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Neoliberalism, environmentalism, and agricultural restructuring in Morocco

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Neoliberal restructuring in Morocco has been taking place for over twenty years. Beginning with a decade of structural adjustment, from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, parts of the public sector have been privatized, state services such as health care and education reduced, tariffs lowered and exports heavily promoted. In the dryland agricultural areas, a declensionist colonial environmental narrative has been appropriated to help justify and implement the neoliberal goals of land privatization and the intensification of agricultural production in the name of environmental protection. This paper contributes to areas of growing interest for geographers through an analysis of the underexplored relationship between neoliberalism and environmentalism, in the form of questionable environmental narratives, in Morocco. Land degradation in the dryland agricultural areas of Morocco is commonly blamed on overgrazing by local pastoralists despite existing documentation that suggests instead that ploughing of marginal lands and over-irrigation are the primary drivers of land degradation in the region. The deployment of this colonial environmental narrative of 'native improvidence' has facilitated an expansion of state power over collective rangelands under neoliberalism at the same time that government involvement has decreased in other sectors. The effects of neoliberalism in Morocco have been complex and thus the paper argues that current neoliberal reforms such as the Morocco–US free trade agreement need to be scrutinized carefully to prevent a further exacerbation of poverty as well as to prevent further land degradation in these areas.

KEY WORDS: Morocco, neoliberalism, environmental narratives, French colonialism, agricultural development

Introduction

On 22 July 2004 the USA ratified the bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) concluded between Morocco and the USA earlier that spring (Anon 2004; USTR 2004). This agreement is only the second FTA in the Arab world, following Jordan's agreement with the USA, which was signed in 2000. The fanfare of press releases surrounding the conclusion of the FTA, however, does not include any mention of the last two decades of neoliberal restructuring in Morocco, including a decade of structural adjustment, which paved the way for this agreement[1]. Nor has there been any discussion of the fact that, despite this neoliberal restructuring, Morocco's 'growth trend rate [has] continued to slacken, entailing a stagnation in per capita incomes over the last decade, as well as increased poverty and urban unemployment, in sharp contrast with the performance of most other middle income countries over the same period' (World Bank 2001). With at least 40% of Moroccans living in poverty or 'economically vulnerable' and urban unemployment at 20%, the World Bank has recently concluded that 'if the economy does not accelerate and new jobs do not materialize during the coming decade, poverty and exclusion are likely to spark unmanageable social tensions' (World Bank 2005a, i).

Such negative effects of neoliberalism and structural adjustment on the social, and often the economic, sectors of society have been documented for many years (Brohman 1996; Peet 1999; Rapley

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2004). Because neoliberalism in general, and structural adjustment in particular, tend to enforce a reduction in government involvement at many levels and a reliance on 'free market' mechanisms for the functioning of the economy and society, poor populations are usually hard hit (Brohman 1996, 132–72). State subsidies for staple foods such as flour and cooking oil are often reduced or eliminated, spending on health care and education is rolled back, and lowered tariffs encourage cheap imports that frequently undercut local production resulting in job losses. In addition to these measures of fiscal discipline, trade and financial liberalization, and tax reform, neoliberal restructuring also entails privatization, deregulation and the procurement of property rights of different kinds (Peet 1999, 48–53). Many of these changes necessitate legal and institutional reform which is frequently facilitated by the main multilateral actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Swyngedouw 2005).

Neoliberalism, then, is as much a political project as it is an economic and developmental project. The term neoliberalism, though, means different things to different people and groups, and the definition of neoliberalism is, perhaps, itself problematic (Hyatt 2001; Watts 2000). As many authors have made clear, neoliberalism is an ideological, and social, project, as well as an economic project (Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). Neoliberalism, it is argued, fosters sectarian volunteerism in the face of the retreat of government, pathologizes the poor, and 'has served to reconfigure the relationship between the entire citizenry and the state' (Hyatt 2001, 203). Neoliberalism, thus, is complex and its variable implementation around the world has produced highly differentiated outcomes. Several authors have directly addressed the apparent contradictions in certain experiences of neoliberalism, others have argued that neoliberalisms are nearly always geographically constituted, while some have insisted that neoliberalism is a 'process' and not a 'thing' (Bakker 2005; Heynen and Robbins 2005; Mansfield 2004; Prudham 2004). Much of this work has been in reaction to earlier criticisms of research on neoliberalism that was judged too monolithic and sweeping in its analyses (Larner 2003). The significance of a wide variety of neoliberal experiences in disparate places around the globe has, in fact, recently become the subject of a pointed discussion and debate in the literature (Castree 2005). Although the bulk of the literature thus far has tended to highlight negative outcomes for the economy, the society, and the environment, recent research has begun to reveal that neoliberalism is not always necessarily bad for the environment or for governance (Bakker 2003; Perreault 2005).

The negative environmental effects of neoliberal reforms in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America, however, have received the majority of scholarly attention and have been well described, particularly by political ecologists (Altieri and Rojas 1999; Bryant and Bailey 1997; Logan and Tevera 2001; Peet and Watts 1996 2004; Peluso 1992; Robbins 2004; Rodrigues 2003; Schroeder 1999). All too often the outcomes of neoliberal reforms on the environment, as many of these studies show, include increased pollution of air, earth and water, and land degradation in the form of deforestation, soil exhaustion, salinization and erosion. Despite the large and growing body of literature documenting the various effects of neoliberalism on people and the environment, scholars have only recently begun to examine, explicitly, the complex relationship between neoliberalism and environmentalism, and how these relations are impacting national development in important ways. It has recently been argued, though, that neoliberalism is necessarily an environmental project, in addition to being an economic, political, and ideological project (McCarthy and Prudham 2004). One of the ways that neoliberalism operates as an environmental project is through its use of environmental narratives, stories that are often derived from the colonial period.

This essay explores neoliberalism, environmentalism (in the form of questionable environmental narratives), and agricultural restructuring in the arid regions of rural Morocco. Specifically, it interrogates the appropriation of a declensionist colonial environmental narrative to help justify the neoliberal goals of land privatization and the intensification of agricultural production in the name of efficiency and environmental protection[2]. In doing so it describes many of the effects of neoliberal reforms in Morocco and analyzes the associated restructuring of dryland agricultural development. Contrary to the commonly anticipated outcome of the 'retreat of government' under neoliberalism, in Morocco some neoliberal reforms have instead consolidated and expanded certain aspects of state power. Relatively little geographical research has analyzed the effects of either environmental narratives or neoliberalism in the Middle East and North Africa. No research to date has examined the complex interaction between neoliberalism and environmental narratives and its impact in Morocco.

The essay opens with an historical overview of neoliberalism and structural adjustment in Morocco. A discussion of (neo)liberal environmental narratives, in the form of questionable degradation narratives, and their colonial precedents is subsequently provided. This is accompanied by an analysis of how these narratives have been utilized to enact

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neoliberal changes in both policies and legislation, with a specific focus on rural agricultural development. Next, research from southern Morocco illustrates how the narratives have been employed in a predominantly pastoral region, in the name of environmental protection, to further neoliberal restructuring, and to control local pastoralist populations long deemed problematic by the Moroccan monarchy[3]. Land degradation in this region is ubiquitously blamed on livestock overgrazing, an old colonial story which drives significant policy decisions. Despite this rhetoric, however, the documented causes of significant environmental degradation in the region, as in much of Morocco, are the ploughing of marginal lands and over-irrigation. Nevertheless, the degradation narrative is being deployed to justify the expansion of state control over collective grazing lands, to encourage privatization, and to intensify production. The paper concludes with a discussion of how neoliberalism and environmental narratives in Morocco, and their complex interactions are affecting environment and development in important, and sometimes unexpected, ways.

Neoliberalism and structural adjustment in Morocco

As a former protectorate, under French administration from 1912 to 1956, Morocco gained independence with several structural features which have impacted its development over the subsequent decades. The export-oriented agricultural sector, and the way it is integrated into the global economy, are among the most important of these legacies. Another is the way power is wielded through the client system of rural and urban notables, effectively preventing meaningful land reform (Payne 1986). Like the colonial government before him, the leader of independent Morocco for four decades (1961–99), King Hassan II, chose to use the best and most developed agricultural land for the production of export crops such as citrus and vegetables. Some of the earliest loans from the World Bank were provided in 1964 to expand irrigated agriculture according to plans originally made during the colonial period (Swearingen 1987). Investment and development of the 'traditional', non-irrigated sector stagnated. The production of staple cereals, in particular, received little investment and ever larger cereal imports were necessary to provide enough bread for the growing population. These and other imports, poor cereal harvests, and other expenditures by the new government led to chronic deficits and economic crises early in the post-colonial period. As early as 1964, Morocco was receiving funds and liberal economic advice from the IMF (Pennell 2000).

In the early to mid-1970s the Moroccan government increased public spending by several hundred percent. This was stimulated partly by efforts to prevent any repetition of the attempted coups d'état of 1971 and 1972, and partly by the tripling of international phosphate prices which resulted in large state profits from Moroccan phosphate production (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998; Pennell 2000). In 1975, Morocco marched into the Western Sahara. By 1976, the costs of occupying the Western Sahara were beginning to drain Moroccan coffers at an estimated US$1 million a day at the same time as the bottom dropped out of the international phosphate market (Coupe 1997). The economic crisis continued to deepen and the gap between the rich and the poor continued to widen. In 1978, when the population of Morocco was estimated to be approximately 19 million people, '68 individuals or families controlled 55% of private industrial capital, of which one-third was in the hands of only ten groups' (Daoud 1990, 86). Furthermore, the 'royal family held one-fifth of all wealth' (Coupe 1997, 152). The government's economic condition continued to deteriorate and total state debt had risen from approximately 20% of GDP in 1975 to 84% of GDP in 1983 (Coupe 1997, 151; Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998, 57). Foreign exchange reserves were nearly exhausted and for all intents and purposes 'the country was bankrupt' (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998, 58). By the autumn of 1983, Morocco had entered a structural adjustment programme with the IMF which provided a loan of US$200 million special drawing rights (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998). Shortly after this, the World Bank granted a US$600 million package of sectoral adjustment loans to Morocco and many of the country's outstanding debts were rescheduled (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998).

This marks the beginning of a decade of structural adjustment in Morocco under IMF supervision. Since 1983, Morocco has entered nine IMF adjustment agreements (Pfeifer 1999). Morocco has since enacted a reduction in price controls and state subsidies, and the liberalization of imports by lowering tariffs and reducing restrictions on import licenses. Funding to the social sectors was cut. Morocco joined GATT in 1987. Exports were also heavily promoted and export duties and licenses were abolished (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998). The currency was devalued, foreign investment was encouraged and a new investment code to facilitate foreign investment was adopted in 1988. Finally, Morocco embarked on an ambitious programme of privatization. Since the official end of structural adjustment in 1992, neoliberal reforms have continued with advice from the IMF and a succession of loans from the World Bank and the

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European Union (EU). Other institutions, including various European governments, USAID and the UNDP, have also been important actors in promoting continued neoliberal reforms in Morocco to the present.

The results of restructuring have been mixed at best and very uneven, both economically and socially, over the two decades since reform began. Within the first two years, by 1985, total debt increased from 84% of GDP to approximately 135% of GDP (Coupe 1997). Total debt has since slowly decreased to approximately 40% of GDP in 2003 (World Bank 2005c), but tends to fluctuate widely. Total government debt grew strongly to around US$22 billion in the early 1990s and has since stabilized at just about US$19 billion for the period 2001–4 (World Bank 2003a 2005b). Debt service payments also peaked in the early 1990s but after falling in the late 1990s have risen steadily for the last several years, nearly regaining their highs of the early 1990s (World Bank 2005c). Although Morocco's balance of payments did improve for a period and the trade deficit has been reduced since restructuring began, both poverty and economic inequality have grown. Much of the improvement in Morocco's finances in the 1990s, though, was due to Saudi Arabia cancelling US$3 billion of its debt in 1991 as a reward for help during the first Gulf Wr (EIU 1999, 10, 38). Such receipts are unsustainable, as are those from selling state industries during the phase of privatization. Since 2000, the budget deficit has increased dramatically, with current estimates placing it at between 5 and 6% of GDP (EIU 2003, 26; 2005; World Bank 2005a).

Since the end of the period of structural adjustment in 1992, important living standards have been declining in Morocco, largely as a result of continued neoliberal reforms, despite modest gains in some areas (EIU 1999, 24). Improvements have been small and incremental, but steady, in life expectancy (which has risen from 59 in 1985 to 69 in 2004), GDP per capita (which has increased from US$560 in 1985 to 1520 in 2004), and infant mortality (which has declined from 90 deaths per 1000 in 1985 to 36 deaths per 1000 in 2004) (World Bank 1987 2005c). On the ground in Morocco, though, these statistical averages mask the fact, for example, that about one-third of Moroccan territory suffers infant mortality rates of over 50% (World Bank 2004, 33). Other development indicators, however, reveal worsening trends and inequality has increased overall. Poverty levels, for example, have recently regained their pre-adjustment levels of around 20% after declining in the early 1990s (EIU 1999 2005; World Bank 1997 2005b). In rural areas, poverty is estimated to be 27%, and in some parts of the country it reaches 37% (EIU 2005, 33). Extreme poverty in rural areas tripled during the 1990s and 45% of the entire Moroccan population is now classified as vulnerable to poverty (World Bank 2003b). Seventy-two percent of the poor live in rural areas (Anon 2000).

After a decade of reform, literacy rates reported by the United Nations actually fell from a high of about 50% in 1990 to a low of about 41% in 1993, a significant decrease that only regained earlier highs in 2001 when literacy rates once again reached 50%, where they remain (UNDP 2005). Statistics reported from the World Bank corroborate a substantial fall in literacy rates, from a high of 49% in 1991 to 44% in 1994 and currently rates stand at about 51% (World Bank 2005c). More disturbing, and in parts of the country perhaps more indicative of declines, a local survey found that literacy rates fell 10% from an estimated high of 65% in 1982 to 55% in 1994 (EIU 1999, 12). Several large provinces in the southwest and northeast of the country currently have illiteracy rates of well over 70% (World Bank 2004, 33). Unemployment has also increased and is estimated to be about 19%, although estimates vary widely from around 12% to much greater than 20% (Cohen 2003; EIU 2005; Pfeifer 1999). Problems of underemployment, not reflected in official statistics, are common in rural areas. It is widely believed that the official unemployment rate is underestimated by the government (Pennell 2000). For a majority of Moroccans, then, especially the rural poor, life has not improved much, if at all, under neoliberalism[4]. For many, current poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy levels are all too similar to those in the early 1980s before reform began.

Although it has been touted as an 'IMF success story', Morocco's performance in a wide array of social and economic areas lags behind that of the other 'lower-middle income' countries. It also ranks significantly below other Arab states, including its nearest neighbours Algeria and Tunisia, in these areas. Morocco is ranked far below these two Maghreb countries in the human development index (HDI) (UNDP 2005). Morocco has the lowest life expectancy, the lowest literacy rates, and the lowest GDP/capita of the three Maghreb countries and it also has the highest rate of infant mortality (see Table 1). Furthermore, Morocco lags behind Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt in terms of access to adequate health care, safe water and sanitation (EIU 1999, 13). Estimates are that 62% of rural Moroccans do not have access to potable water and 68% do not have electricity (Anon 2000). An estimated 10% of Moroccans live in shanty towns, the highest proportion of all the Maghreb countries (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998).

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Table 1 Development indicators for the Maghreb, 2003–4

	HDI	Literacy (%)	Life expectancy	Infant mortality	GDP/ Capita*	Debt service**
Algeria	0.72	70	71	35/1000	6107	6.5
Morocco	**0.63**	**51**	**70**	**36/1000**	**4004**	**9.8**
Tunisia	0.75	72	74	19/1000	7161	6.4
Arab States	0.68	64	67	48/1000	5685	2.5
Mid-income	0.77	90	70	29/1000	6104	6.4

*GDP/Capita (PPP US$). **Debt service as percentage of GDP.
Source: UNDP (2005)

Structural adjustment and liberalization of the economy, then, far from delivering 'development' in Morocco, have not succeeded in several key areas. This project has not been a resounding success at the economic level and it has failed at the social level for large sections of society, thus 'large segments of the population remain socially and economically marginalized' (World Bank 2005a, i). Some Moroccans, though, have benefited greatly from these reforms. As a result of the very uneven distribution of the few benefits of neoliberal reforms, economic inequality in Morocco has worsened over the last two decades. In 1985 the wealthiest 20% of the population was responsible for 40% of consumption and by 1999 this same segment of the population was responsible for 47% of consumption (Pennell 2000; UNDP 2005). The poorest 20%, by contrast, were responsible for only 6.5% of consumption in 1999 (UNDP 2005). The main beneficiaries have been the royal family and its network of elite supporters. In fact it is striking 'how many government elites have converted from the gospel of dirigisme to liberalism' (Dillman 2001, 202). Importantly, 'selective privatization has reconfigured and consolidated state control over strategic resources' (Dillman 2001, 207). The royal family's holding company, for example, Omnium Nord Africain, a financial empire built up by King Hassan II and one of the largest enterprises in Africa, has purchased many of the Moroccan companies privatized (Coupe 1997; Dillman 2001). This kind of 'privatization' may have very different effects than those intended.

The royal family has long benefited from government enterprise. It has been claimed, for example, that King Hassan II 'personally received half of the profits of the Office Cherifien des Phosphates, the state monopoly phosphate enterprise', one of the most profitable enterprises in the country (Dillman 2001, 203). King Hassan II also richly rewarded those men who supported his regime by facilitating their profits from a wide array of business dealings in nearly every sector of the economy from agribusiness to textiles. There are strong indications that this pattern of patronage has continued under the administration of Hassan II's successor, King Mohammed VI (Maghraoui 2001 2002). A wave of new legislation has helped in many ways to facilitate the neoliberal reforms and their elite benefits from the 1990s to the present. The privatization of state firms, for example, would not have occurred without the privatization law of 1990 which mandates the privatization of 40% of state companies (Day 2004; World Bank 1997, 48, 81). Many, if not most, of these laws have been pushed through by, and with the assistance of, international financial institutions, especially the World Bank. Many of these laws governing wages, labour, customs taxes, and so forth have received attention and critical discussion in the media and the academy (Catusse 2000). Others, such as those affecting agricultural development, water, the environment and land tenure, however, have not received much attention. They are all, however, affecting development in Morocco in important ways.

(Neo)Liberal environmental narratives and agricultural restructuring

In the rural, agricultural areas of Morocco, where 70% of the poor live, significant changes are being set in place, which are affecting millions of Moroccans, based on an old story of environmental ruin and 'native' improvidence. As told by the World Bank today, the primary cause of poverty in Morocco is 'the depleted resource base, degraded and misused for generations' (World Bank 2003b, 23). The assumption that Moroccans have abused their environment for generations to the point that it is degraded and in need of 'improvement' is ubiquitous in Morocco. It underpins many analyses and plans of different kinds from agriculture to forestry to anti-desertification campaigns (Maroc 2001b). It also directly informs policy changes and legal

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reform which are increasingly important as neoliberal restructuring continues in the country. One of the main culprits in this story of environmental ruin is the Moroccan herder whose 'over-abundant livestock' are accused of causing overgrazing, 'erosion and soil-degradation' (World Bank 1997, 46). This particular narrative blaming pastoralists for environmental degradation is currently being used to transform agricultural development, including land tenure and use, in the non-irrigated, 'rainfed' areas of Morocco. It is important to recognize, however, that this narrative is nearly two centuries old and has been used for a very long time to appropriate land and resources from the less powerful segments of North African populations as well as to control their actions. The relations between environmental narratives and neoliberalism in Morocco, then, have very deep and complicated roots.

The origins of this narrative lie in the history of French colonial Algeria. When the French occupied Algeria in 1830, the story rapidly took shape that during the Roman period, nearly 2000 years earlier, North Africa had been covered with thick forests and was so fertile that it had become the granary of the Roman empire. The second half of this story blamed the Arab nomad invaders of the eleventh century and their rapacious herds of livestock for ruining, deforesting and desertifying the land. The arid environment they found in Algeria, which had relatively sparse vegetation, the French erroneously assumed was the result of overgrazing and abuse continued unabated during the subsequent centuries. This environmental narrative was used by the colonial administration to help appropriate nearly all forested land in Algeria in the name of environmental protection, and to appropriate much of the best agricultural and grazing lands during the colonial period (Davis forthcoming). Furthermore, this narrative was invoked to justify the sedentarization of most of Algeria's nomads and to control their movements (Davis 2004). This had the additional effect of creating a large labour pool to supply the need for workers in the expanding capitalist agricultural production system of nineteenth century Algeria. The narrative was also used to change and rewrite numerous laws and policies over the course of the colonial period. In the process, the traditional uses of the forest and other lands by the Algerians were systematically criminalized and the majority of the indigenous population was marginalized and impoverished. The same environmental narrative was carried to Tunisia in 1881 and to Morocco in 1912, with much the same effect (Davis 2005b).

One of the most important impacts of French colonial administration in North Africa was the transformation of subsistence production by the local population to commodity production primarily by European colonists and companies. Forests which had provided pastures, foods, medicinal plants, places to live, and agricultural plots were demarcated, rationalized and improved to provide timber, cork and other forest products for market. Pastures which had supported millions of sheep and goats and allowed local herders to subsist on milk products and to trade or sell wool and hides for grains and other necessities were turned into sites of modern, intensive sheep raising to provide tender lamb and fine wool for the French consumer. Agricultural production, which had been largely subsistence oriented, was modernized to produce for the market, both domestic and foreign, and it required land. The transformation to this type of commodity production for the growing global economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred during the height of classical liberalism.

It is widely recognized that one of the major tools used during liberal economic expansion was the 'enclosing of the commons' which amounted to appropriating/privatizing common land, and restructuring property relations and property distribution (Thompson 1993; Williams 1973). Social relations with the natural world thus were transformed in profound and long-lasting ways (McCarthy and Prudham 2004, 3–4). This could not be accomplished in North Africa, however, in the same way it was in various European countries, most notoriously, as it had been accomplished in England. The French were faced with the significant problem of first appropriating land, and not simply of reconfiguring pre-existing property relationships to procure land. Using liberal ideological arguments such as the notion that 'unimproved' land was value-less (waste land) and that land should only be owned by those who make it productive, the French added the story of environmental ruin by the 'natives' to fashion very powerful justifications for land and resource appropriation. First in Algeria, and later in Tunisia and Morocco, this liberal argument favouring 'productive' private property was combined with the narrative of the ruin of a previously fertile land by Arab nomads and their herds to justify many laws and policies which allowed the expropriation of vast amounts of forest, agricultural and pastoral lands during the colonial period. The two stories thus reinforced each other in an interesting example of liberal environmentalism which resulted in far-reaching changes in French North Africa.

This declensionist colonial environmental narrative has been embraced by the post-colonial

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governments in North Africa to varying degrees and for different purposes. Over the past few decades it has also been eagerly appropriated by institutional actors promoting neoliberalism in Morocco. USAID, for example, has been utilizing the narrative to encourage reforms in rangeland management for 30 years. Invoking Garret Hardin's liberal 'tragedy of the commons' thesis, which claims that all common land will necessarily be overexploited and thus should be privatized, USAID has strongly recommended that in Morocco 'the collective pastures must first be enclosed' (Gow *et al.* 1985b, 1)[5]. USAID claims that enclosing the collective pastures is necessary due to severe degradation, although it admits that 'there are *no reliable data* on the degree of present degradation' (Gow *et al.* 1985a, 11; 1985b, emphasis added). Despite this disturbing lack of data demonstrating overgrazing and land degradation, USAID has been advising Morocco to privatize rangeland since the 1960s.

Importantly, USAID also 'assisted' Morocco, along with the World Bank, in writing the agricultural law, the Agricultural Investment Code (Code des Investissements Agricoles), in 1969 (Gow *et al.* 1985b, 2; Swearingen 1987, 161). This complex law covers nearly every aspect of Moroccan agriculture with a particular focus on the high-value irrigated areas. The code creates irrigation perimeters in the irrigated areas which it governs, with very specific rules of use (Delannoy 1969; El Khyari 1987; Swearingen 1987). USAID contributed to the sections treating rangeland management and livestock development which reflect USAID's predominant goals of privatizing rangeland and intensifying production for market. One of the most important aims of the 1969 code was stated baldly as 'the progressive suppression of [collective lands]' (Delannoy 1969, 153). Within the irrigation perimeters, collective lands were privatized (Delannoy 1969, 153; Swearingen 1987, 164).

This 1969 code also defined perimeters of pastoral improvement (périmètres d'amélioration pastorale) which 'provided the legal basis for the creation of range improvement perimeters on communal lands, thereby ceding control over the management and development of these perimeters to the GOM [government of Morocco]' (Gow *et al.* 1985b, 2). This theoretically nationalized those sections of Morocco's rangelands said to be degraded, in order to 'fight against the degradation of pastures' (Delannoy 1969, 155). It was not until the 1980s and later, however, that results of this agricultural code began to be seen in rangeland areas. By 1982, for example, only about 180 000 ha had been delimited as pastoral perimeters, a very small portion of Morocco's estimated 21 million ha of rangeland (El Khyari 1987, 387; Maroc 2001b, 21). The majority of collective lands still extant at the time of independence retained the status of collective lands into the 1990s.

Of Morocco's approximately 71 million ha of land, roughly 11 million ha, or 15%, are considered collective lands (Maroc 2001a)[6]. About 14% of these collective lands, 1 544 656 ha, are arable with most of the rest constituting rangelands (Maroc 2001b). The 9.5 million ha of collective rangelands constitute nearly half of the country's estimated 21 million ha of 'manageable' rangeland (Maroc 2001b). Arable land in Morocco covers about 8.5 million ha and only about 1 million ha are irrigated. Nearly all the unirrigated land is planted in cereals in varying amounts depending on rainfall. A substantial amount of the arable land, roughly 18–19%, is collective land (Maroc 2001a 2001b). It is impossible to calculate how many Moroccans benefit from the collective lands since the government does not keep statistics of this kind. A conservative estimate of these numbers would be in the millions, perhaps as high as 10% or more of the current population of 30.6 million people (World Bank 2005b). In addition to supporting agricultural and livestock production, the collective lands also provide basic necessities such as gathered foods and medicinal products, as well as materials for domestic building and fuel needs. Moreover, they 'play a central role in the maintenance of the peasantry in the countryside and in their resistance to dispossession' (Bouderbala 1997, 160).

With 18–19% of arable land and 45% of rangeland under collective ownership, much is at stake for the millions of beneficiaries of these collective lands if collective property rights are eroded. Over the last decade, under the guidance of the World Bank, and with the agreement of the Moroccan government, this is precisely what has been taking place. Although USAID's influence in the rural sector waned during the late 1980s and 1990s, the influence of the World Bank in Morocco grew (World Bank 1997, 43). The World Bank, it could be argued, has been disproportionately influential in Morocco since the 1960s. It has orchestrated much of the restructuring of Moroccan agriculture over the last 40 years (Swearingen 1987; World Bank 1994b; World Bank 2001)[7]. In the mid 1990s the Bank facilitated a major revision of Morocco's agricultural code, effectively rewriting much of it as a more liberal, interventionist and widely applied law. The new agricultural code addresses Morocco's non-irrigated areas and reflects many liberal goals long held by the World Bank for transforming Moroccan agriculture and its rural development. It also clearly invokes the colonial

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narrative of environmental ruin from 'native' misuse or ignorance. There has been an urgent need to intervene, according to the Bank, because 'the quality of the natural resource base is deteriorating: there is severe soil erosion, degradation of the watersheds, depletion of forest cover, overgrazing of the rangelands and depletion of the soils' (World Bank 1994b, 2). Much of the problem, despite scant documentation, is claimed to be caused by serious overgrazing of the 'large herds' kept by pastoralists on the collective lands. According to the Bank, 'the maintenance and improvement of the Moroccan rangelands are jeopardized by poor management [and] an unclear definition of user rights on collective land' (World Bank 1994b, 24). Worse, perhaps, in the eyes of the Bank, is that 'the lack of a comprehensive land policy has constituted an important constraint to agricultural development and has resulted in an extreme fragmentation of holdings, a lack of land titles, and poor management for certain judicial statutes, in collectively owned lands in rainfed areas' (World Bank 1994b, 9). The Bank has been trying to address these issues, specifically trying to privatize the collective lands for decades.

The new agricultural code for Morocco's drylands consists primarily of one comprehensive law. This is law number 33–94 governing the perimeters for the development of rainfed land (loi relative aux périmètres de mise in valeur en bour) which was passed in 1995 (Maroc 1995). In many respects it applies to the drylands many of the clauses of the 1969 agricultural code that previously only applied to the irrigated areas (MADR 2000). It breaks down the drylands into three zones: those of agricultural development, pastoral amelioration, and the conservation of soils. Importantly, a fundamental principle of this new law is that exploitation of agricultural land inside the perimeters is obligatory (Maroc 1995). Once a perimeter is declared and defined, the management of land tenure within its borders is declared of public utility and thus comes under the control of the State. This means that within these perimeters 'only modes of exploitation conforming to contractual modalities fixed by agricultural legislation are authorised' (Maroc 2001c, 134). This law was accompanied by law number 34-94 of 11 August 1995 governing the limitation of land parcelling in both irrigation perimeters and dryland perimeters (loi relative à la limitation de morcellement des propriétés agricoles situées à la intérieur des périmètres d'irrigation et des périmètres de mise en valeur en bour) (Van Buu 1997, 691).

These two laws are exactly the same, in name and purpose, as those advocated in internal World Bank documents and drafted by World Bank staff for the Moroccan government (World Bank 1994a, 58; 1994b, 9). These World Bank reports, however, also document that a third law was drafted to accompany the two passed in 1995 (33-94 and 34-94). This is a draft law governing the 'privatization of collective rainfed land (projet de loi relatif à la melkisation des terres collectives)' (World Bank 1994a, 58). These three laws are considered by the World Bank to be a necessary part of the process of establishing a land bank and a land market in Morocco. The World Bank states that this legislative framework will encourage the development of the rainfed land through the constitution of economically viable farms and that land consolidation will help reduce farm fragmentation which will increase productivity (World Bank 1994a, 58).

For the government of Morocco, the goal of these laws is to modernize agricultural development in rainfed areas, increase cereal production, and promote exports and private investment (El Asri 1999). The Moroccan government shares with the World Bank most of its neoliberal goals. It also shares with the Bank the narrative of environmental decline at the hands of local Moroccans. As stated in the government's recent five year plan, in order to use the soil rationally and to safeguard agricultural land from degradation, the following measures must be taken, including, the '. . . institution of legislation permitting the deliverance of private, individual land titles for the beneficiaries of collective lands to encourage their development' (Maroc 1998). Thus in its 'strategy of land development to the horizon 2020', the Moroccan government makes clear that it intends to create a land market and to 'lift all the legal obstacles to the free disposition of land' (MADR 2000). In its fight against land fragmentation, the Moroccan government has encouraged land consolidation and pursued registration on private and collective lands, in addition to surveying half of the national territory (Maroc 2000, 16–17).

Despite the rhetoric of the Moroccan government and the World Bank, recent research has shown that, in Morocco, 'farm fragmentation has no impact on agricultural productivity' and that 'consolidation and titling programmes cannot be expected to automatically increase agricultural productivity' (Benabdellah 1998, iv–v). Moreover, the history of land privatization and attempts by the World Bank to create land markets/banks in other parts of the world have 'often been a disaster' with communities losing their previously communal lands in only a few years (Food First 2002). Likewise, the kind of livestock development being promoted to fight against the presumed degradation of pastures has repeatedly failed over decades of attempts throughout Africa and the Middle East.

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The largest pastoral project of this type in Morocco, based almost entirely on exclosures and rotations, has recently been judged unsuccessful. The project, indeed, concluded that it is difficult to distinguish between the effects of the climate and the effects of management on vegetation change (Msika 1997, 41). A long history of failed range development projects in Morocco calls into question the narratives of overgrazing and degradation that underpin them (de Haan 1994; El Harizi 1998; USAID, MARA and USU 1986). In fact, the most recent government report on the state of the environment in Morocco admits that 'the real extent of pasture degradation is difficult to measure . . . at the national scale *no quantitative estimation of the state of degradation of rangelands is available*' (Maroc 2001c, 128, emphasis mine). Moreover, the estimates made for Morocco overall (81% of pastures moderately degraded) appear to have been generalized from a study of only 640 ha of rangeland (Maroc 2001c, 128). Similarly, the dire estimates of severe erosion in Morocco have been made mostly from a small number of studies conducted in the northern Rif mountains (very high relative rainfall and steep slopes) and only 20% of Moroccan soils have been inventoried and mapped (Maroc 2001c, chapter 2). The environmental narratives being used to justify neoliberal restructuring of rural agricultural areas, then, appear to be less well founded than the story-tellers claim.

Land degradation in southern Morocco

The narratives of overgrazing, land degradation and desertification are very pervasive in the southern regions of Morocco. Ouarzazate province is one of these pre-Saharan regions frequently claimed to be suffering 'intense degradation caused by overgrazing' (ORMVAO 1993, 1)[8]. Collectively owned land constitutes 95% of the land in Ouarzazate province (Faouzi 2002). Ouarzazate is also one of the frontier zones of Morocco, bordering the contentious, ill-defined Algerian border across which the group fighting for the independence of the Western Sahara, the Polisario, are active (Figure 1). Many of the pastoral nomads in the region regularly crossed this border in the past, although they cannot do so today because the border is heavily militarized. For hundreds of years, nomadic tribes from the south threatened and occasionally successfully invaded governments in Morocco (Abun-Nasr 1971; Burke 1976). These tribal groups were also the most difficult for the French to conquer and it took about half of the protectorate period to control and pacify them successfully (Bidwell 1973; Dunn 1977). Thus there is a long legacy of mistrust and surveillance of this and other frontier areas[9]. The declensionist environmental narrative is being used in this region to further neoliberal reforms in land tenure and agricultural development. Its operationalization is also acting to control nomadic populations likely to be perceived as a potential threat to the government.

Overgrazing is most commonly blamed for the condition of much of the land said to be degraded in Ouarzazate. Government documents report that pasture degradation is intense and severe, that the number of livestock widely exceeds the carrying capacity, and that pastures are used in an irrational manner by the herders (ORMVAO 1990 1992). These and similar government documents state that due to this degradation grazing has to be rationalized, herds destocked, pastoralists' movements controlled, and production intensified (demobilized). These changes are pursued despite evidence of greater livestock productivity in the mobile pastoralist systems in the region compared to the sedentary systems (Darfaoui 1995, 64). Numerous projects have been launched in the name of reducing degradation that have severely disrupted pastoralists' livelihoods, often further marginalizing them. Following the national trend outlined above, very little physical evidence is provided in support of these claims (Bendaanoun 1994; El Gharbaoui 1985; Habib 1982; Korachi 1995; PROLUDRA 1997).

What existing ecological studies conducted over the last 25 years do show is that there are no 'hard' data demonstrating permanent overgrazing or a significant decline in vegetation over time for Morocco's extensive rangelands. Rather, numerous exclosure studies and botanical surveys indicate that vegetation cover changes dramatically over time and that these changes are generally correlated with rainfall more than any other factor. More than one researcher has concluded that 'overgrazing seems to have a minor role' in land degradation in the region (Waibel *et al.* 1993, 19). Furthermore, nomadic pastoralists living in the region report little or no decline in the quality of the pastures on which they have relied over the last several decades. The vast majority of those herders interviewed did not believe the land in the region was overgrazed or desertified. Some of the government range personnel also expressed their doubts about desertification being a problem and said that overgrazing was not a significant problem in most areas (Davis 2005a). This is not to say that there is no land degradation in Ouarzazate. It is likely that some limited overgrazing is occurring in localized areas around towns and villages. The majority of significant land degradation, though, is found elsewhere, in the over-irrigation and the ploughing of marginal land.

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Figure 1 Map of Morocco

As a result of Morocco's history of building large dams and its irrigation policies, widespread disruption of hydrological systems and traditional water distribution networks has occurred. This has raised the water table in places, causing salinization and water logging, and it has lowered it in others making water more difficult and expensive to obtain. A recent study concluded that nearly half the irrigated area in Morocco, approximately 500 000 ha, is affected by salinization (Maroc 2001c, 131). Over-extraction of ground water has caused saline intrusion of aquifers in the coastal areas of the southwestern plains (Souss and Tensift) (World Bank 1995, 7). In southwest Morocco, the poor germination and growth of the Argan tree, long blamed on overgrazing by goats, has recently been shown to be due to soil salinization (Michmerhuizen 1999).

In southern Morocco, salinization is a large and growing problem. In the Draa valley (Ouarzazate), salinization of the soil in many areas has increased at an alarming rate. In some of the palmeries along

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the Draa, salinization affects more than 80% of the agricultural area, with up to 45% of the affected areas having saline soil loads high enough to be very detrimental to agriculture (ORMVAO 1983; Thiault 1994). In some areas, nearly 10% of the land has been abandoned altogether (Maroc 2001b, 26). Many of these areas also suffer from over-extraction of ground water. In some places, the water table has dropped as much as 11 m in 15 years (Moez 1996, 51). Several efforts to create drainage in these areas have failed, resulting in standing, stagnant water that fosters diseases[10]. Part of the reason for the expansion of irrigated agriculture in such an arid region is the government's provision of free water for agriculture (Miller 1996; Moez 1996; Swearingen 1987). Water is provided free of charge throughout the southern frontier provinces. This water subsidy is part of the government's efforts to slow down the exodus of rural Moroccans to urban areas.

The other primary cause of documented land degradation in southern Morocco is the ploughing of marginal soils which disrupts local vegetation and desiccates the soil (Plates 1 and 2). A provision in the liberal 1969 Agricultural Investment Code has encouraged this by allowing the appropriation and privatization of collective land through cultivation by members of that tribe (Delannoy 1969). Following a complex set of rules, such land can be claimed as private property (complete with the right to bequeath the property to an heir) if it is equipped with a motorized water pump and intent to cultivate is demonstrated (Moez 1996). If a well is drilled and not equipped with a motorized pump, ownership is established for at least one year, even if the land is not cultivated. Ownership can be claimed indefinitely if the land is cultivated. Importantly, the land can be claimed for six months simply by delimiting a parcel with intent to cultivate (Moez 1996, 152). This, combined with government guaranteed high producer prices for wheat, has encouraged a 161% increase in cereal cultivation, from 1965 to 1994, the majority in marginal areas (see Figure 2). In the 'unfavourable' areas of the south, that is the more marginal areas with low rainfall, the area planted in cereals increased by 38% from 1991 to 1996; in the 'Saharan' areas, cereals hectarage increased 24% during the same period (MAMVA 1996, 31).

In Ouarzazate province, the area planted in cereals has increased from 15 000 ha in 1975 to 56 000 ha in 1995, an increase of 273% over 20 years according to the annual reports available from the provincial government. Much of this cereal expansion has taken place on collective lands previously used mainly for grazing. Whether land is planted in cereals or not, in these arid

Plate 1 An unploughed area with natural vegetation between Ouarzazate and Zagora
Source: photo by James E Housfield

Plate 2 Comparison of an abandoned ploughed field next to the unploughed area between Ouarzazate and Zagora
Source: photo by James E Housfield

zones, ploughing the soil not only destroys the local vegetation, it increases the evaporation of moisture from the soil and effectively increases the risk of drought (Swearingen 1996). As one geographer explains, '[f]armers are destroying the grazing potential of these lands through clearing the natural vegetation, [and] unsuitably "mining" their fragile soils' (Swearingen and Bencherifa 1996, 28). Cereals planted in this region almost always fail (unless irrigated), except in rare years of exceptionally high rainfall, since dryland cereals, especially wheat, generally need at least 400 mm of rain to grow a suitable crop (Swearingen and Bencherifa 1996, 20–1). Ouarzazate province receives an annual average of 250 mm of rain, and half that or less in the southern portions of the province.

This brief case study of land degradation in southern Morocco shows that government agricultural policies (some liberal and some not) have promoted over-irrigation and the expansion of cereal cultivation on marginal lands. Despite the documentation of these practices, attention is being

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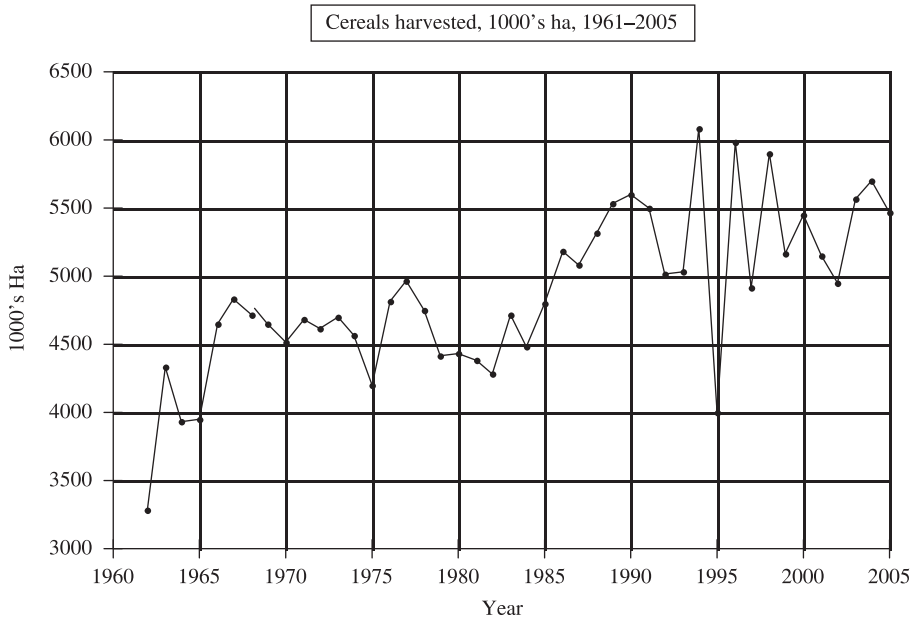

Figure 2 Hectarage harvested in cereals in Morocco, 1961–2005. The drop in cereals harvested in 1995 is attributed to severe drought
Source: FAOSTAT (http://faostat.fao.org)

diverted from these sources of serious land degradation by the focus of government and international institutional actors on the questionable crisis narrative of overgrazing and desertification. This environmental narrative is being used to help justify radical changes in land tenure, land use, and agricultural practices, as it was during the colonial period. These changes focus on agricultural intensification, export production and the privatization of collective lands. Moreover, in pastoral areas, the 'ecological need' to destock, reduce and regulate mobility, and to enclose common land reinforces many strategies of a government which has long-standing aims of controlling nomads in frontier areas (Bencherifa 1996).

Discussion and conclusion

Neoliberalism has been enthusiastically, if selectively, embraced by the Moroccan monarchy and much of the business elite in contrast to the opposition it has encountered elsewhere[11]. This is due, in part, to the fact that the royal family and its patrons have benefited enormously from certain aspects of neoliberal restructuring such as privatization. It is also due to some of the effects of neoliberalism which reinforce the government's political goals. It has recently been argued, for example, that many neoliberal reforms have acted to depoliticize the public sphere in Morocco and thereby delayed the democratic reform of an authoritarian regime (Maghraoui 2002)[12]. This has been accomplished largely through discursively repackaging the most urgent problems of reform in terms of an economic crisis rather than addressing serious questions of the legitimacy of the government and political system. Neoliberalism and its rhetoric have been very useful in this strategic reframing of priorities.

In much the same way, neoliberalism, with its inherent free-market environmentalism, has reinforced several pre-existing goals of the Moroccan monarchy in agriculture and rural development. It has done so by legitimizing the government's goals of land privatization and consolidation with an economic narrative of the efficiency of large landholdings under mechanized, intensive production. From this point of view, despite evidence to the contrary (Benabdellah 1998), the fragmented small holdings of the majority of Moroccan farmers, worked with few inputs and on marginal land, are wasteful, inefficient, and in need of improvement and modernization. The relationship between neoliberalism and environmentalism in Morocco, though, is more complex than this. The market environmentalism which pervades much neoliberalism around the globe is accentuated in Morocco by the incorporation of the colonial narrative blaming land degradation on traditional land use practices such

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as pastoralism and subsistence farming[13]. This narrative originated in colonial Algeria and it facilitated the expropriation of land and resources throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was utilized widely to help appropriate collective lands, a classic instance of enclosing the commons so emblematic of the changing social relations with nature during that period of classical liberalism and the rise of the global economy.

The current use of this declensionist narrative by the Moroccan monarchy and international financial actors has facilitated a contemporary enclosing of the commons, an example of what David Harvey has recently called an act of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003). Under neoliberalism, 'the terminology for "accumulation by dispossession" is of course "privatization" [which] is nothing else than a legally and institutionally condoned, if not encouraged, form of theft' (Swyngedouw 2005, 82). The utilization of this narrative has also cast Moroccan pastoralists and subsistence farmers as double eco-outlaws. These Moroccans, among the most poverty stricken and powerless in the country, have been portrayed both as ecological outlaws and as economic outlaws despite questionable documentation for either claim[14]. The complex neoliberal environmentalism current in Morocco today blames the pastoralist and small holder for degrading the environment at the same time that it accuses them of inefficient or wasteful modes of agricultural production. This powerful discursive formulation has been used to justify and facilitate the legal revision of the agricultural code and rural development plans for Morocco's drylands as detailed above. In southern Morocco, the declensionist narrative of overgrazing has been used, contrary to evidence that the majority of land degradation is caused by over-irrigation and ploughing of marginal soils, to gain control of collective pasture lands and to regulate the resource use and the movements of pastoralists. In parts of Morocco, then, these narratives affect governance in important and complex ways, in that they are being used in the service of neoliberalism at the same time that they have expanded government power and appear to have furthered certain aspects of state authoritarianism.

These changes, especially the law governing the development of rainfed land, are having a substantial impact. Twenty-five rainfed land development perimeters have already been designated covering half a million hectares and affecting 350 000 Moroccans (Maroc 2000; World Bank 2003b). Under this law, plans for the future include 180 projects over 3 million ha (El Asri 1999). Immediate plans include 70 projects for agricultural perimeters covering 1 million ha and affecting one million people (Maroc 2000, 46). The majority of these projects are planned for collective lands as the bulk of rainfed areas are areas of collective property rights. One of the proposed dryland agricultural perimeter projects to be funded by the World Bank, for example, targets six 'priority action zones' of which five are in provinces dominated by collective property rights (World Bank 2003b). Fifteen perimeters for pastoral improvement have already been demarcated covering approximately 3 million ha of rangeland (Maroc 2000). Over the next 15 years, the government plans to delimit 40 million ha of pasture in these perimeters and to enclose 8 300 000 ha in exclosures which prohibit grazing, in addition to creating 814 pastoral cooperatives (MADR 2000). This 40 million ha is nearly double the amount of rangeland considered 'manageable' by the government and would thus include all of the collective pasture lands. Another 2 million ha of land in 30 provinces have been identified as being at high risk of erosion and thus 'necessitate urgent intervention' under the new law's provision of delimiting perimeters of soil conservation (Maroc 2000, 18).

Whether or not these collective rangelands and the 1.5 million ha of agricultural collective lands are ever privatized outright, severe restrictions are enforced by these new dryland perimeters. Land within the perimeters is declared of public utility and comes under the control of the state. The state then dictates certain modes of production which must be carried out, thus criminalizing other modes of production or alternative resource uses. The punishment for infractions of these new rules can include six months' imprisonment and fines that range from 200 to 5000 dirhams (Maroc 1995, article 48). These fines represent roughly one week's to nearly five months' work at the average minimum wage (Maroc 2001a). This is high enough to drive many families deep into poverty and to force some to sell their livestock and migrate to the growing shanty towns in the larger cities. For the millions of poor Moroccans who benefit from and rely on the collective lands for medicines, foods, and other basic necessities, then, the imposition of these perimeters and their new rules are having negative effects. The largest pastoral project carried out under these new rules thus far did not significantly improve the state of the pastures; it further exacerbated economic inequality, and it dispossessed some of the poorest herders from their livelihoods and resource base (Msika 1997; Steinmann 2001).

The implementation of the bilateral free trade agreement between Morocco and the US, ratified in July 2004, will also likely worsen poverty and make life much more difficult for poor Moroccans

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in the dryland agricultural areas. By mandating the elimination or substantial reduction of export subsidies and price supports for grains in Morocco as a result of the agreement, the US expects to supply nearly all wheat to Morocco in the near future. It is already recognized that this will likely disrupt rural agricultural production severely, potentially dispossessing large numbers of Moroccans of their livelihoods and increasing poverty in rural areas (Nathan Associates 2003, 37–9). Recent estimates by the World Bank project that poverty in rural areas will increase from 28% to 34% and extreme poverty in rural areas will double from 6% to 12% (World Bank 2004, 62). If alternative employment is not created and social safety nets are not put into place as the trade agreement is implemented, a significant number of the four million Moroccans employed in agriculture in rural areas, as well as their families, will be severely adversely affected. Given the history of Moroccan governance, these alternatives are unlikely, especially with the reduction of state services under neoliberalism. The trade agreement, then, will likely enhance trends already set in place during the neoliberal restructuring of the past two decades which have exacerbated environmental degradation, increased poverty, and furthered state authoritarianism in several ways. The only other Arab country which has signed a free trade agreement with the USA, Jordan, has indeed not experienced the democratic reforms the agreement was expected to deliver. Instead, the free trade agreement in Jordan 'has necessitated a steady reversal of the political liberalization welcomed by Jordanians in the late 1980s and early 1990s' (Moore 2003). A similar outcome is likely in Morocco.

By examining the historical, colonial context of some of the dominant environmental narratives in Morocco today, and how they relate to neoliberalism, this paper has attempted to show that similar narratives have been utilized for nearly 200 years to facilitate (neo)liberal environmental governance in North Africa. Recognizing that these stories of 'native improvidence' and the inefficiency of traditional production systems have been used to dispossess local peoples from their resources and properties, and to transform modes of production for centuries, allows us to examine the present more clearly and more critically. Not only are these environmental narratives being utilized under contemporary neoliberal restructuring to gain control over land and resources, they also facilitate aspects of state authoritarianism and erode democratic reforms. This paper suggests, then, contrary to some of our more simplistic notions of neoliberalism, that in Morocco its definition and selective implementation have been quite complex. Neoliberal reforms have encouraged the retrenchment of government in many areas, such as spending on social services at the same time that it has expanded state power and state control over resources, such as the collective pasture lands.

The deployment of false environmental narratives to justify political and economic control over resources and to further interest-laden environmental policies are now well recognized phenomena, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Bassett and Zuéli 2003; Fairhead and Leach 1998; Leach and Mearns 1996; Neumann 1998; Swift 1996; Turner 2003). The Moroccan case detailed here highlights some of the benefits of analysing the complex relations between such enduring environmental narratives (often packaged as contemporary environmentalism) and neoliberalism. Interrogating these environmental stories, by exposing their frequently poor documentation as well as the motivations for their use, is perhaps one way to begin to transform the neoliberal project and to encourage governance that will benefit both people and the environment.

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Notes

1 The Bush administration sees this new Moroccan FTA as an economic boon to both countries, and also proclaims that it 'can show many others throughout the Middle East the power of free trade to support democracy and promote prosperity and build a more tolerant, stable and peaceful world' (Shelby 2004).

2 'Declensionist' is used in this article to describe environmental narratives that are essentially stories of degradation, many of which were written during the colonial period and usually blamed indigenous peoples for assumed environmental destruction. The work of Fairhead, Leach and Mearns has been foundational in exposing this kind of narrative and its (mis)uses in sub-Saharan Africa (Fairhead and Leach 1996; Leach and Mearns 1996).

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3 Research for this article was conducted over a period of two non-consecutive years that involved the collection of primary documentary data from Moroccan agricultural ministries and regional offices, interviews, and qualitative research on local knowledge of environmental change in the south of the country. The majority of the research involving local knowledge has been published separately (Davis 2005a).

4 Some Moroccans have protested the poor conditions in their country, especially low wages. A series of strikes and 'social dialogue' in the late 1990s and early 2000s resulted in the minimum wage being raised more than once (EIU 2005, 33). For some of the social/political ramifications of neoliberalism in Morocco and the sometimes successful protest it has produced, especially in urban areas, see Cohen (2003). This author argues that even the 'modern middle class' has declined since reforms began in the 1980s.

5 Garret Hardin's work has been enormously influential over the last 30 years, although he makes the fundamental error of mistaking open access property for common or collective property. For his views and an excellent critique, see Hardin (1968 1974), McCay and Acheson (1987). It should also be noted that Hardin hypothesized that the tragedy of the commons might be avoided as well with strong centralized state controls.

6 The figure of 71 million ha of national territory claimed by the Moroccan government includes the occupied territory of the Western Sahara which is not recognized internationally as part of Morocco. The area of Morocco without the Western Sahara is approximately 46 million ha (EIU 1999). Statistics on the area of Morocco and land uses in the country vary according to different sources, making comparisons difficult. Best approximations from the most reliable sources are used here.

7 As of October 2000, the World Bank had made 34 agricultural loans (and dozens of other loans) to Morocco totalling over US$2 billion (US$2 292 000 000.00). Five of the seven loans evaluated over the last 10 years were considered unsatisfactory, and two were ranked highly unsatisfactory (World Bank 2001, Annex A, 23–5).

8 Ouarzazate province was divided in the 1990s into two different provinces, Ouarzazate province and Zagora province. More recently a further bureaucratic reshuffling created a new, larger province, Sous-Massa-Draa. Ouarzazate province will be used in this paper to indicate the entire region of what is now known as Ouarzazate and Zagora provinces, but not the Sous-Massa region.

9 Surveillance is common throughout Morocco which has 'a security apparatus that monitors the streets' and a very poor human rights record over the last several decades (Coupe 1997, 160). Although many hoped that human rights would improve under the new King, recent reports document increases in secret detentions and torture as well as severe restrictions placed on the press (Amnesty International 2003a 2003b). The issue of the western Sahara is one of the most sensitive for the monarchy and about which it remains the most repressive (Denoeux and Maghraoui 1998, 71). For excellent discussions of recent events, see also Maghraoui (2003) and Slyomovics (2001 2003).

10 Interviews and field research in southern Morocco conducted by the author.

11 For examples of parts of the neoliberal project that have not been completely implemented in Morocco, see EIU (2003, 25–6).

12 Despite recent elections of opposition parties and a new constitution in 1996, both of which were lauded as signs of democratization, the king retains 'the power to dismiss the government, dissolve parliament and rule by decree' (EIU 2003, 7). Although the image generally displayed in the West of Morocco is of a 'friendly emerging democracy', in many ways, this kingdom is still ruled with an 'iron fist'. See footnote 9 above for documentation.

13 Market environmentalism is widely understood to be the process of managing the environment based on the value of its salable products, that is, via the commodification of nature (McAfee 1999; McCarthy and Prudham 2004). Morocco's new environmental protection law provides a good example of this kind of environmentalism in Morocco. Promulgated in January 2003, this 'law is no. 11-03 relative to the protection and development of the environment' (loi no. 11-03 relative à la protection and mise en valeur de l'environnement).

14 This formulation draws on the provocative work of Michael Goldman on eco-governmentality and green neoliberalism (Goldman 2001).

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