

**Daniela Hettstedt, Die internationale Stadt
Tanger. Infrastrukturen des geteilten
Kolonialismus, 1840-1956, Berlin, Boston (De Gruyter
Oldenbourg) 2022, 391 S., 8 s/w u. 10 farb. Abb.
(Studien zur Internationalen Geschichte, 51),
ISBN 978-3-11-072570-4, EUR 84,95.**

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Gabriel Doyle, Reims

In Jim Jarmusch's 2013 »Only Lovers Left Alive«, the Moroccan city of Tangiers is the haven for two exhausted vampires fleeing America and thirsty for blood. Through the vampires' nocturnal taxi ride, Jarmusch captures Tangiers' seafront, run-down infrastructure and the rehabilitated Alcazar cinema first opened in 1913. The film illustrates a long-standing Western interest, artistic and geopolitical, for a city on the tip of Africa overlooking the Gibraltar straight. Between 1912 and the independence of Morocco in 1956, various treaties declared Tangiers and its hinterland an international zone administered by multiple entangled authorities from up to twelve different countries. Daniela Hettstedt's book »Die Internationale Stadt Tangiers, Infrastrukturen des geteilten Kolonialismus, 1840-1956«, a revised version of her doctoral thesis, offers a fascinating account on this *cas d'école* of international cities. By focusing on Tangiers' changing urban environment, the author shows that even before 1912, various infrastructural projects had contributed to a mode of urban administration that took on a colonial complexion.

The study chronologically starts with the creation of the first *conseil sanitaire* of the city in 1840 and dedicates four chapters to four types of projects developed before independence: public infrastructure for hygienic purposes (sewage systems, abattoirs and marketplaces), transport and information infrastructure around the waterfront (a lighthouse, a prospected telegraph cable and the never-achieved *chemin de fer ibéro-afro-américain*), the institutional framework of the city's administration during and after World War 1 and the urbanistic projects for the transformation of Tangiers in the interwar period. Whether the projects were materially achieved or only stayed archived speculations, D. Hettstedt uses the debates and conflicts they ignited and shows the meeting of different imperial agendas in the streets of Tangiers.

Hettstedt's convincing main argument is that the experience of international urban administration in Tangiers represents a case of *geteilter Kolonialismus* (shared colonialism), in the sense that it involved both competitive chiseling of a territory and institutional collaboration between different imperial powers. According to the author, shared colonialism results from a »permanent state of negotiation« in local committees in charge of infrastructure



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between State representatives, namely consuls, and non-State actors like engineers of private companies. The concept could thus be employed for similar urban experiences like the concession-system in Shanghai (with which the author draws many pertinent comparisons¹) or to contextualize short-lived cases of international urban administration like the municipality of Tianjin between 1900 and 1902² or the Allied occupation of Istanbul between 1918 and 1923³. Tangiers presents a typical port-city framework of legal pluralism favoring European commercial interests that could also be found in Ottoman and Chinese cases during the same period: unequal commercial treaties granting extraterritoriality to European nationals, the protégé status for a selected number of autochthonous inhabitants (in this case especially local Jewish notables employed by European consuls) and commercial concessions to European companies for the management of infrastructure. All infrastructural projects therefore contributed to a colonial discourse on civilizing local inhabitants and evoke the ambition to »open up« Morocco to global capital flows, which others have shown had detrimental consequences on the local economy⁴.

The book relies exclusively on sources in European languages, namely emanating from debates within the different committees of the city (found in European and American diplomatic archives) and the local newspaper in English »Al-Moghreb al-Aksa«. Yet Hettstedt makes sure to always include the sultan's government in Fès, the Makhzen, and its main representative in Tangiers, the Mendoub, and their intentions to protect Moroccan sovereignty over the city's infrastructure. For example, the 1901 project for new abattoirs in the city saw the intervention of the local governor (*pascha*) Sid Benacar Ghamar in defense of old principles and institutions of Islamic urban administration like the *mohtassib*, traditionally in charge of the *souk*, and charitable giving of meat to the urban poor by local religious clerks. By using sources in Arabic and more historiography on Islamic cities, Hettstedt could have underlined more clearly that despite the various imperial projects in Tangiers, vernacular modes of urban administration still permeated local city life.

By choosing to concentrate on tangible questions related to the city's material environment, the book offers a model methodology for the multi-scale analysis of late 19th and early 20th century imperial rivalry. Instead of insisting on national projects formulated

¹ Isabella Jackson, *Shaping Modern Shanghai. Colonialism in China's Global City*, Cambridge 2017.

² Pierre Singaravélou, *Tianjin Cosmopolis: une autre histoire de la mondialisation*, Paris 2017 (*L'univers historique*).

³ Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation 1918–1923*, Leiden 1999 (*The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage*, 17).

⁴ Antoine Perrier, *Tanger, ville fermée. Le sabotage économique d'une ville internationale par la France et l'Espagne (1912–1956)*, dans: 20 & 21. *Revue d'histoire*, 2021/2 (n° 150), p. 65–79. DOI: [10.3917/vin.150.0065](https://doi.org/10.3917/vin.150.0065).



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in Paris, Berlin or Madrid, Hettstedt accurately shows the relevance of local material interests that can shape international relations. Hence, although the fourth chapter raises more common questions of traditional diplomatic history (the guarantee of an international and neutral legal status to Tangiers), the reader has already become familiar with these notions through projects on the ground like the international administration of the Cape Spartel lighthouse since 1865. In the same vein, the urbanistic projects studied in the last chapter, namely the one by French architect Henri Prost who will later pursue his career on the other side of the Mediterranean, helps the historian to assess what the post-World War 1 change of administration concretely involved. All four chapters show how enriching global microhistory can be for the study of late imperialism in the Mediterranean, and the author could have underlined more clearly how this approach diverges from the Marxist-inspired French historiographical school that tackled the same issues⁵.

Beyond the concept of shared colonialism, this study could be useful to urban historians interested in narratives of westernization or modernization in non-European settings. They will find common questions related to this field such as heritage preservation of »indigenous« neighborhoods by colonial officials or on the right to the city for local inhabitants, from Spanish tenants suspected of anarchism to expropriated Moroccan residents.

⁵ Jean-Marc Delauney, *Méfiance cordiale. Les relations franco-espagnoles de la fin du XIX^e siècle à la Première Guerre mondiale* (vol. 1, 2, 3), Paris 2011 (Recherches et documents. Espagne).



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