" by UNESCO since 2001.

1. Urban Places and Global Influences

Unlike social modernization, perhaps, globalization is not a single process, consistent in itself. Rather, it is a general term for highly differentiated, sometimes even antagonistic processes (see, e.g., Wimmer 2003; Beck 1997). Global influences and social change impinge on a place like Jemaa el Fna Square by means of specific discourses, new norms, new behaviour, new products, international tourists, and—in the special case of Jemaa el Fna Square and other UNESCO masterpieces—by means of the awarding of a distinction by an international organization.

Just as the life of a society is specifically compressed in towns, an urban society seems to become concentratedly visible and read-

able for the observer at particular urban places. Distinctive places are generally everyday transition spaces, on the one hand, but as social arenas they also have a life of their own and a symbolic character. This implicit referential character makes the study of them particularly promising for social and cultural scientists.[1] The author thus starts from the assumption that phenomena associated with globalization and modernization can be found in such places in a uniquely compressed form, and that these are ideal places for describing such phenomena.

Both older and more recent ideas and ideologies with respect to space and society are materialized in the built environment, in urban architecture, in free spaces. Places make it possible to interpret people's actions and social practices, including their everyday, routine behaviour. One possible way of analysing the urban consists in studying the dialectical relation between material construction, social practice, and discursive representation of the urban in concrete urban places (Wildner 2003, 21; see Harvey 1993). A place such as Jemaa el Fna Square is here conceived of as (1) a physical material place, characterized (in the urban context) by its particular material construction; and (2) a social space in which social actors move and which is constituted by (alterable) rules (norms, unconscious and conscious concepts), resources (such as financial and material resources, legal titles), and relations (market relations, kinship relations, etc.).[2] Finally, a place such as Jemaa el Fna is (3) a significant place and thus an object of discourse, which is interpreted in everyday discourses or, for instance, in literary testimonies. In this conceptualization there are parallels to Mitchell's (1996, 34-35) conceptualization of landscape. Jemaa el Fna is a social arena and a significant place, and, as such, it can be distinguished from any arbitrarily chosen physical space of the same size. On the one hand, places or cultural landscapes are "discourse materialized" (Schein 1997), since *more general discourses* are implicitly reflected or consciously expressed in their materiality and layout: the small and big stories about just distribution of power and resources in a community, capitalist valorization, modernity, the exoticism of the old, or contemporary urban planning. Taking Schein's idea further, one could also speak of landscapes as "discourse visualized" or "discourse zoned." On the other hand, *specific discourses* with respect to a particular place can themselves affect that place. Like other famous places in the world, Jemaa el Fna Square is permanently discussed and interpreted discursively, these discourses having different scalar ranges, but with mutual influence and overlapping of tendentially local and tendentially global discourses. It is to be expected that these discourses will also be reflected in its materiality and its social organization. Thus global or other exogenous influences impinge on the social space and the urban landscape of such a place in many different ways.

2. The Heritage of the Present

In cultural geography and in the cultural sciences generally, the topic of heritage has attracted increasing attention for some years now. Following the constructivist turn, "heritage" is understood as a social construction: whether or not something is called a part of the heritage of a society or group is not due to any inherent quality of the thing itself, but is the result of discursive and in some cases highly conflictive discussions (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines "heritage" as a mode of cultural production in the present and, in the context of the world of museums, as a historically contingent construction of the exhibitors (1998, 1; see also Glesner 2002, 8). The heritagization of objects thus places them in a relationship both to the past and to the present: Only what the present holds to be relevant is perceived as a part of the cultural heritage of a society (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). At the same time, the

objects are classified as belonging to the past, and for cultural practices this classification is always highly ambivalent, since the modernity of the objects is thus called into question.

This article relates to articles and monographs that deal with the heritagization and museumization of, for instance, landscapes and towns (see DeLyser 1999; Handler and Gable 1997; Soyez 2003; Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000; also Salamandra 2004 about Damascus). A special feature of this study which distinguishes it from most other cultural geographical studies is that it focuses on (spatially bound) cultural and social *practices* in an urban landscape rather than on the built environment. The article also relates to studies of staging culture for tourists and the influence of tourism on cultural change (see, e.g., Vorlaufer 1999; Glesner 2002; also Bartha 2006; Smith 1977). However, an original feature of this study is its focus on the effects of a specific intervention by an international organization, UNESCO, on local cultural practices and an urban landscape, in this case Jemaa el Fna Square. It is thus also a first case study of the effects of the UNESCO program for the proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, under which a total of 90 objects were listed between 2001 and 2005. In view of the fact that Jemaa el Fna Square has carried the designation longer than any other "masterpiece" included in UNESCO's representative list, its study would appear to be promising with respect to safeguarding these and other future objects.

3. Notes on Methodology

This article is based on the results of the author's ongoing research on tangible and intangible heritage in North Africa. The author spent a total of six months carrying out field research in Morocco on several different occasions between 2004 and 2006. An essential feature of the research was its ethnographical approach to the study of Jemaa el Fna Square. In addition to many informal conversations, the author also conducted formal narrative interviews with the square's social actors. In addition, a good picture of the institutional environment of the square was obtained through many interviews and conversations with public-administration staff, private individuals, other academic researchers, and UNESCO staff in Paris and Rabat. Where accessible, private and administrative archives, documents, media reports, pictures, and other literature on Jemaa el Fna Square were studied and taken into account (see, e.g., Hanai 1989; Goytisolo 2001a; Tebbaa and El Faïz 2003). To complete this ethnographic research, systematic records of the activities in the square were made, for instance in the form of dynamic maps (see Figure 1).

In the rest of this article, Jemaa el Fna Square is first located as an urban square (section 4); this section is followed by a short account of the background to the UNESO distinction (section 5). Section 6 discusses the discursive reinterpretations of Jemaa el Fna as a result of the proclamation. Following this discourse reconstruction, we consider the square as a social space and the changes brought about in it by international tourism (section 7), the question of local appropriation in Marrakech of the global UNESCO concept (section 8), and the transformation of the social space and cultural practices in the square as a result of general social changes in Morocco (section 9). The article ends with a discussion of the square's "authenticity" and the question of how the UNESCO proclamation can safeguard it.

4. Jemaa el Fna Square in Marrakech: Notes on the Geography of a Social Space

When squares become famous and their names serve as metaphors, it is generally because of some special feature, such as their architecture, their central location in a well-known city, their literary associations, or political events that have taken place there. Jemaa el Fna in the Medina of

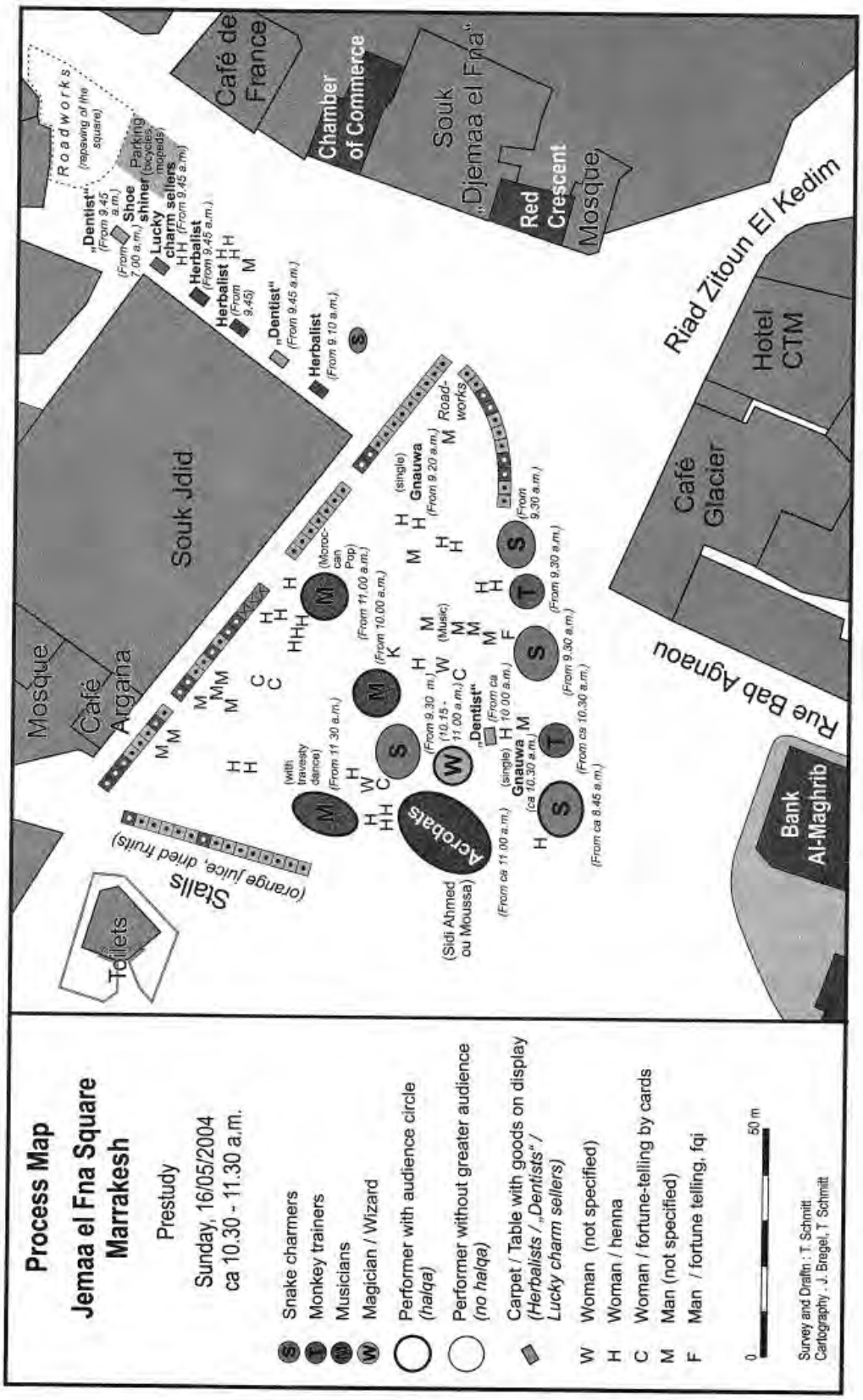

FIGURE 1 Dynamic mapping of Jemaa el Fna Square.

The map is part of a series showing the positions of various performers and social actors and their activities on Jemaa el Fna Square during one hour of a day (here, Sunday 16 May 2004, between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m.). Because of the dynamic character of the activities, such a map can document these positions and activities only in an approximate, generalized way. Nevertheless, the map does give a well-rounded impression of the activities and their distribution during this hour.

Marrakech, however, is well known mainly because of the performances that take place there, day after day, in endless variations (Figure1 and Figure 2).

The architecture of the square, which, as far as it is possible to trace its history, has changed its dimensions several times, is of no particular historical or artistic value. Everyday 20th-century Maghrebi architecture, in the form of simple hotels and cafés and a *souk* building, gives the square its present-day spatial setting; only the buildings of the Post Office and the Al-Maghrib bank, built in the French colonial style, stand out somewhat from the rest. The CTM hotel, built about 1920 as the central bus station, combines early modern architecture with the Arabo-Islamic patio principle. The square is close to the Koutoubia mosque, a signature landmark; but the square and the mosque are about 300 metres apart.[3] Its position between the *souk*s to the north of the square, stretching as far as the Ali ben Youssef mosque, the Kasbah in the south, the Mellah in the south-east, and the nearby Koutoubia mosque has defined the emergence of a great city square (see also Deverdun 1959). Although Jemaa el Fna is located within the Medina of Marrakech, the historical old city, the districts to the south-west of the square have become dominated by 20th-century architecture, in some cases of the representative kind. Visitors who arrive in the Medina from the "modern" district of Guéliz will not find the typical Arabo-Islamic layout, with dead-end alleys, immediately behind the town wall, but only on the other side of Jemaa el Fna.

Not its architecture but its social activities give the square its role and identity within the city—its discursive meanings. We find evidence of the existence of intangible traditions, as recognized by UNESCO through its proclamation, in a 17th-century travel report by Hassan Al Youssi; in this report Al Youssi describes how an old man, surrounded by a circle of listeners, told amusing stories (see Tebbaa and El Faïz 2003, 98).[4]

5. Background: The UNESCO Proclamation

In 1998, UNESCO created a new program for the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Between 1998 and 2005 exactly 90 different "masterpieces" were proclaimed by UNESCO. This program can be regarded as a kind of preliminary project for the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which was adopted in 2003 and entered into force in April 2006. The convention rules that all masterpieces proclaimed up to this point will be recorded in the new *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* created by the convention.

The full background of the development of this new program for the proclamation of masterpieces is obviously not familiar even to authors who have discussed the concept (see Blake 2001; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). In some publications, several events are (correctly) listed that prompted treatment of the question of intangible heritage at an international level, for instance, an initiative by the government of Bolivia to protect the intellectual-property aspects of popular culture (1973), or the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* of 1989. But the special role played by Jemaa el Fna Square in Marrakech is not mentioned, at least in most publications. In the city of Marrakech, on the other hand, it is "local knowledge" that UNESCO's decision to protect Jemaa el Fna is a result of the efforts of the Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo. So how can we reconcile the differences between "Anglo-Saxon" and "local" knowledge in this case?

In the mid-1990s, Goytisolo, who today lives in the Medina of Marrakech, took an initiative that finally—and in a form not intended by him at the time—led to the new Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003). As perhaps the most intimate

FIGURE 2 A view of Jemaa el Fna Square, April 2005.
This view taken from the terrace of the Café Glacier shows the south-east corner of the square, with—among others—snake charmers, monkey trainers, henna women, fqi, and, on the right, a closed halqa around a seller of remedies. In the heat of midday, as in this photo, the number of activities and visitors on the square is noticeably reduced.

European connoisseur of Jemaa el Fna Square and its oral traditions, both of which figure in his novels and short stories, Goytisolo saw the cultural versatility of the square threatened by local authority plans to build beside it a new tower block with a glass façade and an underground parking lot. Apart from the fact that these plans were scarcely compatible with the status of the Medina of Marrakech as a UNESCO World Heritage site, they would—in Goytisolo's opinion (2005)—irrevocably destroy the traditions of the square. At the time, Goytisolo obviously saw no way to stop these plans definitively within a local framework. In January 1996, through his publisher, Hans Meinke, Goytisolo informed the general director of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, of the threats to Jemaa el Fna Square and proposed that the square be placed under the protection of UNESCO as "*patrimonio oral de humanidad*" ("oral heritage of humanity"). The fundamental significance of Goytisolo's proposal for the new UNESCO program, and thus also the new convention, can be demonstrated sufficiently by letters and other written sources (e.g., internal documents of UNESCO).

Similarly, as proposer and joint founder of a civic society, Association Place Jemaa el Fna Patrimoine oral de l'humanité, Goytisolo created the prerequisites for the protection of Jemaa el Fna Square at the local level in Marrakech. Thus, in the person of Goytisolo, we can see the potential power of what we will describe here as *scalar hybrid (social) actors*, who are at home and able to act on several levels of a socio-spatial system, or, to put it more simply, in several worlds, and can jump scales (on the term "scale jumping," see Swyngedouw 1997): from the local context of the *Medina of Marrakech*, where Goytisolo was able to study Jemaa el Fna and its oral and intangible traditions in the role of the

privileged foreigner for several decades, to the world of *global culture politics*, in his capacity as a world-famous writer (and always seeing himself as playing a political role), which made possible direct contact with the top level of an international organization like UNESCO. The term "scalar hybrid" is used here to indicate the double localization of a social actor in global–local interaction contexts, the actor being fixed in a particular place on the local level while, at the same time, he is active on a global level that is not tied to any concrete physical place. This understanding of scalar hybridity is not identical with the use of the term "cultural hybridity" in cultural studies (see, e.g., Bhabha 1994).

The story of how Jemaa el Fna came to be placed under protection could therefore be told as a *local–global* success story with a happy ending (at least for the time being), although not all critics of the program will accept this narrative: Because it was important to prevent the building of tower blocks in the old city of Marrakech, an international convention was born that offers protection for endangered local cultural traditions all over the world.

6. Jemaa el Fna and Its Discursive (Re)interpretations

The proclamation of Jemaa el Fna Square as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity can be understood as a discursive reinterpretation of the square. If we consider the discursive interpretations of Jemaa el Fna, we can distinguish in an ideal sense four different interpretations, two of them going back to the second half of the 20th century up to the proclamation, and two more recent. These different interpretations overlap rather than being mutually exclusive. They can be found—with some shifts of emphasis—among the local population, among foreign visitors, and, for example, in literary testimonies.

Discursive Interpretation I: The Square as a Place of Tumblers, Storytellers, and "Oriental" Fascination

A small travel book by Gisela Bonn, published in 1950, provides one of the most dense, most concise formulations of this interpretation or stereotype of Jemaa el Fna. Describing that part of Jemaa el Fna where the performers are to be found—which Bonn calls the "entertainment market" (as against the goods markets which were also held there at that time), she writes (1950, 153),

> It is a playground teeming with people, where storytellers, tumblers, snake charmers, dancers, and players all offer different attractions. Spectators crowd around these unusual artistes, forming circles of varying sizes, looking on in wonder at a spectacle which is repeated every afternoon in Marrakech.[5]

It is certainly no coincidence that in German-speaking countries travel brochures today still contain abridged and modified versions of Bonn's text: for instance, Jemaa el Fna is described as a "meeting point of tumblers, snake charmers, sorcerers and storytellers."[6] Thus Jemaa el Fna is characterized as a square full of (bizarre) street artistes, where the visitor is offered "oriental life in a thousand variations (...) as if from a cornucopia" (Bonn 1950, 153). The formulation of this interpretation is that of a European visitor, although it is undisputed that the square has also had an almost magical power of attraction—to use another cliché—on the Marrakchi, and even more so on the people from the surrounding countryside.

Discursive Interpretation II: The Square as a Place of Marginalization

Besides this interpretation of Jemaa el Fna as a place full of fascinating "Oriental" performers, there is another interpretation that sees the square as a place of marginalized

people and marginalization—an interpretation that Hanai (1989), for instance, has formulated in the language of the social sciences, but which corresponds to everyday interpretations of Jemaa el Fna (which, to some degree, are still current today). Here, Jemaa el Fna appears as a place where people who have been unable to find better work now earn their money as water carriers or fortune tellers; as a place of pickpockets and confidence tricksters, of charlatans and swindlers, a place of female and male prostitution, of homeless children—in short, of plainly visible or colourfully costumed poverty (see Hanai 1989). Lucette Heller, a Jewish Marrakchi by birth, described Jemaa el Fna Square, looking back on her childhood, as a *place to be avoided*—at least for the Jewish population (Heller 1999, 20). For a long time in Marrakech the expression *"fils de la place"* ("son of the square") had extremely pejorative connotations. To a certain degree, *both* images of the square existed side by side, never completely excluding each other. Jemaa el Fna also held a great fascination for Goytisolo, author of the novel *Makbara*, which he tried to express through detailed descriptions of the performers. At the same time, in his "reading of the space" of Jemaa el Fna (Goytisolo 1993, 241), the square is also revealed as a space of marginalization and—oscillating between fascination and marginalization—of *subversion*.

Discursive Interpretation III: The Square as a Place of Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The present-day perception of Jemaa el Fna as part of the *cultural heritage of humanity* shows the powerful influence an idea can have when propagated by a global institution.[7] This perception is the result of a discursive reinterpretation of Jemaa el Fna, first by Juan Goytisolo, and then by UNESCO and local (Marrakchi) and national (Moroccan) intellectuals, which almost seamlessly succeeded the interpretation of Jemaa el Fna as a *place of marginalization*. Goytisolo, who closely studied the traditions of the square, discovered that the repertoire of the storytellers, consisting of material that had been transmitted orally over a long period, contained tales from the Thousand and One Nights and echoes of Greek epics and legends. In the storytellers' tales he recognized the oral roots of our written literature, and he described his findings in international journals for the broader public (see, e.g., Goytisolo 1997). Goytisolo urged in drastic terms the importance of saving the art of storytelling as found in Jemaa el Fna: "It is important to understand that the loss of a single *halaiqui* [here "performer," especially a storyteller] is much more serious for humanity than the death of 200 best-selling authors" (qtd. in N.N. 2000). And so it was Goytisolo who, as Ouidad Tebbaa once observed,[8] reconciled Morocco's intellectuals, and (let the author add) the middle classes of Marrakech, with the square. The discursive reinterpretation of popular cultural traditions on a local level (in Marrakech) corresponds with their discursive reinterpretation on a global level, whereby the UNESCO concept creates a new kind of global cultural geography with a focus on—often marginalized—intangible cultural traditions.

Discursive Interpretation IV: Jemaa el Fna as a Disneyfication of Itself

In a statement on the new UNESCO program, taking Jemaa el Fna Square as an example, Laurie J. Sears asks, "But can it be preserved without becoming a Disney version of its former self?" (Nas 2002, 147). Many short-term tourists with whom I spoke in Marrakech in the course of my field research told me they thought that Jemaa el Fna's activities were essentially a "theatre for tourists" (to borrow the title of Glesner 2002), overlooking the fact that all performances are directed also, or even primarily, at a local and a regional audience.

The question of the "Disneyfication" and "authenticity" of the square, touched on in these discursive interpretations, is discussed in more detail in section 10 below.

FIGURE 3

Tourists and open-air restaurants in Jemaa el Fna Square, 2004. Every day in the late afternoon, a great part of the square is taken up by open-air restaurants, which are a tourist spectacle par excellence

7. The Influence of Tourism in Jemaa el Fna

When we speak of tourism in Jemaa el Fna, it is necessary, as I have already mentioned, to clear up a misunderstanding: Many of the offerings in Jemaa el Fna Square are directed, or have been directed until now, not at European, American, or Asian tourists but at a local or regional audience, especially the latter. In 1995, Goytisolo still described the tourists as exotic and alien elements in the square, like beings from another planet, of whom he sometimes took pictures (e.g., Goytisolo 2001b, 49). Because of the language barrier (for the stories, prophecies, and songs are normally all in the Arab and Berber dialects of the city and surrounding regions), many performances cannot be understood by foreign tourists. Where language recedes into the background and tourists are at least partially able to appreciate expressive performances, as in the case of the acrobats, sometimes the musicians, and especially the Gnauwa drummers and dancers, the number of foreign tourists in the audience noticeably increases. Since they are generally prepared to give more money than the locals do, the performers are quick to address them directly and even invite them to take part in the performance.

The many open-air restaurants that are set up every evening in Jemaa el Fna are a tourist spectacle par excellence (Figure 3). They work with an official licence, covering a large part of the square during the evening, and they of course represent an attempt (a successful and financially lucrative one for all parties concerned) to translate the square's tourist potential, its myth, into economic value; by now these restaurants have themselves become a part of the myth.

Foreign tourists who visit Jemaa el Fna and get only a superficial impression of the city will probably best remember these open-air restaurants. But even foreign tourists will register the "animation" of the square by snake charmers, musicians and dancers, sorcerers, acrobats, and a range of other performers that tourists may not always be able to classify. Tourists who stay in Marrakech for only a few days will hardly be

able to judge the cultural value (as diagnosed by Goytisolo and UNESCO) of, for instance, the storytellers in the square, if they notice them at all. But not all tourists behave in the same way in the social space of Jemaa el Fna. Those who are members of a tourist party, a *closed group*, and who walk around Jemaa el Fna with a guide, often find the colourful performances disconcerting, sometimes even alarming, and their reaction is reserved. Others show more interest, more curiosity, and they react more playfully to the performers; they go to see the more expressive performances (such as those of the Gnauwa) or those explicitly address them (such as having their photograph taken with the snake-charmers). Some tourists, who may know more about the background of the UNESCO distinction, occasionally look into the *halqa* with an understanding, rather superior smile, in the way that adults sometimes watch children at play. The difference between the behaviour of the tourists and that of the locals is very noticeable when, for instance, the *fqi* in the middle of the *halqa* gives a personal blessing to his audience; his invocations are taken very seriously by the local listeners. A very small minority of tourists, mainly individuals, who are negligible in terms of numbers but not insignificant for the social space of Jemaa el Fna, make more effort to penetrate into the world of the square; for instance, they may sit for a whole evening in a music *halqa*, or perhaps listen to the storytellers for a while—following in the footsteps, so to speak, of UNESCO—even if, like Elias Canetti (see below), they understand practically nothing of the words.

Tourism in Marrakech has changed both quantitatively and qualitatively over the past few decades. In the 1970s, Marrakech became an attractive destination for hippies, alternatives, and artistes, as well as a centre of hidden gay tourism. Over the last few years, foreigners have settled in increasing numbers in the old city of Marrakech, with the effect of a partial gentrification of the Medina (see Escher, Petermann, and Clos 2001). A Marrakechi musician with close links to Jemaa el Fna Square describes the time when artistes and alternative tourists met in the square in the 1970s and 1980s as one of mutual giving and taking, while in these days of mass tourism such exchanges no longer take place (Tergui 2004).

In particular, many members of the Gnauwa of Jemaa el Fna earn their living by performing in hotels for a tourist audience in the evening, rather than depending on the late-afternoon performances in the square. The name "Gnauwa" originally denoted the members of a religious brotherhood, traditionally black Africans, who developed their own musical tradition (see, e.g., Chilyeh 1998); but the younger Gnauwa of Jemaa el Fna, at least, no longer see themselves as members of a religious brotherhood, instead identifying as musicians who enjoy playing the music of the Gnauwa and perform professionally before an audience. Thus, tourism in Marrakech is *one* factor in the local preservation of certain cultural traditions, such as that of the Gnauwa, at least in commodified forms, and in assuring their presence at distinctive locations within the public space.

Thus, Jemaa el Fna is a place where very different population groups come together: residents of the city; more distant inhabitants of the surrounding areas (the Haouz of Marrakech, the mountainous regions, and the Presahara); wealthy Moroccan tourists (especially as weekend tourists) from the economic and administrative centres of the Atlantic coast; tour groups and individual tourists from other countries; and foreigners living in Marrakech. For all of these, Jemaa el Fna is a crossing point, but only in a limited sense can it be called a genuine meeting place of all population groups. In socio-spatial terms, the square is not homogeneous; within a constricted space, the different social groups show a tendency to segregating behaviour: for example, foreign tourists rarely integrate themselves in the traditional *halqa* and mainly stay at the food stalls with "international" service, while the *harira* soup

stalls are more or less dominated by poorer (local and regional) visitors and by the social actors (performers, henna women, etc.) of the square. This tendency toward segregating behaviour also applies, at least in principle, to the various local ethnic groups, such as Arabs, Berbers, and also the Saharouis (for further discussion, see Hanai 1989, 171). This segregation is not hermetic; rather, it is repeatedly broken down—which may well be part of the fascination the square holds for both social actors and observers.

8. Social Change as Reflected in Jemaa el Fna

Social life and artistic forms of expression in Jemaa el Fna Square are not static but have always been subject to constant change, depending as they do on the spontaneity and creativity of the performers and their interactions with the audience. If I describe here some of the changes to Jemaa el Fna that have taken place over the past few years, it is not because I wish to compare the present-day Jemaa el Fna with some idealized earlier version of itself. But the effects of social modernization and transformation processes in Morocco and of general globalizing tendencies are undeniable, and go much deeper than the effects of international tourism; they are not only reflected in the square's social practices and cultural displays but may well be changing it in fundamental ways.

The most obvious changes have been brought about by *urban developments* that have altered the visual appearance of Jemaa el Fna since the 1990s. There are thus several reasons why the square today has a different socio-spatial character. These include regulative interventions by the city and the regional representative of the government, the Wilaya of Marrakech: not least, the presence of the police officers, which has helped to prevent petty crime to a great extent, and the repeated *aménagement* of the square. This has meant replacing the compacted earth surface, first with dark-grey asphalt (on the occasion of the GATT conference in Marrakech in 1994) and then with light-coloured paving stones (in 2004). In 2003 the square was largely closed to motor traffic, and the avenue des Princes, which leads to the square, is now a pedestrian precinct. Visually, the paved surface and the environs—in the local context—now have a "new town" look, and in the global context they have the ubiquitous appearance of any big-city square.

But the performers and their audience have also undergone changes. This can be clearly seen, for instance, in the position of the storytellers, whose art was a decisive factor in the decision to place the square under protection and who enthralled Elias Canetti during his visit to Marrakech in 1954:

> The largest crowds are drawn by the storytellers. It is around them that people throng most densely and stay longest. Their performances are lengthy; an inner ring of listeners squat on the ground and it is some time before they get up again. Others, standing, form an outer ring; they too, hardly move, spellbound by the storyteller's words and gestures. Sometimes two of them recite in turn. Their words come from farther off and hang longer in the air than those of ordinary people (Canetti [1954] 2003, 77).

A comparison of Canetti's account from 1954 with the present-day situation (2005/2006) shows up one aspect of the change: The largest circles today are found not around the storytellers but around the many musical groups offering Moroccan pop music, which chiefly attract adolescents and young adults. In quantitative (but not in qualitative) terms, the storytellers have become a peripheral phenomenon, both chronologically and spatially. They have to compete against the noise of the mopeds and the lack of interest on the part of the crowds. Some storytellers, such as Mohammed Bariz or Ahmed Bouchama, continue to give fascinating performances, despite the adverse conditions, enthralling their audience through words, gestures, and

facial expressions. Yet their circles are seldom complete, and their takings are comparatively low. Among those performers who work mainly with speech and dialogue, those who work in pairs and who combine their dialogues with slapstick attract the biggest audiences.

The older generation among the (few) present-day storytellers are illiterate—meaning they have learned stories orally from their teachers and made them their own through additions and modifications. The younger storytellers today can read and write, and none of the storytellers remain uninfluenced by the modern mass media, so that their present-day form of storytelling is referred to as the expression of a "hybrid" or "secondary" orality (see also Goytisolo 2001a). Other performers in Jemaa el Fna—in particular, some musicians—have attended secondary school up to the university entrance level. One of the most prominent storytellers is sometimes invited—and this, too, is a consequence of the reinterpretation of Jemaa el Fna as "heritage"—to *recitations* held, for instance, in the Institut français de Marrakech, or occasionally also to recitations in Europe, but this occasional attention paid to the storytellers changes little in their precarious economic and social situation.

In earlier decades storytellers and artistes often lived almost *archetypal lives* before they could establish themselves permanently in the square (see, e.g., Samrakandi 2001 on the storyteller Mohamed Bariz; also Tebaa and El Faïz 2003): Fascinated since childhood by the old masters in the square, the storyteller Mohamed Bariz absorbed their gestures, facial expressions, and repertoire, then took to the road for some years to try out his skills in the markets of the small towns in the region, returning only later to form his own first *halqa* in the square. It is predictable that there will be no more such biographies in the future, especially since, outside Jemaa el Fna, the art of storytelling is no longer found in public spaces in Morocco. Are today's performers the last of a long tradition (see UNESCO 1997)?

Despite this professional pessimism, there have also been *innovations* in Jemaa el Fna during recent decades that indicate that the square has *cultural vitality*. One such innovation is the founding of Berber (or Imazighen) music groups that do not limit themselves to performing traditional folk songs in traditional dress but give expression to Berber culture and language in songs they have written themselves, with a combination of traditional and modern instruments—and thus appeal, in particular, to a young audience. The first group of this kind in Jemaa el Fna, founded in the early 1980s, was Imzwagen; today it has broken up again, but quite a number of *halqa* of this kind can now be found in the square.[9]

The musicians who play Moroccan pop music and the young Berber musicians playing their own compositions, as well as a number of comic actors, currently attract such big audiences that they seem to like working in the square, at least for a time (perhaps not for a whole lifetime), and it seems to be an acceptable financial option for them. These *halqa* in Jemaa el Fna thus have a real chance to reproduce themselves vitally in the foreseeable future, provided that they are not driven away from the square by outside forces.

Some of these musicians aspire to professional standards. On the one hand, they want to preserve the tradition of the music *halqa* in Jemaa el Fna, and they follow its traditional rules: This can be seen, for instance, when they pray for those present or when they invoke local saints. At the same time, they want to perform contemporary Moroccan or Berber music. A good number of these musicians have made recordings in sound studios and sell their own cassettes and CDs, which underlines their professional aspirations. I personally know a Berber musician who performs with his colleagues in Jemaa el Fna only in traditional dress (the *jellaba*), and only with traditional instruments, but also sells video CDs featuring his own songs and sketches. The relations between tradition and modernity in Jemaa el Fna Square are thus not

FIGURE 4 A fortune teller in Jemaa el Fna Square, 2005.
This fortune teller has worked in Jemaa el Fna Square since the 1950s. Lying on the ground, among other things, is a copy of Royal Air Maroc Magazine, showing the front cover advertising an article about Jemaa el Fna Square and its proclamation as a masterpiece by UNESCO. When the fortune teller begins his work by rallying people around him, he often opens the magazine and shows the article with a photo of himself. By referring to the article, he is able to underline the dignity of his work. This can be interpreted as re-appropriation of the media's response to the UNESCO proclamation by the social actors in the square itself.

easily discernible to observers.

But what has been the effect of the UNESCO proclamation on the social actors themselves?

9. Local Appropriations of a Global Concept

Of course, the various social actors who have worked in Jemaa el Fna for many years know about the proclamation of the square as "oral and intangible heritage of humanity"; individuals occasionally refer to it in their performances, and sometimes show magazines they have brought along containing reports on Jemaa el Fna and perhaps photographs of themselves (se Figure 4). This could be interpreted as a strategic instrumentalization or appropriation of the UNESCO distinction, through which the value of their own persons and their own work is displayed to the public. In some cases, the performers show that they identify themselves with the distinction in several ways. I have several times heard performers discussing which offerings in the square are worthy of being called "heritage" (Arabic *turat*, French *patrimoine*) and which are not: Does the work of every slapstick artiste (however crude and sensational), every dispensing of cures (however ineffective), every traditional (but probably inaccurate) form of fortune telling, deserve to be described as "heritage"?

This means that there is an informal hierarchization of the performances in the square itself, and not only in external perceptions. For those performers known to me personally, the traditional character (i.e., the age) of an offering and its quality and originality, assessed intersubjectively, are relevant criteria for judging the work of their colleagues—and it is clear that high quality and a high degree of originality can make up for a lack of tradition.

The performers in the square understand themselves, to some extent, as *embodied carriers* of the intangible heritage, and they definitely see the UNESCO distinction as being related to their own persons. In addition to their pride in the distinction, some interviewees in 2004/2005 showed their disappointment over the fact that, in spite of the UNESCO proclamation, hardly anything has changed in their generally precarious economic situation, nor in that of past performers who are now very old. At some points in all their statements, the reproach is heard that *other people* (especially journalists, scholars, intellectuals, and UNESCO) now exploit the square for their own purposes, without giving the performers a fair share of the profits or equivalent compensation. Thus, the proclamation of the square as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity is perceived by the performers as an honour, but also as a form of dispossession or *disinheritance*, against which they must put up a defence. A musician from the square, interviewed in spring 2004, expressed this as follows: "*We* are the heart of the square. In other words, without us the square would be dead. So we have to defend our heritage."[10]

One obvious effect of the UNESCO proclamation on the social structure of the square is the founding of a number of interest groups. In 2002, the majority of the performers joined together to form the Association des maîtres de halqa. Another interest group was founded in 2003/2004 by the proprietors of the open-air restaurants and juice stalls, who feared a restriction of their economic activities, or even expulsion from the square, as a result of the UNESCO proclamation. The interest groups deal with the local authorities and municipal bodies; they have no direct contact with UNESCO. UNESCO and the proclamation are discursively present in the square, but for the performers UNESCO as an institution is impossibly far away.

10. The Square and the Question of Authenticity

Section 6 above mentions the discursive interpretation of the square as an inauthentic tourist spectacle, as a Disneyfication of itself, as a representation of the Orient that is no longer authentic and no longer in keeping with the times. What can the social and cultural sciences say about this discourse today?

The question of authenticity, or the question as to the admissibility of the question of authenticity, has been taken up in a number of different disciplines in recent years, ranging from social anthropology to the scientific preservation of historic monuments. Dean MacCannell introduced the term "staged authenticity" in research on tourism as long ago as 1973: Local inhabitants present a picture of their culture that is attractive to tourists but has been deliberately created. However, the distinction made by MacCannell implies that there is a local culture that can be called authentic in addition to the commodified, inauthentic version that is presented to tourists (Wang 1999, 351; Bartha 2006, 201). In the cultural sciences, it has now become accepted as a matter of common sense that authenticity is a socially constructed category (see, e.g., Glesner 2002, 28) and that there is no absolute yardstick for the authenticity of a performance or a material artefact. Depending on the point of view and the criteria used, the same object can be assessed very differently with respect to its authenticity, as shown, for instance, by Lydia DeLyser (1999) in the case of an American ghost town that has been preserved as an open-air museum. From a *phenomenological point of view*, an

observer may experience a situation as evidently authentic, and the personal value of this experience is not to be disputed. However, as soon as this experience is translated into language, as soon as it is communicated to others intersubjectively, problems arise with respect to the clear and undoubted attribution of authenticity.

In the debate on authenticity, cultural scientists are not in a privileged position. They have two basic possibilities: First, they can dispense with their own ideas of authenticity and limit themselves to the reconstruction of discourses *on* authenticity, or they can reconstruct how authenticity is staged and under what conditions observers perceive cultural forms as authentic or inauthentic (see, e.g., DeLyser 1999); second, they can define specific notions of authenticity for narrowly limited areas, using explicitly named criteria—knowing that, if other criteria are applied, the observed objects may be assessed differently with respect to their authenticity. Assessment of the restoration of a building *in the light of* how close the materials used are to the original materials would be an example of such a relational concept of authenticity; the assessment might be different if authenticity is judged by the function of the building or its original appearance.

Today, "Disneyfication" appears to be a globally understood metaphor for an *inauthentic*, commodified, and banalized modernization or reproduction of cultural forms that are removed from their original contexts and meanings; in other words, a metaphor for the negative opposite pole of authenticity. Is it possible to name meaningful criteria for the Disneyfication of Jemaa el Fna? If so, should Jemaa el Fna be regarded as Disneyfied? We should not forget here that *all* cultural forms of expression contain an element of staging (Crick 1989, 65;see also Bartha 2006, 201).

Let us attempt to operationalize Disneyfication. One could speak of Disneyfication (a criterion that is in no way absolute but indicative of a tendency) if the majority of the performances and offerings were directed primarily at (foreign) tourists and ceased to attract local audiences. Taking this criterion as a basis, then, we can speak of a partial Disneyfication of the square. Many of the actors no longer meet original needs or fulfil their original function but serve above all as decorative models for photographs: for instance, the water-carriers in their colourful costumes or the dentists, who only a few decades ago really pulled teeth in the square. That *some* of the offerings have disappeared or are disappearing thus seems desirable from the point of view of meeting basic social needs—the Marrakchi today go to properly qualified dentists to have their teeth treated. Other offerings, such as those of the seers and *fqi,* are still in demand by the local people; the new music groups sometimes attract big crowds.

Authenticity with respect to *personal practice* could also be defined as the concord of inner thoughts, feelings, and desires with outer speech and actions—in other words, as honesty (from the field of humanistic psychology, see Bugenthal 1965). Here we might ask, Do the storytellers and musicians themselves believe that their stories and songs are important, or, at least, entertaining? Do the fortune tellers or teachers themselves believe what they say? This may not be true of them all, but it can be said of many of the ambitious musicians or, to take a different example, of the theosophist Thimouni Mbarek, who worked on the square until 2005, explaining his cosmological worldview, which contained elements borrowed from numerology, the natural sciences, Islam, and Christianity. Mbarek presented his cosmology playfully, with wit and self-irony. But for the author, despite all his self-staging on the square, he was personally authentic, convinced of the truth of what he said.

However, the question of the many facets of authenticity concerns not only the intangible traditions but also the *urban design and furnishing* of the square. In 2005 the licensed fruit-juice stalls presented themselves in a new dress: the licence holders were obliged by

the city of Marrakech to buy stalls with nostalgic designs created by the Agence urbaine de Marrakech. The stalls are vaguely reminiscent of horse-drawn carriages or the first automobiles at the end of the 19th century. These designs are obviously the result of a wish to further upgrade the square's tourist appeal by using historical shapes. They are globally known shapes, introduced into Morocco by France during the colonial period and familiar to European and American visitors, who recognize their historical character; but they do not reproduce the picture of Jemaa el Fna as the "cornucopia of Oriental life" (Bonn 1950, 153). It is this kind of eclecticism that may strike visitors as Disney-like. But in this case no attempt was made to authenticate (see Glesner 2002) the stalls and shops as representations of "Oriental" life. Jemaa el Fna Square thus currently reveals at least two quite different kinds of staging: One is undertaken by individual actors in the square, who have always expressed and still express cultural forms or who, because of their precarious financial situation, resort to the use of costumes (such as the water carriers); the other is planned intervention in the physical appearance of the square, following discussion and agreement within and between government and municipal bodies.

11. Can the UNESCO Proclamation Protect Jemaa el Fna Square?

A central question, to which the answer must remain open, is the issue of what is meant by taking appropriate measures to safeguard intangible traditions. This question has been discussed by UNESCO ever since it started planning its program for the proclamation of masterpieces, and, on the other hand, by local and regional societies interested in protecting such traditions. Because of the particular circumstances in which the UNESCO program was developed, as described above, Jemaa el Fna was for a time an important reference point in discussions on the safeguarding of masterpieces.

An indisputable shift of emphasis in comparison to earlier UNESCO approaches (such as the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* of 1989) is that, with the new emphasis on the concrete and the local, the question of *concrete safeguarding measures* for local traditions now clearly assumes greater importance. When applying for the proclamation of a masterpiece or—in future—for inclusion in the new Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, applicant states are required to set out concrete "action plans" for the protection of their traditions, and this can be seen as a reflection of the original impulse for the development of the program, which was a desire to protect the traditions of Jemaa el Fna Square.

The question of what constitutes appropriate measures to safeguard intangible traditions, or even whether such safeguarding is possible at all, is still a matter of controversy. But the example of Jemaa el Fna (and it seems to me that this simple but instructive example is not taken into account at all in the ongoing discussion) clearly shows that such safeguarding may consist, for instance, *in warding off concrete dangers* such as development plans on the part of the government or the local authorities, or business investment plans. In her conclusion, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett seems to oversimplify the matter:

> Indeed, one of UNESCO's criteria for designation as a masterpiece of intangible heritage is the vitality of the phenomenon in question: [A] if it is truly vital, it does not need safeguarding; [B] if it is almost dead, safeguarding will not help (2004, 56).

Even with a maximum degree of vitality, the traditions of Jemaa el Fna Square would probably not have been able to survive if the square had been permanently destroyed by massive urban developments. On closer examination, the case marked [A] in the above quotation is not sound.

Nevertheless, it is possible to hold different views of what it is that needs protection:

The specific architecture of the square? The storytellers and performers themselves as "*living treasures*" of human knowledge? The tradition of oral storytelling in the square? Orality as an abstract principle? The epics, stories, and songs that are told and sung in the square, in as many variants as possible, recorded on video and transcribed? The principle of the *halqa*? Typical objects used by the storytellers and musicians (instruments, clothing, etc.)?

During my research in Marrakech, I actually heard all of these ideas expressed in connection with the need to protect Jemaa el Fna, depending on whether I talked to urbanists, intellectuals, anthropologists, businessmen, tourists, members of the Association des amis de la place Jemaa el Fna (of which Goytisolo was a co-founder), or the performers themselves. The heterogeneity of local ideas regarding protection has its counterpart in the controversial global discussions and also in UNESCO's efforts to produce a definition of the safeguarding of intangible heritage that is broad enough to include all the notions formulated above with respect to Jemaa el Fna (and marked there with a question mark; see, e.g., UNESCO 2003, art. 2). Parallel to their various notions of what safeguarding means, the different social actors involved also have their own ideas about how to *valorize* the square as an advertisement for tourism in Marrakech, or as an urban centre. Ideas regarding protection and valorization also assume a great variety of mixed forms and amalgamations on the part of individual social actors in Marrakech.

The *performers*, who still feel their economic and social existence to be precarious, especially in view of their age and state of health, relate the UNESCO proclamation not only to their work but also to the protection of *their persons*, and they have already made some attempts to get the social question of security for illness and old age placed on the cultural and political agenda.

The Association des amis de la place, the aim of which, according to its constitution, is to protect the square, would like to intervene as *little* as possible, because not only locally, but also globally, there is very little experience with the safeguarding of intangible heritage.[11] In public statements, its members oppose further interventions from outside, especially the increasing use of the square for open-air cinema and concert events, which prevents the regular performers from carrying out their work and earning an adequate income.

As we have already said, the music *halqa* in particular succeed in earning enough to support themselves, and thus have a good chance of being reproduced in the foreseeable future. But in the case of the storytellers, whose earnings in the square are much lower, we have to be more sceptical. And, according to the established storytellers in the square, there are no young people wishing to take up this occupation.[12] It is therefore not surprising that, in a program arranged by UNESCO for the purpose of safeguarding Jemaa el Fna, special attention is paid to the art of storytelling, on the one hand, and to the storytellers, on the other: Under this program, storytellers from the square visit schools in the city of Marrakech in order to present their art to the pupils, and they receive financial support for doing so. However, the special attention paid to the storytellers is viewed with suspicion by other actors in the square. Thus, the "safeguarding" of the square is not free of tensions and conflicts. The same applies to groups interested in protecting Jemaa el Fna.

Safeguarding measures would be relatively easy wherever local authorities have intervened through official regulations in the past. This applies, for instance, to the licensed open-air restaurants that are set up at the end of every afternoon and then fill a large area of the square until late at night, and to the licensed stalls for orange juice and dried fruits. "Defenders" of the traditions of the square sometimes demand that the space occupied in the evening by the restaurants should be limited in order to leave a greater area free for the performers. Since 2004, the

noisy diesel generators that are used to power the juice machines and to light the stalls in the evening have been gradually replaced by electric motors and electric cables laid below ground. These measures have contributed to a noticeable improvement in air quality and a reduction of noise in the square; they benefit the stall owners and the visitors as well as the performers. This example clearly shows that the promotion of tourism and the preservation of cultural traditions are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Exogenous attempts to preserve existing practices in Jemaa el Fna Square at a particular time will always run the risk of contributing to further museumization or folklorization of the square. And it seems that either it will lose the old traditions that are "worth preserving," or it will lose its spontaneity as a result of attempts to preserve it "artificially." But what at present seems impossible—safeguarding without falling into the trap of museumization (see Goytisolo 2001a)—may perhaps succeed in practice.

12. Conclusion

In this article I have tried to show the current effects on the physical place and social space of Jemaa el Fna Square of two global influences, international tourism and the proclamation of the square as a masterpiece by UNESCO, as well as of general social changes in Morocco. At the same time we have seen how discursive reinterpretations of the square have already affected it, both as a social space and as a physical material place.

Here we can relate the results of our Jemaa el Fna case study to discussions of the importance of different *scales*, which for Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge is a central issue in the geography of heritage and for them is always linked to the question: "Whose heritage is it?" (2000, 259). In the case of Jemaa el Fna, heritagization began when the square attracted the attention of international institutions. Recognition of the cultural practices of Jemaa el Fna as an important local and national heritage was a second step in the process. With each scale, it is possible to link different interests and different expectations with respect to the proclamation and with respect to the measures taken to safeguard the square, and on the local level a distinction can also be made between the actors in the square itself and those in the urban society and the local administration.

Speculation is justified as to whether, without Goytisolo's initiative and UNESCO's intervention, the *halqa* tradition in Marrakech would today have disappeared but for a few marginalized remnants, in view of the economic and urbanizing pressures on the square—and, incidentally, whether the city, through its short-sighted policies, would have robbed itself of its unique tourist attraction, which today clearly distinguishes it from all other North African or Arab cities.

The global organization UNESCO continues to provide a constant counterweight against many other interests. The purpose of the proclamation by UNESCO is to protect this cultural space from the negative consequences of modernizing and globalizing processes, including international tourism. The discussion on the safeguarding of Jemaa el Fna in section 11 above can also be relevant for other local cultural traditions recognized by UNESCO. But it is important to remember Jemaa el Fna's specific context. It is situated in the middle of the metropolis of Marrakech, and social change and the pressures of tourism are particularly great there. On the other hand, compared to many other cultural traditions, the question of safeguarding the traditions of Jemaa el Fna seems to be less dramatic, insofar as its stagings and performances have always served the economic interests of the performers, for whom they are a source of income and are offered as cultural forms, not just for the sake of culture, tradition, or even religion.

International tourism may be the most visible factor currently affecting the square as a social space, but the tourists themselves are not necessarily the cause of the greatest

changes. Besides urban developments carried out by the city and the *Wilaya* of Marrakech, social processes of modernization are causing gradual changes in the square and in its offerings. The UNESCO proclamation is a retarding factor in this respect. Moreover, it draws the attention of journalists, as well as social scientists, to the square. But it is this author's opinion that for the current tourist boom in Marrakech and the increased tourist pressure on the square, the proclamation is at most a subordinate factor. A UNESCO proclamation is likely to have the undesired effect of attracting extra tourists to visit a masterpiece of intangible heritage, especially in cases where pioneer tourists before the proclamation were few in number. If the storytellers were to disappear, their local audiences and (with a certain time lag) professional anthropologists and observers would register this fact, but the tourists would not miss them.

As we have shown, it would be short-sighted to zone the place Jemaa el Fna, which is reserved for performances, as a place (re)presenting both pre-modern and touristic Morocco. In her excellent book *Les Sindbads marocains : voyage dans le Maroc civique*, the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi (2004) describes young Moroccan Web heroes from Marrakech and the remote regions in the south of Morocco, who want to develop civil society and democracy in Morocco with the aid of the World Wide Web. In her book Mernissi playfully opposes the motif of the young Internet heroes to the figure of the snake charmer, who is emblematic of Jemaa el Fna Square and often represents both pre-modern and touristic Morocco. But the performers of Jemaa el Fna are not just spectators of the modernization going on around them; they also live with the products and institutions of modernity, recording their own musical compositions in sound studios, for instance, or founding interest groups. The tradition of the *halqa* and the desire to appropriate modernity and have one's interests represented in civil society are thus not mutually exclusive.

If this vitality survives, and the square does not yield to the pressures of tourism and commercial ambitions, the participant observer may be able to personally verify a fifth discursive interpretation of the square, which also stems from Juan Goytisolo but has not yet become well established (see Goytisolo 2001c): the square, which, behind the mask of mediaeval pre-modernity, with its spontaneity, colour, sociability, and diversity, could be an alternative concept, a heterotopia (Foucault [1967] 1994) for many sterile towns and urban deserts, a stimulating place for urbanists—not so much a heritage of the past as the representation of a desirable future.

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Notes

1 For the detailed ethnography (and geography) of another well-known square, see Wildner's (2003) study of the Zócalo in Mexico City.

2 The distinction between physical material space and social space is based on Bourdieu (1991); the conception of social space as constituted by rules, resources, and relations is borrowed from Giddens (1984).

3 The square was probably named for another mosque that was to have been built there but was never completed. This mosque—probably planned for the north-west corner of the present-day square—is supposed to have been commissioned by the Saadian Sultan Ahmed

El Mansour Dahbi; according to the historical tradition, he wanted to name the mosque *Jamaâ el Hna* ("Mosque of Peace"). Since it was never completed, popular lore transformed the name for the ruin and its location into *Jamaâ el Fna* ("Mosque of Destruction" or "Destroyed Mosque"); at least, this is a plausible etymological explanation. The name of the square appears in records going back to the 17th century (see Wilbaux 2001, 263-64; UNESCO 1997, 7-8).

4 Jemaa el Fna appears to be a classic example of the notion that elementary social actions can structure a space not only as social space, but also as physical material space, simply through the physical presence of bodies. When spectators crowd around a performer so that their bodies create a circle with an inside and an outside, they are structuring both the social and the physical space.

5 Translations from Bonn's German are by Ruth Schubert.

6 See ITS Flugreisen Winter 2003/2004, ITS Information and prices section: 82 (Cologne).

7 For an investigation of the discursive influence of international organizations, see Bøås and McNeill (2004).

8 Ouidad Tebbaa, book presentation at the Institut français de Marrakech, March 2004 (author's handwritten notes).

9 This information comes from conversations with (among others) Mohamed El Khouri in 2005 and 2006.

10 "*C'est nous le cœur de la place. C'est-à-dire: S'il n'y a pas nous, la place, elle est morte. Alors on défend notre patrimoine.*"

11 This information comes from a conversation with a member of the Association des amis de la place in spring 2005.

12 This conclusion is based on conversations with storytellers in 2004 and 2005.

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