Explaining trends, developments and activities of Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands

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concept: all comments welcome

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Summary
In this paper we present the results of two short studies on Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands. The first study describes the number and type of Moroccan organisations and their networks (van Heelsum, 2001) and the second new trends among Moroccan organisations (Kraal & van Heelsum, 2002). First we analyse briefly the development of the Moroccan community and its organisations. Secondly we will examine more closely one of the new trends: the increasing interests of young Moroccans in issues related to Berber identity. The number of organisations that publicly bare the designation Berber and organisations that are engaged mainly to Berber issues is evidently on the increase. We have employed the work of Penninx & Schrover (2001) to explain some of the developments.

1. Explaining the development of organisations
Many authors have theorised on the factors that explain the development of migrant organisations (Vermeulen 2001).1 Penninx & Schrover (2001) have suggested a general framework on the type of organisations that develop during the course of different phases in the immigration process. This view is based on a historical description of the inception and development of migrant organisations in the Netherlands covering a span of over 400 years from 1580 to 2000. The authors surmised that there is a relationship between the immigration process and the organisations that are founded during the varying phases of that process. Besides they stress that the receiving society and the needs of a particular group of immigrants always influence each other. They distinguish three main phases namely a) a phase in which the first immigrants found organisations that focus mainly on their country of origin, b) a phase in which organisations support the growing infrastructure of the new community and c) a phase in which organisations direct themselves more to the specific needs of the second generation. We will try to employ the approach of Penninx and Schrover in our description of Moroccan organisations as a test of its usefulness for this purpose.

1 Vermeulen (2001) cites for instance Stinchombe (1965) and Hannan & Freeman (1989) on the internal organisational ecology within migrant groups as determinant factor. Morris (1992) and Cloward & Piven (1992) point to deprivation as the important exigency that prompts the emergence and development of migrant organizations. Koopmans & Statham (2000) and Morawska (1996) include the role of the receiving society in their analysis and stress that it is the ‘political opportunity structure’ that creates possibilities for organisations. Minkoff (1995) and Klandermans (1992) combine the internal and external factors and focus on internal dynamics and exogenous environment as the essential impulses. Breton (1990), Katznelson (1992), Jones-Correa (1998) and Kasinitz (1992) focus at ethnic identity and the quality of mobilisation as the main determinants.
2. Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands

The development of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands started in the nineteen sixties with the arrival of 'guest labourers' in the Netherlands. The intention of the host nation and of the Moroccan 'guest labourers' - as the designation indicates - was that the 'guests' would return within a short period. After some time it became clear that the stay of the guest workers was not temporary but permanent. In this first phase of Moroccan immigration the Moroccan migrants consisted mainly of single men, who lived in very poor conditions in hostels with many people in one room. Residence permits were temporary and employers arranged the renewal, so being thrown out of the country was always a threat. Moroccan organisations that were established in that period were primarily focussed on the improvement of the legal position and living conditions of these migrants. Secondly organisations focussed on the situation in the home country. Political organisations that were allied with parties in Morocco emerged, and tried to influence the political situation and human rights in Morocco.

After a number of years, it became clear that 'guest workers' were staying. They decided to bring their families and in this second phase of the migration process the number of women and children increased through family reunification. The new composition of the community had consequences for the type of activities needed. It led to the emergence of new type of organisations. A need developed to offer courses and organise activities for women and children. The migrants brought their culture and habits from the country of origin, and in the case of the Moroccans their religion, Islam is as an essential component of the cultural baggage. Moroccan migrants felt the lack of venues of worship for Muslims prayers as an urgent problem and started founding mosques. Like Penninx & Schrover have stated in a more general way (2001: 55), the first generation immigrants get organised in order to recreate the world they have left, also because it is easier to encounter the new society from a familiar environment.

Today we can observe that a third phase has occurred in the migration process of the Moroccans. The composition of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands has radically changed: 43 percent (117.085) are second generation children, most of these are 15 or younger. Because of the increase in the number of children that are born in the Netherlands, the diversity of organisations has also increased: theatre- and sport clubs, music, language and literature groups.

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2 Statistics on January, 1 2001 according to the Dutch bureau of statistics (CBS) http://www.cbs.nl/nl/statline
are developing. The second generation tends to have a dual orientation: first to their community and by extension to their country of origin and second, towards the Dutch society of which they are a part. The activities of the organisations conform the progression of the settlement process as elaborated by Penninx & Schröver. The three phases are shown in more detail, when we look at the organisational development.

In our first study in 2001 we looked for names, addresses and the names of boardmembers of all Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands in order to analyse the network between them. We found 720 Moroccan organisations and composed a database of information on them. We analysed the network of interlinking boardmembers and found a loose type of network compared to that of the Turks and Surinamese (Van Heelsum 2001). The largest category of Moroccan organisations is religious: encompassing mosques and associated Koran classes, youth, women, and elderly associations. The central organisation in the network turned out to be one of the umbrella organisations for mosques. Since the opportunity structure of the receiving society lacked religious facilities for Muslims but provided opportunities to found mosques, the process of establishing religious organisations started rapidly. Other organisations that we added to our database were not overtly religious and consisted of political organisations, sports organisations, interest groups, advisory boards and organisations that target at a specific subgroup.

Some of the oldest organisations, are politically orientated, and have a clear left-wing affiliation. The KMAN, Committee of Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands (Van der Valk 1996) is the most prominent. In the nineteen sixties the KMAN and other left wing organisations worked in concert with the opposition forces in Morocco. The Moroccan government established in 1973 organisations called 'Amicales' in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, apparently to counter the opposition movement abroad and to exert influence over its citizens. These organisations were on paper meant to help Moroccans abroad to develop social and cultural activities, but they revealed themselves as a control apparatus of the Moroccan government. According to some authors, threats and abuse were part of their methods in exercising the writ of the Moroccan Government (Bouddouft 2001: 75; Van der Valk 1996: 145). More social and political resistance against Amicales evolved in the Netherlands compared to other European countries. As a result of the vigorous resistance of the left wing forces the Amicales did not become very influential in the Moroccan community (Bouddouft 2001: 75). The eighties were characterized by the conflict.

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3 The organization which we classify as Moroccan are those that have a majority of Moroccan board members or that state that Moroccans are their target group. We did not include multicultural or general Islamic organisations.
between the Amicales and the adherents the opposition like KMAN. Suspicion, fear of infiltration and retribution hindered positive and normal development of Moroccan organisations. The conflicts scared off the Moroccan community from joining organisations or participate in the activities of the established organisations. Many Moroccans adopted an aloof attitude towards organisational life (SMT 1999: 7).

The situation in Morocco changed after 1974. The Moroccan government slowly started a process of liberalisation and implemented economic and political reforms. In 1999 this process accelerated because of the death of King Hassan II; his son Mohamed VI succeeded him. The new king initiated further reforms. He appointed the socialist Yousoufi, who had served a long prison term as an opposition leader, as his prime minister. These developments had profound effects on the Moroccan organisations in the Netherlands. The organisations that were allied to the opposition weakened and the divide between the pros and antis was diluted. The opposition groups had to redefine their position. To adapt to the new and changing situation some organisations became less politically oriented (like the former opposition student movement Union Nationale des Etudiants du Maroc).

The conflict between the anti King Hassan II (KMAN, UNEM) and the loyalists represented by the Amicales in the Netherlands had hindered the average Moroccan from participating in community affairs and organisations. The depolarisation of the groupings has created new opportunities to participate in Moroccan organisation without fear of reprisal and stigmatisation. Hence participation in organisations has increased, the number of organisations is growing and organisations that were once by definition mutual enemies, now cooperate more with each other. Nevertheless, the distinction between organisations that are critical towards the Moroccan government and organisations that cooperate with the Moroccan government still exists.

During the phase that the Moroccan community was expanding, the number of mosques increased. Currently, religious organisations are the largest category in the database of Moroccan organisations. In our network analysis, one of the umbrella organisations of Moroccan mosques, UMMON, the Union of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands, has most contacts through common board members, and assumes a central place in the network of mosques. This organisation is also the largest federation of Moroccan mosques. UMMON could not manage to stay away of the earlier described controversy: they were accused of royalist sympathies and working with the Moroccan government. Because of this and other problems, and because of the
weak links between the member organisations, they never managed to become of strong representative organs for Moroccan Muslims in the Netherlands.

The extending community also developed women's organisations. The oldest women's organisation in the Netherlands based in Amsterdam is MVVN, the Moroccan Women Association in the Netherlands, that worked together with KMAN and UNEM. The objectives of this organisation are emancipation, participation, consciousness raising and improving the position of Moroccan women in the Netherlands. Activities include Dutch lessons for beginners, Arab lessons for advanced students, courses on social orientation, a reporting station called Mudawwamah, advise and information, excursions and management training. For some time this was the only Moroccan women's organisation, and clearly part of the opposition movement, but new ones were soon established, sometimes as part of mosques and sometimes on a neutral basis. Currently we find 42 women's organisations, both religious and secular.

In the third phase in the development of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands, the number of youngsters started to grow. In our database 79 organisations come out as Moroccan youth organisations and nine organisations for students in higher institutions. Examples of student unions are UNEM in Amsterdam, Eurabia in Rotterdam, MaSiVe in Den Haag and Al Karawin in Tilburg. These youngsters are partly first and partly second generation Moroccans and in general well informed on the Dutch society. The need to organise in a Moroccan setting is enhanced by their search for an identity that fits to the Western society but that encompasses also indispensable Moroccan aspects. Islam and the role of Islam in a not always friendly Western society has become a hot issue for debates in student unions.

The higher level of education of the second generation Moroccans gave rise to new opportunities. The second generation is attracted to the Information Technology and take advantage in recruiting, organizing and mobilizing and propagating its views. The development of the IT has led to development of new types of organisations. A number of organisations have established websites for young Moroccans; typical are for instance maroc.nl, maghreb.nl and amazigh.nl. On these websites the concerns of young Moroccans become visible. Common subjects are identity, news and music (Brouwer 2001; Mamadouh 2001), but also Islam and the problems that youngsters have in determining how to react to negative news on Muslims in the media. The

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4 Mudawwamah means office hour as well as being the name of the Moroccan family law. Questions on the application of Moroccan and Dutch family law i.e. divorce, succession, children are submitted to the station.
websites have gained enormous popularity. The website maroc.nl, provides a so called imam-on-line, the Dutch speaking Van Bommel, who answers questions of young boys and girls by e-mail in Dutch (because their Arabic is limited!) on subjects connected to religion.

Another typical initiative of youngsters and second generation Moroccans in an environment where newspapers stress the criminality of Moroccan youth, is the approach of 'Towards A New Start' (TANS). TANS targets Moroccan boys and girls between 18 and 30 years old with high education and emphasises that they work with a positive approach and that they want to give young Moroccans the opportunity to meet, to build up a network and to develop themselves. One of their initiatives was a multicultural career market in cooperation with a major financial institutions and IT companies.

3. Trends
The second part of our fieldwork research included interviews with representatives of different Moroccan organisations and was meant to shed light on new trends (Kraal & Van Heelsum 2002). Some trends became clear during interviews. Many organisations think that it is important nowadays to organise activities on Moroccan cultural issues. On the one hand, this was one of the oldest targets of organisations and a typical target that all migrant organisations have had through the last 400 years. Cultural activities have always included the celebration of Ramadan, Eid al Fitr, and other Festivals. Young Moroccans have a new way of approaching these issues. They try to develop ways of dealing with both Moroccan and Dutch aspects of their identity. They judge their knowledge of Moroccan cultural heritage and language as deficient, hence the second generation Moroccans are very eager to obtain information about their background. They invite speakers and musicians and organise exhibitions on Arabic art.

Secondly Islam is a theme that plays in varying degree a role in nearly all organisations. As the attitude of the outside world and of Western Europe is becoming increasingly bigoted towards Islam, Moroccans in the Netherlands see the need to defend their religion. In our interviews they stressed that Islam is part of their way of life and as it is challenged it is self evident that they defend it and that Islam plays a role in the activities of their organisations. Organizing Koran lessons or inviting Islamic scholars is regarded as a must.

A third important issue of Moroccan organisations, and of many Moroccans, is how to deal with the media. News coverage on Moroccans in the Netherlands is considered biased, negative and
sometimes irresponsible. The majority of respondents asserts that they are portrayed in a stereotyped and prejudiced way by the media. We encounter different opinions on how to cope with the mass media. Some say that there is nothing that they can do. Others claim that they should challenge it by showing the best in the Moroccan society.

4. The Amazigh issue
We will now examine in more detail how a special group of Moroccan organisations, namely the Berber organisations are developing. To test the approach of Penninx and Schrover further, it is useful to see how the three phases in the migration of the Moroccans to the Netherlands influence the Berber organisations.

Since 1990, organisations of Moroccan Berbers have developed activities in the Netherlands, for instance Izaouran, Amazigh (Amsterdam), Adrar (Nijmegen) and Syphax (Utrecht). About 85% of the Moroccan immigrants came from the Northern Rif Mountains, a region with mostly Berber population, where opposition towards Arabisation and French colonial occupation was fierce. Because of the negative connotation of the word Berber ('barbaric'), people nowadays prefer the term Amazigh, meaning free people, but because many Dutch are not familiar with the term Amazigh Moroccans grudgingly employ the term Berber in addressing the Dutch public. The Berbers seems to be confronted by challenges from all sides in the Netherlands and in Morocco. Mr. Chacha, a board member of one of the Berbers organisations explains:

‘Berbers are not in a position of high esteem in Morocco. They are seen as backward, farmers, and no real Muslims. Within the Moroccan community in the Netherlands similar notions exist on Berbers. Berbers in the Netherlands are not proud of their culture, but try to behave as Arab as possible, while the Arabic culture was actually imported to that region. The second generation has even more problems, since the children speak a Berber language at home and Dutch is the standard in school and neighbourhood. A foundation like ours that wants to spread Berber language and culture becomes an issue of discussion. Left wing Moroccans accuse us of being “regionalist”. And royalists accuse us of being anti-Moroccan. Because we try to promote a local language, we are called anti-Arab and against the King. From conservative circles, the mosques, they call us anti-Islamic. The Arab
language is the language of Islam, so the reasoning is a person that finds Berber language important is against Islam.’ (translated from Lindo et.all. 1997: 18, appendix)

Mr. Chacha thinks that stimulating minority languages has nothing to do with religion. In Morocco the Berber issue is historically charged with negative overtones after the French introduced separate laws for Arabs and Berbers in 1930, which is generally seen as a catalyst for Arab nationalism. Though the dividing line between Berbers and Arabs is not always clear, due to extensive intermarriage throughout the years, many royalists saw Amazigh-organisations in the Netherlands as an irredentist international political movement.

Since 1994, the position of Berbers in Morocco has improved, King Hassan II announced that the national dialect would get a formal place in Moroccan society. Television news is summarized in three Tamazight-languages and the development of educational material for schools has been initiated. Nevertheless the process of Arabisation is also pursued on several policy areas. According to one of our respondents the official registrar of births does not allow parents to give their children Tamazight-names, and names of the old Amazigh-kings have even less chance. The registrar of births accepts only known names, and those are usually Arab names. Recent developments in Algeria have influenced the Amazigh-movement in Morocco. Compared to Algeria, the movement was not very active (BBC January 2 2001), but since the Berber rebellion in the Kabylia region (Algeria) that started April 2001, the possibility of a Berber separatist movement in Morocco increased. The Moroccan government reacted by stopping the distribution of a newspaper and forbade some Berber meetings. The Moroccan government provides just enough space to prevent the cultural Amazigh movement form developing into a political movement. Towards the end of July 2001 King Mohammed VI stressed the importance of Berber language and culture in the history of Morocco and initiated an institute for the study of language and culture in an academic way.

5 Developments among the Amazigh organisations
Both in Morocco and in the Netherlands interest for Amazigh culture is increasing and attitudes towards Berbers are becoming less negative. Especially young people of the second generation attend meetings of Amazigh-organisations. Their motives are usually not very political. They are

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5 The attitudes towards Berbers that Chacha describes, are more recognisable for Berbers from the Rif mountains than for Berbers from the South or the High Atlas. About Southerners (Soussi) some other prejudice circulates, for instance on their spirit of commerce.
6 See ‘Dahir Berbere 1930’ by Gilles Lafuentes on the website Syphax (archive) http://www.syphax.nl.
interested in information on their background, language, culture and history. Language became one of the subjects for organisations to work with. The youngsters spoke a Riffine dialect of Tamazight at home, had to learn Dutch in school and take part in Moroccan Arabic in a programme known as OETC, i.e. lessons in ones own language and culture. This education was supposed to make it easier for the kids on their return to Morocco, to adjust to the Moroccan educational system. However their parents decided to stay in the Netherlands. Educational authorities then argued, even if Moroccan children do not repatriate, they would benefit if the pupil repeat the regular subjects in their language: calculus, geography, history etc. But for the children from Tamazight-speaking families OETC in Arabic was experienced as an extra difficulty. Amazigh organisations are appealing for the development of similar courses in Tamazight. Tamazight is mainly a vernacular. There is no standardized and unified Tamazight language and spelling and there is hardly any teaching material.

Website-organisations plan to offer language and writing courses in a standardised form of Tamazight. As soon as books and methods have been developed, they will be described on the websites and the organisations will meet and discuss with the developers. Said Essanoussi has developed computer dictionaries (Tarifit - Dutch, Spanish, English and French) (Bouadi 2001). He also developed fonts to type in Tifinagh, the Tamazight alphabet on a computer. The discussion on the website shows, that youngsters would like to learn Berber language but find it very difficult. Another subject that people find interesting at present are Berber stories and poems. A Dutch publisher (Bulaaq) presented a book with a CD containing Berber fairy-tails. One of the writers of Berber stories, Mohammed El Ayoubi wrote a book containing oral literature from the surroundings of Ayt Waryaghel - an area the Riff. He explained his motive for gathering the stories:

‘My generation is the last one that knows the oral literature of the Riff. One day this oral tradition will come to an end.’ (Bouadi 2001: 32)

A visitor started a discussion on the question why the Dutch broadcasting organisation NPS had a translation of their website in Arabic and not in Tamazight. Over 70% Moroccans in the Netherlands are Berbers. It ended in a letter to the NPS-editors with a request for a translation in Tamazight.

The developing interest of the second generation Moroccans in Amazigh-culture and language is
also evident by the large number of visitors to Berber music and literature festivals. When Tarzzut (a Berber organisation from Rotterdam) organised on 12 May 2001 a cultural event in the Amsterdam ODEON-theatre, the tickets were sold out within a few hours. According to the organizers, the event was not political. One of the organizers, interviewed in the Dutch paper Metro on May 8 2001, stated:

‘Berbers have inhabited North Africa for ages and have a very rich culture and a long history. We want to show as much as possible of this (...) A language expert will give a lecture and some know Moroccan writers in the Netherlands (Abdelkader Benali, Said el Haji, Mimoun Essahraoui, Ehmed Essadki and Najib Elyandouzi) will read from their work and explain how their work is influenced by Dutch and Berber culture. There is also a lot of music. The legendary Berber protest singer Walid Mimoun will perform and also Ayned and Choukri.’

On websites like ww.amazigh.nl and rif.couscous.nl visitors discuss Amazigh issues in so called 'chat boxes'. The intention of the web organisation is 'to raise awareness of Amazigh identity'. The subjects that come up in the chat boxes are often directed towards life in the Netherlands. The role of the maverick imam El Moumni, who described homosexuality as a disease, was heatedly debated, many disagreeing with his traditional views. The news coverage on Moroccan youngsters was discussed in a humoristic manner.

According to one interviewee, the negative media coverage that Moroccans receive in the Dutch media, has stimulated the interest in Amazigh identity:

‘The level of education of the second generation is high and they are very conscious of the difference between them and others. The negative news on Moroccans in the Netherlands has provoked them to look for another self-definition. "Berber" might sound better than "Moroccan". It can be associated with heroes and a romantic image.’

It seems reasonable to conclude that the changes in the Amazigh-organisations are influenced by the phases that Penninx and Schrover have mentioned. In the first phase, a political orientation directed towards the country of origin was logical for the first generation immigrants. Over the years, when more Dutch born Moroccans became interested in the Amazigh issue, the organisations became more orientated towards questions of identity, raising and solving social
problems in the Dutch society, like problems in Dutch education. This is shown by the fact that all organisations now state homework support as an important activity. Nevertheless, there are contacts within the European networks of the Amazigh movement centred in France. Internet makes international exchange of information easier, but because most discussions on the websites of these Amazigh-organisations are in Dutch, while the international websites use French, we can safely assume that only higher educated people who are versed in French join the international exchange. The limited knowledge of both Arabic and French put the Dutch Amazigh-community in a special position, until the moment that they can all communicate in a standardized form of Berber language. It is too early to conclude upon the effect of their peripheral position in terms of language.

Another factor that influences the activities of Berber organisations is their increasing educational level of second generation Moroccans. This causes increasingly a more intellectual approach to issues like Islam and Amazigh. Beside language, music and literature, activities to increase knowledge of the history of Berbers has become more significant. In this field some organisations are active who do not openly present themselves to be Amazigh-organisations. The Moroccan Cultural Union Bades (MCV Bades), the Association of Moroccan Migrant in Utrecht (AMMU), the Moroccan Association for Cultural Action Rotterdam (MACAR), the Coördinaat Minderhedenstudies and the Opleiding Arabisch of the University Leiden organised a conference in November 2001 on the Rifine hero Abdelkarim El Khattabi. At this two-day congress researchers of international allure were invited from France, Egypt, Spain and Morocco, to expound on the history of the Rif.

Bades organised two more congresses in 2001 on subjects that were (indirectly) connected with Amazigh-culture: a congress on developmental aid in the Rif, a discussion evening on the booklet by Mustafa Arab: "Riff between palace, Istiqlal and the freedom movement". A spokesman from Bades explained:

‘Culture is more than language and literature. Attention for history is also important for our activities, it's part of our identity ... and that exists of Amazigh-elements, Arab elements, Islamic elements, and also Jewish elements, although these last elements nowadays do not get so much attention anymore. One needs to be realistic: 80% of Dutch Moroccans are Berbers, so we pay attention to that. But we are not fanatic.’
6. Conclusion

In our introduction we quoted the work of Penninx & Schrover (2001) who state that the immigration process of ethnic groups and the development of their organisations are related and follow certain phases. In the first phase organisations are primarily focussed on improving the legal position and living circumstances for these migrants. In the second phase, a need developed to offer courses and organise activities for the women and children that increased in number. During this second phase the infrastructure of the Moroccan community expanded and the number of mosques increased. In the third phase, with an increasing number of children born in the Netherlands, the diversity of organisations increased: theatre- and sport clubs, music, language and literature groups, etcetera, developed. Both orientation toward the Dutch society increased, but also the need for ethnic specific activities. At present young Moroccans find the issue of their identity to be important, and many organisations pay attention to this issue.

Two factors that come out prominently in our research results are not explicitly covered by Penninx & Schrover. The first factor is the development in the country of origin. As we have seen previously the political changes in Morocco have influenced the way in which Moroccan organisations operate in the Netherlands to a high extent. In the last ten years, not only the division between adherents and opponents of the king became less sharp, mainly because the controlling apparatus is not so threatening anymore, but also the number of organisations and the cooperation between them has increased. Recent literature on transnationalism is helpful to see similar relationships. The influence of political development in the country of origin is stressed by authors who focus on transnationalism, like Østergard-Nielsen (2000) for Turkish and Kurdish organisations in the Netherlands and Germany.

A second influential factor is the image of the group in the media. Penninx (1997) described this factor in earlier work broadly as position allocation. The image of Moroccans in the Dutch media is not very positive. Gangs of young Moroccan criminals in a train station and in a swimming pool in West Amsterdam were recent news items, a conservative Moroccan imam expressed his views on homosexuality, and the negative news on Muslims as possible terrorists since the 11th of September has not improved the image of Moroccans in the eyes of the Dutch. The negative image that was created by all these issues, made some of the Moroccan youngsters angry (Obdeijn & De Mas, 2001). As a consequence of all those negative images, a reaction was bound to come. Two kinds of reactions are distinguishable; the first type of reaction is the withdrawal of some
youngsters in their own community. A second type of reaction is to fight stereotypes by promoting Moroccan culture, literature, art and music in big cultural events with famous names. The promotional activities of TANS are also directed towards influencing the public opinion, showing that a group of high educated and successful Moroccans exist.
References


