

# Mapping the Mediterranean: Diasporic Narratives of France and Spain

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The Mediterranean Sea has been a means of contact between Africa, Asia, and Europe throughout the history of humanity. This importance continued throughout the 20th and 21st centuries as migratory traffic increased from Africa to Europe, where immigrants hope to discover more opportunities and a better life. This project seeks to explore the diasporic connections between north and sub-Saharan Africa as represented in literature and media. These maps seek to show the conflicting narratives that exist in France and Spain surrounding immigrant populations and so-called “pure-blood” Europeans, highlighting the systemic blocks between immigrant and host society, while simultaneously demonstrating the changes immigrants go through in order to conform, or at the very least survive, in a new locale.

شفتي خنا جاع ما بغينا نسو جو لفراري  
وغير لماما لا دخت  
ساي لا في

Chefti 7na ga3 ma bghina nsougou l'ferrari  
w ghir l'mmima la de7ket  
c'est la vie

You see, we don't wanna drive a Ferrari,  
We just wanna make momma happy,  
that's life





As seen in the above video, immigrants yearn to leave underdeveloped and often unofficial housing in search of economic and social liberties found across the other side of the Sea. Many European countries portray this interconnectedness as a recent phenomenon; however, a long history of (re)conquest, (neo)colonization, and (neo)imperialism form the network of the Mediterranean. For example, Andalucia (southern Spain) used to be called Al-Andalus, belonging to caliphs from North Africa who expanded their empire.

What this site explores, however, is a more recent history, focusing on narratives from the 21st century which focus on the immigrant experience from the perspective of the migratory subject, contrasting starkly with popularized representation of immigrants, racialized subjects, and the areas which these populations inhabit. Through Faïza Guène's *Du rêve pour les oufs* (2008) and Mapping Lavapiés, we compare and contrast Mediterranean connectivity and identity, as well as the ways that diasporic communities construct their own spaces and cartographies.





In 2018, Germany reported the largest total number of immigrants (893.9 thousand), followed by Spain (643.7 thousand), France (386.9 thousand) and then Italy (332.3 thousand). The last three years, in fact, has seen an increase in the number of immigrants coming to the post-Brexit European Union, while the number leaving the EU has decreased in the same period, causing an overall population increase on the continent (as demonstrated on the chart below, from *Eurostat*).

In France, the total number of immigrants who have not received citizenship as of 2018 is 4.8 million or 7.1% of the total population (66.9 million people) (The Local, France). The largest number of immigrants in France are of North African decent, particularly Morocco and Algeria, according to United Nations reports. The map to the bottom right is for city bike rentals; however, the highlighted areas show the location of the *banlieue* surrounding Paris. The *banlieue* is where a lot of housing projects began after immigrant populations began creating unsanctioned housing. Certain areas, such as Ivry-sur-Seine and Saint-Denis, are mal-reputed as locations of violence, drugs, and gangs; however, the reality of these spaces is that they are not stereotypically “French.” These spaces have been altered (culturally, physically, and linguistically) by the populations that now live there—alterations which are even more interesting because the *banlieue*, although predominately North African influenced, houses immigrants from all over.

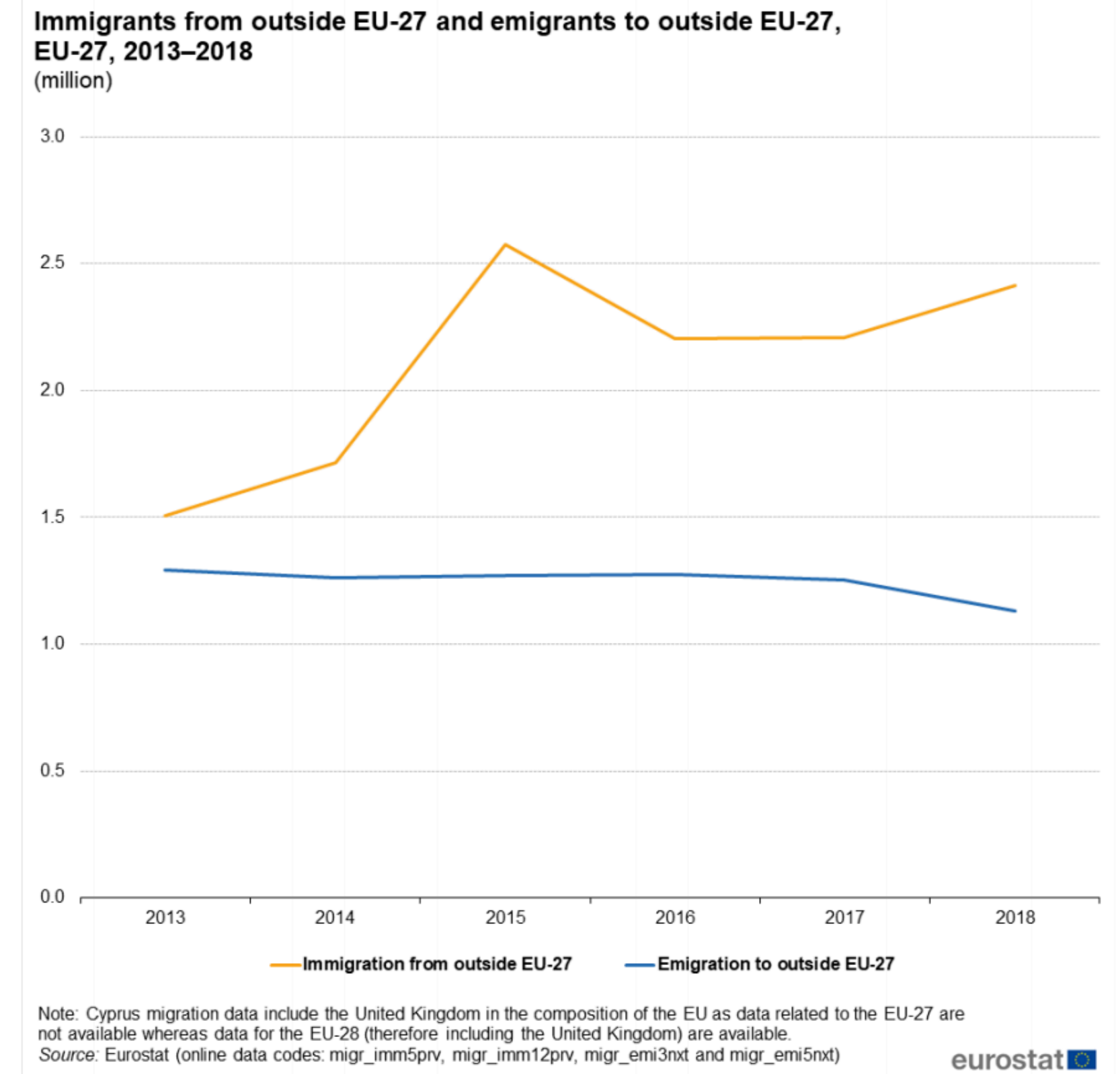


Figure 1: Immigrants from outside EU-27 and emigrants to outside EU-27, EU-27, 2013–2018 (million) Source: Eurostat (migr\_imm12prv) and (migr\_emi5nxt)



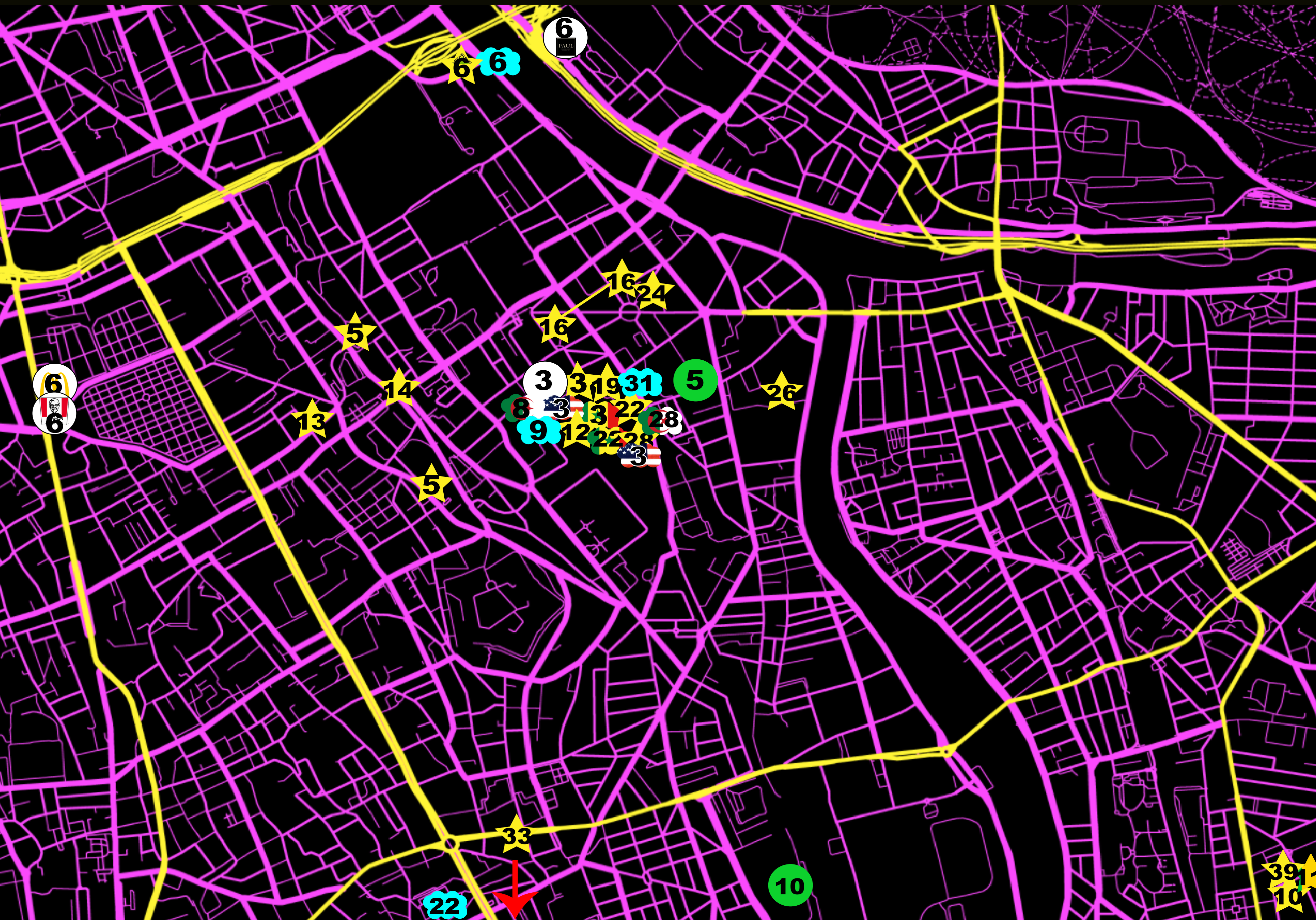
## About the maps (in general)

The maps blend together fictional elements from the stories, other cultural productions that are based/made in the area, and representations of immigrants in non-fictional representations (media, reports, social media, etc.). The fictional narratives are used as the driving tool for the maps because, as we follow the personal narrative from the immigrant perspective, there is a trend to highlight specific locations and the activities done there. These map points then interact with other representations, complicating the one-sidedness of immigrant narratives and painting a fuller image of immigration from North Africa to France and Spain. Each point on the map links to more information either from the stories or from external sites, allowing each to be questioned, complicated, and stood in comparison to other representations.

## France and Algeria Map Legend

Each point on the map has a number which follows the chronology of the fictional story which is the focus of the map. When a character interacts with or mentions a specific space, it is pinned with a number and, thus, anything related to that space or event is given the same number. Yellow stars refer to specific plot points in the narrative, blue clouds refer to memories and are pointed where the memory was made, clouds with a flag refer to a memory that relates to another country and are plotted where the person is when remembering, green dots are reference points, and white dots mark possible locations of actual business/stores but without specifying which one.

# Ivry-sur-Seine



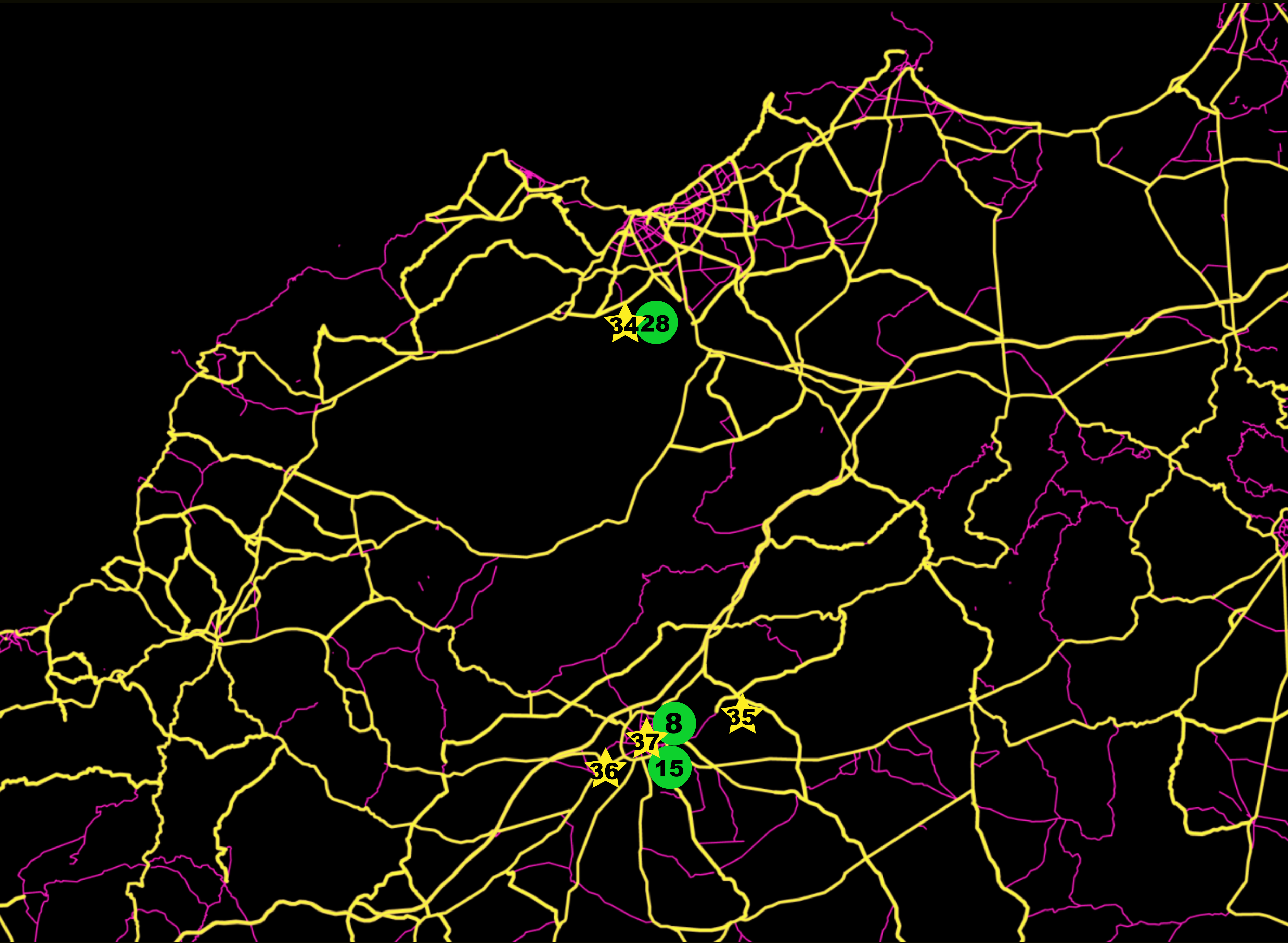
- Home
- Background
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# Algeria




Home
Background
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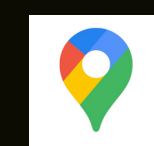



Ivry


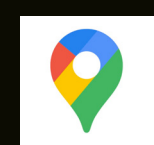
Paris



Algeria


 Ahlème walks down rue Joubert to go to Interim Plus, a temp agency where a lot of immigrants find temporary employment. She reads the document and gets stressed with all of the questions about citizenship and work status.


  Walking down the street and seeing sex workers in minimal clothing standing outside in the cold spurs Ahlème to remember a story her dad, Le Patron, told her about the first winter he experienced in Paris when he arrived from Algeria in 1963.


 Ahlème goes to the bar, la Cour de Rome, in quartier Saint-Lazare to meet her two friends, Nawel and Linda, after her appointment at Interim Plus. Nawel was just visiting family in Algeria and describes the shocking differences and how censored life is there compared to France. It reminds Ahlème that she hasn't been back since her youth.

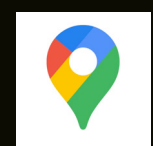
  Returning back to Ivry-sur-Seine, Ahlème stops to see her friend, Tantie Mariatou, who lives in the same building as her in the cité Gagarine. They live in a social housing structure, which is inhabited by many other immigrants.


  **3** Cité Gagarine is one of the largest housing areas in Ivry-sur-Seine. It used to be a socialist complex; however, once communism fell, immigrants began moving in to the buildings which were converted into social housing projects.

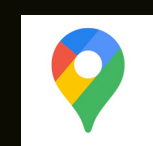
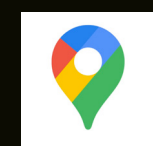
 Tantie Mariatou discusses her life prior to moving to France and how she named her son after her first "love". In Senegal, she was told stories about money trees in the United States, which made everyone want to go there. She heard the same about France.

 Rather than France, she dreamed of going to New York City because she is a hairdresser, and, since Black Americans do a lot of exciting things with their hair, she wanted to style hair for people like Mary J. Blige, Beyoncé, and Alicia Keys. Instead, she follows her husband, Papa Demba, to France.

 Tantie works at Afrostar 2000 in the Chateaud'ea neighborhood in Paris. Her clients mainly come from the Ivory Coast.



 Ahlème's brother, Foued, plays soccer on a local field in Ivry. The community creates their own space by branding the field "Stade Ladj-Coucouré", but the official name is Stade Pierre-de-Coubertin. Two possibilities are marked: the stadium for the handball team in Ivry (who practices there but plays at the official Stade Pierre de Coubertin [see next point]) or the stadium at Collège Henri Wallon. Based on geographical data, this stadium appears to be at the base of a hill, "la Colline."



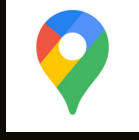


Ivry

Paris

Algeria

5 According to my research, the Stade Pierre de Coubertin is actually here, just southwest of Paris.



5 Ahlème states: “Je suis entourée par tous ces immeubles aux aspects loufoques qui renferment nos bruits et nos odeurs, notre vie d’ici” (Guène 29) [“I am surrounded by all of these buildings with over the top parts that suppress our noises, our smells, and our life over here” (my translation)] She references that now with running water and electricity, the life in the “bidonvilles” is far off, but the idea of oppression and seclusion still exist in her experience in the modernized banlieue. Now, the repressions take different forms and she mentions tensions between the police and neighborhood youth in recent weeks, engaging the space in issues tied to the banlieue riots, which juxtaposes starkly with the serenity of boys playing soccer.

6 Ahlème begins the story with her experience in the job agency where she is forced to fill out paper work and find employment

6 that she really doesn’t care about due to her legal status. All of these show the locations of jobs that held at one point or another.

6 She heads to work at Leroy Merlin, which is a home improvement store. Her newest job is to count nails in the store

and take inventory along with a group of others. Her other jobs have included a cashier at the mall in Thiais, distributing balloons at Val de Marne, summer camp counselor (unspecified location), McDonalds, Quick (fast food), Paul (bakery chain), KFC, La Foire des fous (a bar), phone sex operator (she used the name Samantha for cultural ambiguity), a security company, and Pizza Hut.

7 Ahlème goes on a group date where she is set up with a friend of a friend. She differs from everyone else in that she enjoys art films and was the only one happy with the choice that she made. They end up in Montparnasse for dinner at La Navette spatiale. This site further drives her from others who grew up in the banlieue as she states the embarrassment she felt when Hakim, her date, spoke with poor manners and language that are common in Ivry (according to Ahlème).

8 In this first reference to Algeria, we discover that her mother passed away. She focuses, however on the education in the village and how she spent all of her time with women and no men—both at school and in the village. She juxtaposes this segregation of education and village with that of France where she was, upon moving there, thrust into a mixed education setting, and men and women mingled together in public and private domains.



Ivry

Paris

Algeria

In addition to the segregation, she doesn't have much of a male influence in her life either due to her father living and working in France. On page 45 she states: "Un second père, ça peut paraître étrange. Déjà que je connaissais à peine le premier. C'était ce monsieur qui vivait en France pour y travailler, nous enoyait de l'argent pour que l'on mange bien et que l'on ait de belles robes le jour de l'Aïd-el-Kébir" (Guène 45). [A second dad. That may seem strange, what with barely knowing the first one. He was the man that lived in France for work, who sent us money so that we could eat and so that we had nice dresses for al-Eid al-Kabir. (my translation)]

9 This adds to the layers of cultural and personal baggage when she arrives in Ivry to live with her father upon the death of her mother (the cause of which isn't revealed to us until later). Her father takes her to le bar PMU. She explains the sense of freedom and independence in life, but this newly found liberty only exists in France, which is also reflected by the many memories and references there rather than Algeria.

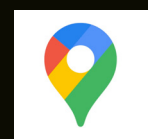
10 Due to her immigration status, Ahlème returns various times to the *préfecture* (government official responsible for various administrative processes in a specific locale, such as citizenship/immigration). She describes the need to get up at 3:00 a.m. and stand in line with many other immigrants who are all hoping that they are seen on that day. The irony exists

in the fact she spends her entire life in France and really only knows this country, but she isn't fully French until she gets the infamous blue paper.


10 In line at the office, she meets a guy from Eastern Europe named Tonislav and references a guy from Mali as well. She mentions the restaurant, Le soleil de Bodrum, which is in front of the train station, plotted here.


11 The great fear of immigrants is to fail the immigration system and be sent back home. She witnesses someone being sent back to Bamako due to problems with paperwork and legal status. This office, in this way, becomes a hub that extends far beyond France via an international network of people and locations of acceptance/deportation.


12 Despite an entire life in France, Ahlème and her family still maintain the use of Arabic (Algerian specifically) and various customs. On her father's birthday, she makes him *kerentita* from her grandmother's recipe. This cake brings back memories of Algeria and reflects their familial culture and heritage.







 Foued has issues at school because the professors say he's acting out and not doing well. Ahlème acts as his parent due to le Patron's accident/work injury—because many immigrants work in manual labor jobs, the risk of injury is quite high and, at times, this forces spouses and/or elderly children to step in for finances and household duties. Since she doesn't want to stress out her father, she takes care of it and begins contemplating how to confront Foued and keep him from the negative parts of the banlieue.

 The metro causes a lot of stress, in general, due to its overcrowdedness, quick pace, potential for crime, and policing. Ahlème doesn't pay for her metro ticket/pass, most likely due to her economic status and her role as sole money earner of the household. In either case, when stopped by RATP police, she is forced to show identification for her fine; however, her Algerian passport unleashes issues of citizenship and legal status upon her. She doesn't mention the stop itself, but issues like this occur throughout the entire metro and RER system.

 In a moment of reflection on her past, Ahlème shares the story of her mother. She was making a wedding dress for a cousin who lived in a neighboring village. The mother was a renowned seamstress in the area and gets asked to make a lot of dresses like this. When she went to deliver the dress to her niece, she made Ahlème and Foued stay at home, which saved their

life. In the village where the wedding was to take place, the army entered and killed everyone. Ahlème mentions that this happened all over Algeria on that day for what seemed to be no reason. This event became the catalyst for the two children to go live in France with their father, reflecting the idea that both economic status and political events create unfortunate circumstances that often force people to immigrate.

 In Ivry-Sur-Seine, there are two *cités* (a word that typically refers to neighborhoods, but typically areas with a certain reputation, often negative and often similar to a “ghetto”): l'Insurrection and Youri-Gagarine. These areas are right next to each other in Ivry and the groups that base themselves in these areas compete for space and reputation. Foued, part of the Insurrection group, ends up in jail due to a confrontation with l'Insurrection over selling some goods illegally (black market DVDs and clothes). Ahlème has to go bail him out.


 After connecting at the immigration office, Tonislav asks Ahlème on a date to café Le Balto in Place d'Italie. Here she discovers more about his immigration story. Even though he sells counterfeit clothing and works odd jobs, he is actually a professional musician.





## Ivry


## Paris


## Algeria


 Tonisiav comes from Belgrade, Ukraine where he began his career in music. He uses his father's violin that he brought from here.

 Le Patron must shave his mustache, which for him is a big deal because facial hair gives him honor and respectability. The loss of his mustache causes him to reflect on his past when he first got to Paris. He would go to café Slimane in la Goutte-d'Or where he played guitar and the majority of his social life took place during the '70s. The café was frequented mainly by Arabs/immigrants and was owned by an Algerian man.

 Linda takes Ahlème and Nawel to Tropical Club for a night out. The club isn't chic, but plays on an exotic/oriental view of the tropics and is patroned by what Ahlème terms "ploucs" (rednecks or country bumpkins), but seems to be more a way to refer to those who have nostalgia over the colonial days represented by the club. The site is for Comptoir général, an African-colonial themed bar that reflects how Ahlème describes the space, while the Google maps location is for a bar with a Tropical Club night.

 The DJ at the club is an immigrant from Pointe-à-Pitre in la Guadeloupe, adding to the exoticizing of the space as tropical and not in Paris.

 Papa Demba, Ahlème's neighbor/Tantie Mariatou's husband, works at a highschool in Vitry-sur-Seine near the Place de la mairie de Vitry. He is "randomly stopped by police there for a document check. In addition to the random stop, he is also subject to insults, such as the word "gibbon", which is a species of monkey. Papa Demba is, of course, upset about the remark, but mentions that he is impressed by the vocabulary in fact, he had to look look up the word to verify its meaning. Additionally, the police assume that he is a gym teacher because he couldn't actually teach math (the subject he actually teaches).

 Tantie refers to their home village, Mbacké, and the honor that they both held there and here. Her point is that the honor shouldn't be lost just because of some racist policemen. She also uses words in Soninké, their native language, to insult the police: *kou yinkaranto* (those imbeciles). This serves to not only mend the wounds caused by the systemic oppression and racism faced by these characters, but also reclaims honor through geographical, linguistic, and cultural reference.



23 Needing a way to escape, Ahlème goes to la porte de Choisy and sits in the Café des Histoires. In the café, she writes, reflects, and reinvents herself when she shares with another person that she writes for a paper under a pen name and fake name (Stéphanie Jacquet = fake name, Jacqueline Stéphanet = fake pen name). The ability to become a new person with a stereotypical French name and eliminate all previous identities becomes a new possibility and potential future for Ahlème, one that makes her want to return to this spot in the future.

24 Foued worries about his street cred and how he appears in l'Insurrection. He asks Ahlème to get a piercing by trying to flatter her, but she denies him permission to get the piercing.

She also makes fun of how he attempts to demonstrate his masculinity by using various beauty creams, hair dyes, and accessories. He wants to be a part of popular rap/hip hop/street culture, but she does not understand his attraction to such things in the banlieue.

25 Le Patron, in a conversation with Ahlème after the fight with Foued while she prepares dinner, begins reminiscing and refers to a friend with whom he played dominoes on rue des Martyrs. He lived on this road along with various other friends, all of whom were immigrants and new to Paris. This contrasts the modern sites where immigrants typically live since the expansion of the city eventually pushed them to the banlieues

for cheaper housing.

26 Ahlème's continued worrying about Foued leads her to take action. She goes to Bloc 30 in Ivry-sur-Seine. This block holds a very bad reputation for being a "no-go-zone." She knows that Foued is involved in criminal activity so she goes to this area, where she states that the Brigade anticriminalité refuses to go, to confront the people that Foued may work for. It turns out that she went to school with someone a bit higher up, which makes her feel confident that Foued will get out of it without a problem. Even though she feels confident in that and she has friends in the group, she is terrified and can't wait to get out of the risky neighborhood.

27 Excited to meet Tonislav again, Ahlème goes to the Place carrée near the Hôtel de ville (town hall) in Châtelet-Les Halles in the center of Paris. While waiting for him in the square, she sees a group of Mexican immigrants playing mariachi for tips while tourists and people meander near them. This is one of the few central areas of Paris that Ahlème visits and she doesn't notice any other immigrants in the area outside of this group who is there for economic opportunity.



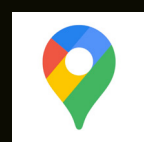
Ivry

Paris

Algeria

★<sup>28</sup> Family from Algeria contact Ahlème from time to time and constantly ask for packages and things from France. The Algerian family believes that they are rich because they live in France and they assume that the wealth of France automatically trickles down to anyone living in the country. The letter also begs the family to come to Algeria for a visit, their first in over a decade.

28 The letter spurs a recall of the last time that Ahlème was in Algeria. Her uncle drove her and Foued to the airport in Oran to join their father in France after their mother's death.



★<sup>29</sup> Finally getting employment, Ahlème goes to boulevard de la Chapelle for her new job in a shoe store. Nawel helped her get the job, showing that the connection of family and friends through residential location, immigration status, and/or identity factors (Nawel is also a descendent of Algerian immigrants) creates a network of opportunity and support. Ahlème has high hopes that, unlike the agency jobs she was getting, this job will turn into a long-term contract. The hope of economic stability makes her think about taking the family back to Sidi-bel-Abbès, where her mother and father came from.

★<sup>30</sup> On her break at the shoe store, Ahlème explores Barbès to relive some of her father's memories and search for café

Slimane where he used to play guitar and see friends. She goes to M. Yassine's sandwich place, Kiosque de Kaïs, and a bar-tabac (bar that also sells tobacco). She sees a group of Algerian men and asks them about the café and they lament that it closed some time back. They begin speaking about Algeria and she mentions that her father comes from Tlemcen.

31 Reliving a memory, Ahlème thinks about Foued when they first got to Paris and what he did at school. He was excited for school but told all of his counselors that he wanted to be a football player. The counselor responded: "tout le monde ne peut pas devenir Zidane" (Guène 129) [not everyone can become Zidane" (my translation)]. This serves to reflect the idea that not all dreams for all people can be met, even in France, but also interjects a famous French soccer player into the conversation. Zidane is the child of Algerian parents, but he was born in France and is a French citizen. The comment simultaneously racializes the situation and institutes oppressions, as Foued is offered technical trades as his alternatives rather than science, business, etc. Additionally, Foued is not even a French citizen while Zidane is, showing that the true issue at play here is one of race rather than simply nationality.




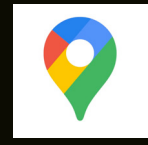


Ivry

Paris


Algeria

 Ahlème goes to meet Linda and Nawel in a café called Babylone for one last get together before her and her family travel to Algeria. While waiting for her friends to arrive, Ahlème sees an article about Tonislav talking about his deportation back to Belgrade, explaining why she hadn't heard from him in a while.



 The journey back to Algeria begins in Paris Orly airport.



 The family lands in l'Aéroport Oran-es-senia, the same airport to which Foued and Ahlème were driven after their mother's death. This is the first time they're stepping foot in it again since then. The setting contradicts the Parisian setting as the sun is blazing and warm. Rather than facing issues of bureaucracy and policing, she faces officials who demand tips so that they won't throw away the familys goods. One of the officials even yells at them for going to France and being wealthy but refusing to share the wealth with their countrymen. This dynamic is key as the immigration myths described above that lead people to places like France are still rampant. Additionally, the condition in Algeria is always deemed worse; therefore, anyone who can get out must be able to change their situation drastically.



But, as we see with Ahlème, life isn't necessarily easy or rich even if it is better.





This narrative continues in the work as the trio gets to their village and enters their family home. Ahlème learns to keep her mouth shut because she is aware of the struggles in Algeria that she doesn't have to think about in France. She does, however, hope that Foued becomes cognizant of this fact as a sort of scare tactic to make him appreciate what they have in France and not to mess it up by falling in with the wrong crowd.





On the trip, the family takes a moment to visit their mother's grave in the municipal/civilian graveyard.



Ivry

Paris

Algeria

37

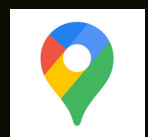


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In a store where Ahlème hopes to place an international call, she witness a group of men staring at her as she enters. This reminds her of her “frères” (literally brothers, but a way to refer to fellow Algerians) in Paris at Gare Saint-Lazare who stare at her while she walks past. In Algeria, she focuses mainly on the differences from France and various things throughout the journey remind her of things and people from Paris; however, in Paris, she only remembered her mother or when an issue occurred that reminded her of school, for example. The majority of her memories and identificatory points exist in France, reflecting that her life and her future exists only there even though her immigration status does not guarantee that.

38



Ahlème returns to Paris after a week, but le Patron and Foued remain for another week in Algeria. enjoying the city alone, she returns to Tropical club with her friends to have a night out.

39



After staying at the Tropical Club until 4:00 a.m., Ahlème goes directly to the prefecture to stand in line. The story ends with her waiting to see if she will get her papers and eventually her citizenship, but the reader never finds out. It's possible that this refrain, the common and constant refrain of all immigrants to France returning to the prefecture to advance their citizenship process, continues for much longer or ends that day.



## Observations

Overall, these maps have provided really interesting insights into the kinds of narratives surrounding immigrant populations from the inside and outside perspectives. Through Ahlème's story in *Du rêve pour les oufs* by Faïza Guène, we can observe a queering of cartographies in Paris. She not only leaves out typical markers of French identity, such as the Eiffel Tower or Notre Dame de Paris, but she also supplies local nomenclature for locations, such as "La Colline" or "Stade Ladj-Coucouré." Both of these names are used by the community, but do not reflect official names of the area,—no hills or elevation hold a name and the various stadiums reflect the "ideal" French body (white and male). These realistic views of the neighborhood (both positive and negative) simultaneously reflect and counter the media narrative and add to the cultural productions and other various organizations that occur throughout the city.

Lavapiés demonstrates a similar narrative as various communities join and alter the space in various ways, which often counter the media representation of both the space and the populations that inhabit it. Despite Lavapiés longer history in the center of metropolitan Madrid, the neighborhood functions similarly to the French banlieue in that it takes on the shape and feel of the populations that inhabit the space and call it home. Certain pockets or areas of density on the map show the most trafficked spaces in the area which often produce the most intricate narratives and sites of contention. These sites are where media and personal stories collide the most and often create the conflict fought in most countries in Europe today. But, despite these contentions, the migratory narratives mapped here serve to show that the focus is on creating a new narrative rather than focusing on what's left behind.

Note: This project has served as a wonderful stepping stone towards a larger dissertation project focused on mapping migratory narratives around the Mediterranean. While productive, we face various problems due to access of materials. The result of this is no fictional narrative currently mapped in Spain and no fictional narrative that connects Spain to France (a common path for North African immigrants in particular, Spain often serves as a country of access and passage rather than destination, although numbers hint at this changing). In any case, these maps have served us to observe variances in representations of immigration from North Africa to Europe. We intend to continue curating these maps and complicating them with more media, personal, and fictional narratives as we continue our doctoral studies and future careers.