SOLROUTES

Migration, Solidarity and Routes (Un)Making in the Atlantic Sahara

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Introduction

Since the 2000s, West African migration has been intermittently polarised by the Atlantic and Western routes linking the major cities of the Gulf of Guinea to the Canary Islands, a territory under Spanish sovereignty. Along this route, from Dakar to the south of Morocco, different types of cities and urban areas see the arrival of different categories of adventurers and people on the move, both in search of work and travel opportunities. At the heart of this route, Mauritania occupies an original and special place, both in terms of its spatial organisation (the main towns are located along an axis linking Nouakchott to Nouadhibou) and its society, a "borderland" at the heart of the boundary between North and West Africa. This unique mix turns its towns into migratory "crossroads" where different types of economic, religious, and political mobility merge and intermingle. Above all, because of its historic status as an interface between different parts of Africa, immigration has played a key role in the creation of Mauritanian cities and contemporary society. It is within this unique model, steeped in intersecting dominations based on ethnic, racial, colonial, and historical constructs, that the issue of migrants travelling to the Canary Islands is currently being played out.

By way of introduction, it is perhaps worth emphasising how important the role of migrants is in the construction of Mauritanian society and economy. From this point of view, colonisation and the economic structures it imposed are an inescapable part of the story: Nouadhibou, a town known today for its important fishing economy, was born from the arrival of a railway transporting iron ore from Zouerate, first through a colonial company and then under the aegis of a national company.[1] It expanded rapidly with the arrival of large numbers of black people from the Senegal River valley and the Sahel, who came to work in the fishing industry, which was booming at the time.

Nouakchott, on the other hand, was born of a colonial project implemented in the post-colonial period in exchange for preferential access to iron ore for the French authorities[2]. From the 1970s to the 1990s, the bulk of Mauritania's economy was based on economic extraversion, both through trade linked to the Senegal River groups and through the export of its mining and fishing resources[3]. This structuring of Mauritania's political economy is at the heart of the power relations that ensure the continuity of Moorish control over political power and over the dominated groups, particularly the Harratin[4]. As commercial and migratory crossroads, Mauritania's two largest cities are faced with a migratory history in which the closure of European borders, starting from the

[1] Pierre Bonte et Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, *La Montagne de fer : La SNIM (Mauritanie) - Une entreprise minière saharienne à l'heure de la mondialisation*, Illustrated édition., Paris, Karthala, 2003, 368 p.
[2] Armelle Choplin, *Nouakchott. Au carrefour de la Mauritanie et du monde*, s.l., KARTHALA Editions, 2009, 382 p.
[3] Armelle Choplin et Jérôme Lombard, « La "Mauritanie offshore". Extraversion économique, État et sphères dirigeantes », *Politique africaine*, 2009, vol. 114, nº 2, p. 87-104.
[4] From an emic point of view, the term "Harratin" refers to black Mauritanians who were formerly enslaved. In certain contexts, it can have a negative connotation. This is why we will use the term "Black Moors" to refer to them here. Jorge Brites et al., « La Mauritanie de Ghazouani : l'illusion de l'alternance », *L'Année du Maghreb*, 6 janvier 2022, nº 26, p. 271-298 ; E. Ann McDougall, « Introduction. 'Who are the ḥarāṭīn?' Asking the right questions… », *L'Ouest Saharien*, 2020, vol. 10-11, nº 1, p. 15-48.

early 2000s, has played its part in transforming the migratory landscape.[5] The proximity of the Canary Islands affects not only Mauritania but also Senegal and, above all, southern Morocco (Western Sahara). Since 2005, with the huge increase in arrivals by pirogue on the Canary Islands, the coastal towns of the Atlantic Sahara have been at the heart of a mobile and constantly changing border apparatus.[6]

This includes most of the players involved in the international governance of migration. Major international organisations such as the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees work alongside major security players such as the Gendarmerie, the National Guard, and the Mauritanian police, all of which are involved in controlling migration in the maritime area to varying degrees. On another scale, this border apparatus has also been developed in civil society and the associative fabric.

This context means that each migratory situation is an assemblage in which different imaginaries and temporalities play out and overlap, linked both to the historical depth of international migration in the western Sahara and to its links with different economic centres.[7] It is around this latter dimension that the research sought to understand the making of the journey from the Atlantic route. More specifically, following our previous research fieldwork carried out in Tunisia and the scientific literature on the subject, we see two industries as central to the organisation of migration routes in Mauritania. The first is small-scale and industrial fishing, an industry that is both globalised and relies heavily on foreign labour.[8] The second is the gold industry, which also has a small-scale and industrial component.[9] In both cases, the labour market is a relevant ethnographic "entry point" for grasping the fundamental components of the migration routes we are interested in: what migratory imaginaries and migratory practices are involved in the day-to-day making of the route? In what way do these spaces contribute to the construction of relationships within which tactical cooperation is played out and thwarted, enabling the journey to continue? How do these relational spaces enable us to rethink the construction of solidarity on African migration routes?

[5] Philippe Poutignat et Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart, « Migration Policy Development in Mauritania: Process, Issues and Actors » dans Martin Geiger et Antoine Pécoud (eds.), *The Politics of International Migration Management*, London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010, p. 202-219.

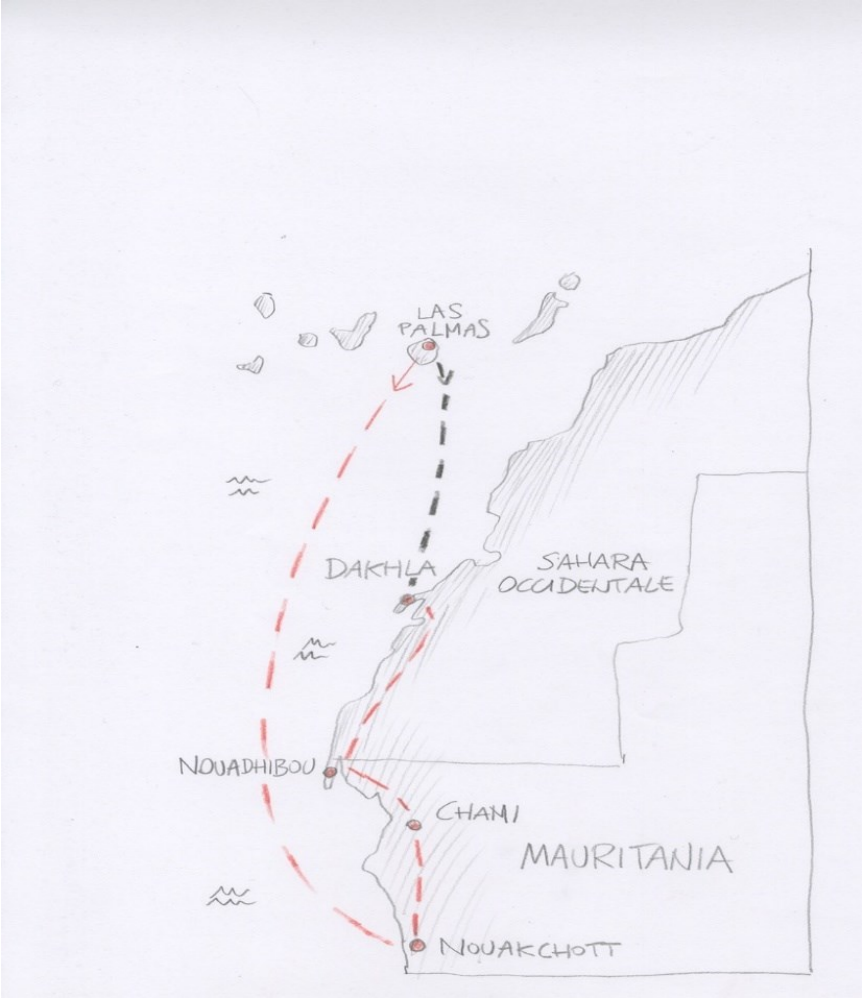
[6] Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart, « The manufacture of transit. Border control, urban trends and migrant trajectories in Nouadhibou (Mauritania) » dans , s.l., Lexington Books, 2012, p. ; Philippe M. Frowd, « The field of border control in Mauritania », *Security Dialogue*, 1 juin 2014, vol. 45, nº 3, p. 226-241 ; Hassan Ould Moctar, « Autonomy within entanglements: Illegalised migrants, the EU border regime, and the political economy of Nouadhibou, Mauritania », *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 1 février 2023, vol. 41, nº 1, p. 56-73 ; Hassan Ould Moctar, « The proximity of the past in Mauritania. EU border externalisation and its colonial antecedents », *Anthropologie & développement*, 1 décembre 2020, nº 51, p. 51-67.

[7] Armelle Choplin et Jérôme Lombard, « Migrations et recompositions spatiales en Mauritanie. "Nouadhibou du monde". Ville de transit… et après ? », *Afrique contemporaine*, 2008, vol. 228, nº 4, p. 151-170 ; Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart et Philippe Poutignat, « Nouadhibou "ville de transit" ?Le rapport d'une ville à ses étrangers dans le contexte des politiques de contrôle des frontières de l'Europe », *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 2008, vol. 24, nº 2, p. 193-217.

[8] Marta Alonso Cabré, « Entraves et conséquences de la nationalisation de la main d'œuvre dans le secteur de la pêche artisanale en Mauritanie », *L'Année du Maghreb*, 10 décembre 2019, nº 21, p. 341-355.

[9] Laurent Gagnol, Géraud Magrin et Raphaëlle Chevrillon-Guibert, « Chami, ville nouvelle et ville de l'or.Une trajectoire urbaine insolite en Mauritanie », *L'Espace Politique. Revue en ligne de géographie politique et de géopolitique*, 28 février 2020, nº 38 ; Laurent Gagnol, Rayane El Ghastalany et Ahmedou Mahfoudh, « (À paraitre) De l'âge du fer à l'âge de l'or ? Géographie extractiviste en Mauritanie », *L'Ouest Saharien*, 2024, vol. 19, nº 1, p. 34.

About Methods



Document 1 : The Route and the Generative Narrative Workshops

The 26-day Ethnographic Caravan touched with varying intensity and depth the following spaces of mobility and settlement between Mauritania, Morocco and the Canary Islands: 1) Nouakchott; 2) Chami; 3) Nouadhibou; 4) Dakhla; 5) Gran Canaria[10] . At the same time, the stories collected and the situations encountered evoke more extensive circulations and are not exclusively oriented towards the European Union; on the contrary, they include Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Algeria and Niger. In this perspective, this caravan has had the function of opening up a research device that we intend to broaden and develop in future editions, holding together this double dimension and researching its points of intersection and overlapping: on the one hand, mobility within the European Union, and on the other, inter-African mobility linked to work and to finding the resources necessary to continue what most people on the move designate by the term *adventure.*

Based on the methodological approach of SOLROUTES,[11] the Caravan has been implemented by two researchers (a sociologist and a geographer) and two artists (a filmmaker/photographer and a cartoonist/comics artist). The image in all its forms - filmed, photographed, drawn and used as

[10] In the Dakhla stage, L. Queirolo Palmas and A. Ferraris participated, while in the Gran Canaria stage only A. Ferraris (cartoonist). In the remaining three stages, the group consisted of L. Queirolo Palmas, C. Cassarini and J. Gonzalez Morandi (film-maker).
[11] See Solroutes Working Papers 2 - https://wp.solroutes.eu/wpcontent/uploads/SOLROUTES_WorkingPaper02_Methodology.pdf

a stimulus - was at the centre of the research and narrative device. In total, we conducted 18 filmed interviews, 3 filmed Generative Narrative Workshops (GNW), and 19 meetings/conversations transcribed in the form of a field diary (see Annex-1).

The following cultural objects are also being prepared, which rework – using the format of graphic journalism, photo-reportage and ethnographic documentary – both the research experience gained through travel and the video-elicitation sessions during the various GNWs: 1) a short drawn story (*postcard*, see storyboard in Annex-2) for *Internazionale* an Italian weekly magazine with a large circulation; 2) a photo-reportage for a Spanish trade union magazine on the working conditions in artisanal gold mining (see Annex-3)[12]; 3) an episode for a film on routes and solidarity; 4) an article and a video clip in a weekly magazine (*L'Espresso*) on the miners' routes and their struggles against slavery in Mauritania.[13]

Two GNWs - organised in collaboration with local associations[14] - were based on a film we produced on the topic of migration and solidarity in the Canary Islands. *Main Land,*[15] was used as a video-elicitation tool to evoke, to bring closer, what lies on the other side of the projection and debate site; to the eyes of the viewers in Mauritania, the film reveals a *geographical other* - the Canary Islands as the destination of arrival - but above all a *social other* where solidarity is white, informal, at times critical and political, and in any case distinct from the way institutions act. The GNW participants - around 20 representatives of civil society and migrant associations in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou - expressed distinct positions during the discussion, in one case reflecting on the concept of solidarity from a non-European point of view, in the other criticising the film's narrative perceived as an encouragement to *clandestine* migration.[16]

The organisation of the two GNWs with civil society allowed the SOLROUTES project and the Caravan team to accumulate social capital in the worlds of NGOs and associations in the two cities and to open up multiple avenues of research and knowledge of local contexts that could be explored in greater depth at a later date. It was a springboard experience for the development of an ethnographic journey in which, however, improvisation soon proved crucial, and the making of what was planned often remained unpredictable. With this in mind, a third unplanned GNW took place with a group of Malian miners in Chami, divided into two sessions: the first during a rest day in the city and the second under a tent-camp near the extraction pits 80 km away. The cultural object that the participants asked us to produce is a video document for a claim on the working conditions in the artisanal gold industry. Contrary to plans, the design-based GNW could not be carried out in Dakhla, partly due to the absence of a local partner involved in advance and partly due to operational difficulties in a more hostile political environment.

[12] See: https://www.revistacatalunya.cat/
[13] See «Chami : Misery of gold » https://lespresso.it
[14] Mauritanie Perspectives et Association Mauritanienne pour la promotion de l'Education des Filles.
[15] The film was shot in 2022 by the director involved in this Caravan and the PI of Solroutes together with Luca Giliberti, Enrico Fravega and Juan Pablo Aris Escarcena (Universidad de Sevilla), and produced by the Visual Sociology Laboratory of the University of Genoa. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-NgGU-ZORM
[16] During our fieldwork, the term *clandestine* is commonly used by experts and stakeholders, as well as by adventurers and activists in the field of migration.

Guides

Since the first GNW in Nouakchott, the Caravan has incorporated among its participants the unforeseen figure of the *guide*, understood as a subject who has an intimate knowledge of a route made up of places, relations and actors, and who, by virtue of his symbolic and social capital, has the opportunity to introduce outsiders (artists and researchers in fact) into spaces otherwise precluded in the context of short fieldwork temporalities. We have, however, tried to transform the role of the *guide* by freeing it, as far as possible, from the classic function of *informant* - the one who transmits and makes accessible knowledge otherwise obscure to the profanes - and instead enhancing its potential as *co-narrator.*[17] The two guides who joined the Caravan progressively became an integral part of the travelling group, sharing the spaces of cohabitation and contributing to the reflections and interpretations on the encounters and the materials collected, as well as to the operational choices related to fieldwork. It is the dimension of continuous reflexivity, an opportunity made possible by the common exposure to the situations of the journey, which allows access to what Jean Rouch called the third gaze, a point of view that goes beyond the classic distinction in ethnography between the *emic* and the *ethic*, tries to ground narration and interpretation by crossing, dissolving and reworking the gaze of the *researchers* and that of the *researched.*

The two guides who have integrated the Caravan in its multiple encounters present different trajectories, biographies and positioning. Both use the term *aventurier*[18] to define themselves and they are both non-nationals, perceived as migrants, with respect to the space through which they accompany us. Abdoulaye, a refugee and spokesperson for a migrants' association in Mauritania, as well as an informal taxi driver, shared the stages of Chami and Nouadhibou with us for a week while with Malik,[19] a transnational trader in clothing and activist in various associations, we continued the journey from Nouadhibou to Dakhla for a further 9 days. Both of them, like most of those we meet along the way, have friends and relatives who have either *moved* to the Canaries or are waiting for the right moment to pass.

With Abdoualye and Malik, we share all the rituals of entering the field; some addressed to the authorities, others aimed at interacting with the different social worlds of the travelling people and their support networks.

> It is the heat of midday, and the sun is blinding Chami. We must perform, as everyone has advised us, a courtesy visit to the local authorities to announce our presence. A kind of ritual we have to undergo to be able to move without problems in this area made up of sand, grey brick houses and shacks. At the Gendarmerie headquarters, three young men in green uniforms are waiting for us, lying on the ground on top of a rug in which they are sleeping. Next to them, a gas cooker, pots, pans, and boots. It's a police station, but I don't see any tables; people, even soldiers, like to lie on the floor. They are polite and sleepy. The

[17] See Michael Taussig (2004), *My Cocaine Museum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[18] See Sylvie Bredeloup (2014) *Migrations d'aventures. Terrains africains.* Paris, Éditions du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques.
[19] Fictitious names (as all the others used along this text).

one who looks like the chief looks at the paper we give him – a permit in Arabic for film shooting – and seems to have trouble reading it. Then he picked up the phone, and after a conversation, we realized that we had to pay our respects to *Hakim*, the governor. Tomorrow, we will have the mayor (*Walid*) instead. The social capital that we are able to activate is what makes research development possible. The same applies to the subsequent wanderings with Abdoulaye in search of the leader of the Malians of Chami to explain our research project, to be able to carry out interviews with the miners and to film the working situations in the extraction pits. First, we end up in a workshop where engines are repaired, then in a boutique selling all kinds of goods, and finally in an informal restaurant where workers returning from the mines for the Friday holiday eat and rest. Finally, we find the leader of the Malians, a young man dressed in a blue suit that reveals some religious affiliation to an Islamic brotherhood. (Extract from the field diary, 15 February 2024)

Time and context of the Caravan

The context and the period within which the research device has been deployed are marked on the one hand by the reactivation of the Atlantic route, also as a consequence of more effective containment policies on the central Mediterranean; on the other by the European Union's efforts to negotiate with Mauritania a migration deal similar to what has already been done with Morocco, Libya, Turkey and Tunisia, and now underway with Egypt.

According to data from the Spanish Interior Ministry, the first two months of 2024 represented a moment of crisis for the border regime and, thus, a horizon of hope for its violators.

Tab. 1- Arrivals through the Atlantic Route during the Caravan

	Boats	People	Boats increase (%)	People increase (%)
January/February 2023	42	1865	-	-
January/February 2024	181	11932	+539%	+ 331%

Source: Ministerio de Interior - Spain. https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/.galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2024/04_informe_quincenal_acumulado_01-01_al_29-02-2024.pdf

More generally, the area covered by our Caravan is crisscrossed by major factors of change, instability, and effervescence linked both to youth protest movements in Senegal and the violent repression by the authorities, to the persistence of state terrorism and counter-terrorism, the consequences of which are the growth in forced migrations; as well as to a general geopolitical shift of alliances from France/EU towards Russia in Mauritania's neighbouring countries. In terms of imaginaries, there is also a pan-Africanist and anti-colonial wind blowing, embodied by the military juntas that have taken power in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

The atmosphere around the topic of undocumented mobility also finds a reflection in digital space, as in the case of the FB page of Helena Maleno Garzon: an activist - *a woman who fights for those who risk their lives trying to cross the Strait of Gibraltar*, according to the self-definition she uses - followed by over half a million supporters. Every one of her announcements of a successful *Boza* - that is, of a boat arriving in Europe on the Atlantic or Western Mediterranean route[20] - is applauded and commented on by thousands and thousands of travelling people. During the 26 days of our mission, Helena Maleno's page launched the *Boza* cry 38 times, reporting that 2298 people had succeeded in crossing the European border along the Atlantic route. From this perspective, such a type of communication not only conveys relevant information, first and foremost for the families of those on the road but also builds an emotional landscape, circulating among *the candidates for migration* - a term often used by the authorities with a stigmatising accent - a feeling of success, hope and possibility; this imagery goes hand in hand with the necro-political dimension of the border, recalled by the equally recurrent announcements of shipwrecks and missing persons (*Avis de recherche*).

In fact, the Atlantic route remains among the most dangerous in terms of deaths and disappearances, according to the data of the *Caminando Fronteras* report, cross-referenced with those of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior[21], during 2023, 39,910 people managed to reach the Canary Islands; at the same time, 6007 - a number that is nevertheless underestimated - lost their lives during the crossing, with a sad balance of almost one victim for every six arrivals.

On writing

A final caveat on the narrative form of this text, the various stages the Caravan passes through, due to the brevity of the immersion in each context, are neither explored nor reported in terms of *case studies* or *community study*. The logic we pursue here, following the suggestion of the multi-sited ethnography,[22] is to give back in the form of an itinerant narrative, a set of fragments, encounters, discourses and practices that revolve around the topic of unauthorised and undocumented mobility, solidarity and work circulations, intending to contribute to developing by stages and from a viewpoint positioned from the outside the European Union, a theory on route-making from below that incorporates solidarity as one of its driving forces.

On the basis of this perspective, in Nouakchott, we enter the field, explore the expert discourse on solidarity and mobility, and contrast it with a heterogeneous field of subaltern knowledge gathered in the worlds of migration. Later in Chami, thanks to Abdoulaye's mediation, a crew of Malian miners became our main source of learning about the artisanal gold industry and mobility

[20] On the term and its origin see: Luca Giliberti, Luca Queirolo Palmas (2024), *Boza! Diari dalla frontiera*. Milano: Eleuthera.
[21] See: https://caminandofronteras.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Maqueta_ES.pdf - https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/export/sites/default/.galleries/galeria-de-prensa/documentos-y-multimedia/balances-e-informes/2023/24_informe_quincenal_acumulado_01-01_al_31-12-2023.pdf
[22] See George Marcus (1995), Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 24, pp. 95-117.

practices. In Nouadhibou, the main place of departure to the Canary Islands and the epicentre of a global fishing industry, on the one hand, we confront the rhetoric of deterrence, so hegemonic among several stakeholders participating in the GNW; on the other hand we access a religious infrastructure that supports people on the road like pilgrims and we encounter more political and radical practices of border contestation, such as those of Ezekiel, a young fisherman who will act as a kind of third guide at distance, commenting our ethnographic encounters. In Dakhla, we return to the question of the relationship between resources, labour and departures in a context where migrants, unlike Mauritania, are ousted from the fishing industry and where the Royal Navy intercepts pirogues sailing up the coast towards Europe. The Canary Islands are places that appear permanently in our everyday encounters and conversations in Mauritania as in Morocco, forming part of a widespread imaginary; they are also evoked by the film *Main-land* and experienced directly by the cartoonist of the Caravan who, before reaching Dakhla, carried out drawing and fieldwork activities at the boat graveyard in Gran Canaria and at the urban beach where many people on the move camp.

Nouakchott, Chami, Nouadhibou, Dakhla and Gran Canaria are in the spirit of Solroutes project nodes, i.e. *a social and temporal space of transit across the routes in which different and contingent assemblages* **-** of border control devices and border transgression tactics, of surveillance and autonomy - *emerge and overlap*. It is this dimension of friction and concurrence that we will try to highlight in our narrative.

Nouakchott

Associative notability and situated narrations of migration

Nouakchott is both dense and empty, a city almost devoid of urbanity. Coming from Europe or Mediterranean Africa, we're inevitably surprised to find a city with so few public social spaces: no parks, very few cafés and, in the end, very few “classic” restaurants, apart from a few on the outskirts, built along the lines of “drive-ins”. Nouakchott is not a city without "urbanity", but it is rare and diffuse. In all this, migrants seem to be coping, negotiating their place, in a context of strong socio-racial segregation between black Moors and white Moors. Our story begins in one of these segregated areas. As in all the towns we will be travelling through on this caravan, the associative worlds set and rebroadcast the “narratives” of the migratory situation (of diverse origins) with which we have to come to terms and on the basis of which we seek to understand. The preparatory work for this caravan brought us into contact with two associative structures that are typical of the contemporary configurations of civil society in the capitals of the global South. What they have in common, apart from living off the "development rent", is that they talk about migration without the main people concerned. These two organisations act as intermediaries for us: they take on a coordinating role in exchange for access to the players they believe will be of interest to us.

The first few days in the field were devoted to exploring the different narratives of immigration that the notables in the associations told to us about migrants, a situation that many of the people we spoke to considered to be terrible: immigration was a scourge that, in the long term, would compromise the country's development prospects. One of them told us: "If we let it go on, we're in the process of emptying ourselves of our young people". One of the great narratives fashionable in Nouakchott, indeed, is that the migration phenomenon is now affecting Mauritanians themselves. Against all expectations, the route is to North America via Nicaragua. This narrative is often expressed in epidemiological terms: "it's spreading in our country..." or, more frankly, by referring to it directly as a "disease". This narrative necessarily needs to be sociologically situated, as it emanates from actors who have chosen to stay while the social environment where they live is marked by the fact that social mobility can be achieved by migration. This narrative is all the more interesting because, in Mauritania, it refers to a clear distinction between nationals and migrants, a stigma that supposedly evokes specific social properties: poor, illiterate or poorly educated... It is at the intersection of these issues that both the reception of migrants and the phenomenon of departures from Mauritania by both migrants and nationals take place. This navigation through the worlds of associative notability reveals another social fragmentation: the racial fragmentation that exists between Bidhan and Pulaar groups around the political resources of the development world. This fragmentation is euphemistic, as in this statement by a Pulaar woman: the Bidhan are "the wealthy"; they do little work and seek to benefit from their community's de facto dominant position in the political and economic worlds. The withdrawal of the Pulaar into the intellectual and associative worlds is therefore logical: not being places especially endowed with economic capital, they are not overly interested in them. This is why, throughout our fieldwork and during the GNW organised in

Nouakchott, many of the associative interlocutors were Pulaar, often suspected of having connections with the Senegalese populations, with whom they share certain social characteristics.

The workshop - the filmed session which we called GNW - was held in the main hall of an international hotel. The space for our meeting is vast: it's more of a conference than a workshop. Around thirty people attended the screening, representing the academic world and civil society working on human rights, migration and women's issues. The trade unions were also present but said nothing. The introductory round was formal. Visually, the room was black and middle-aged, with a relevant proportion of women. After the screening of the film - Main-land - there is a question and answer session on the making of the film. Most of the questions relate to our relationship with the state or with the migrants: "Have you had any problems with the authorities as a result of the work you have done?"; "Did the people interviewed agree to participate of their own free will?" Rather than a debate, we are witnessing a succession of interventions.

What follows is the outcome of the debate generated by the screening of our film on informal solidarity in the Canary Islands. In the accounts of participants, the hospitality due to migrants seems to be linked to the theme of reciprocity because the inhabitants can also be tomorrow's travellers. Amadou Sall, our partner of *Mauritanie Perspective*, draws up a list of basic lessons for us Westerners: "What you need to understand is the importance of competition between equals in Africa. We turn to our cousins, within our extended family networks, and it's this imitative energy that moves people, organises desires, spurs action". Thus, solidarity is relational and circulatory; it is not the property of an individual or a moral character that would distinguish individuals from one another between those who show solidarity and those who do not. This type of solidarity explains, for example, "why the young Senegalese fisherman in the film left, even though he had become a father, accepting his mother's choice". While the point about imitative energy as a circulatory and driving force emphasises the generational issue and the competition between individuals, the last reflection, on the other hand, evokes the hierarchical force of the relationship between the generations. It is as if there were two vectors at work, pulling in different directions: the individual and the wider group.

This explains why Modu, one of the main characters of the film Main-Land, complains when he states that all his work was limited to sewing for relatives without being paid and that his choice to leave was also linked to the need to emancipate from this obligatory family solidarity.

The succession of speeches during the GNW did not entail a debate around different positions but unfolded several layers: the first concerns mobility seen as a detriment to local societies or as normality inscribed in local histories; the second is linked to a continuous oscillation between the *clandestine* emigration of others and the *clandestine* emigration of Mauritanians, seen as something new and unexpected. For all, the term solidarity is redefined through the category of hospitality as something rooted in culture, tradition and religion. I wonder about the rhetoric of this cultural interpretation of hospitality, which suppresses the conflicts that run through society. What has this GNW produced? No specific object. However, it has certainly accredited the project

to local players and placed us in a series of links and relationships that will enable our research to develop.

The narratives of migration that we met and collected were therefore rooted in the Pulaar social group, and, in February 2024, this narration overlapped with the Malian war situation. Roughly speaking, well before the issue of people leaving for Europe, the people we spoke to classified migration in Mauritania into two main categories: firstly, those of migrants, by which they meant Senegalese and Malian workers, and secondly, those of "refugees". The opening of the M'bera camp in south-east Mauritania is attracting a lot of attention. More than 90,000 refugees are thought to have been living there for several years, escaping the resumption of conflict in northern Mali. Here, too, the ethnic variable is euphemised according to the people we spoke to: some describe them as simply "Malians", while others specify that the majority are Tuaregs. This euphemism is not insignificant; it refers to the historical and social figures of Malian migrants in Mauritania. Indeed, the arrival of workers from the south of Mali, mainly Bambara, is considered normal. They work in all the low-skilled sectors of the Mauritanian economy alongside other historic nationalities, such as the Senegalese, the Gambians and, above all, the sub-national black Moors. The presence of Tuaregs is much less common and directly linked to the upheavals of the war. The socio-ethnic fragmentation of the labour market echoes the way in which these different types of mobility have taken place in Nouakchott, itself a segregated city from a socio-spatial point of view.

Mixed but segregated flows in urban space

These first few days spent navigating through Nouakchott have brought to the fore an observation made over 15 years ago by Armelle Choplin about the city's "bottom-up" structure:

"The centre imposed by the elites is, in fact, opposed by numerous margins (which are not limited to the spatial peripheries), populated by excluded people who take advantage of the autonomy offered in this space to oppose the imposed model of the city. Because the State does not have the means to fully control this capital, the inhabitants, including those on the margins, are also (re)constructing the city through the spontaneity of the exchanges they establish there".[23]

These exchanges are, to a certain extent, what we are looking at here, on the assumption that beyond the narratives that are told, movement and mobility are built around these exchanges. Our meeting with Abdoulaye is, in a way, the starting point for understanding these logics. His biographical story is a summary of the way in which adventure is combined with the spaces and careers that any mobile person may encounter in the course of his or her life. Abdoulaye comes from a rural region in southern Mali. After taking the police exam, he decided to "go on an adventure" to Spain via Mauritania. This first part of his life took him to Cape Verde, where he gave

[23] A. Choplin, *Nouakchott. Au carrefour de la Mauritanie et du monde*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

up before returning to Mauritania via Senegal. In Nouadhibou, Abdoulaye worked in the fishing industry for several years, where he became familiar with the maritime world and its numerous intermediaries. After his failed attempt and the organisation of around fifty convoys, he stopped this activity following the death of one of his friends from the same village. It was a seminal experience. From that moment on, Abdoulaye chose to stay in Mauritania and settle in Nouakchott, where he lives with his wife and four children. His first career in fishing and the organisation of passages enabled him to establish himself in the "community" landscape and to be recognised as a *doyen* of the Malian fishing community. This second career in the community was breathed into by the political changes in Mali, enabling him (as he would admit on several occasions) to be considered a privileged interlocutor of the consular authorities in Mauritania and the new Malian regime.

Abdoulaye is not, like our previous contacts, notable in the world of civil society associations. He has several statuses that give him access to different social worlds. We began our collaboration with him from this particular perspective since, over and above his role as 'fixer' and 'translator', Abdoulaye is also a protagonist of our study, who enables us, without objectifying them, to situate the spaces of exchange and cooperation that we were seeking to understand. His biographical history and his status as president of the Malian Fishermen's Association show us two main things. The first is that the construction of unauthorised movements is based on a permanent interplay between proximity and spatial distance of different kinds, residential and relational, linked to the spaces where people live and work. The second is that the social spaces of migratory exchange and intermediation are deeply embedded in the ethno-economic structures of the labour market. We'll come back to this later.

The first point becomes obvious as soon as we leave the rich city centre to go to the fishing port and Abdoulaye's home: two spaces in his daily life and in his migratory history in Nouakchott that are directly linked to the ways in which migrants and impoverished nationals co-exist. On this subject, when asked about the fractures in Mauritanian society, one of the community leaders we met in Nouakchott told us: "In Nouakchott, you have a border. I mean, a 'real' border, which divides the city in two. On one side, the white Moors, the expatriates, the rich... on the other side, the migrants from the sub-region and the descendants of slaves... That's how it is here. While the water-tightness of these worlds and the physical materialisation of this "frontier" must, of course, be put into perspective, it does have an obvious performative and symbolic dimension (which we will see later at a crucial point in our study in Nouadhibou). This is how the moral geography of the city is structured for all the people we spoke to. Abdoulaye lives "on the other side". We take a taxi from the city centre and cross the border. The urban landscape changes radically. From recent buildings reminiscent of the architecture in the Gulf countries, we move on to more modest dwellings, separated by half-tarred, half-sandy roads. Commercial specialisations are also changing. From the well-ordered districts of the city centre, we move on to gigantic open-air garages stretching for dozens of metres along the roadside. Finally, the racial variable is obvious: here, there are only black people, no white Moors or Europeans. It's at the end of this neighbourhood that Abdoulaye's house appears; 1 km away as the crow flies from the sea, Abdoulaye lives here with his four children and his wife. The house is modest and contrasts with everything we've seen so far. In front of the house sits a Peugeot 406 in an advanced state of

disrepair. But don't be fooled; this car is the fruit of a long and arduous accumulation of capital that has enabled Abdoulaye to become an informal taxi driver and earn a living from it. Like many migrants, Abdoulaye bore the full brunt of the law reserving the profession to nationals. However, like many Malians, Abdoulaye evades the controls, thanks both to corruption and to his refugee card. Malians in Mauritania have always asked for this status, not least because of the protection it affords them from the Mauritanian authorities. Here, everyone has refugee status, in addition to a daily or longer-term job in the district's flagship sector: fishing.

Document 2 : Fishermen in the artisanal port of Nouakchott. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024

It is around this second point, an economic space where the logic of exchange is constantly being replayed, that we are beginning to get our hands on the fabric of the movement. Nouakchott's fishing port is a stone's throw from Abdoulaye's neighbourhood. Its organisation is functional: fishermen bring the merchandise to wholesalers who sell it to other dealers... Teams of fishermen are formed on different bases, linked to ethnic and national affiliations, seniority and skills, and proximity to Moorish bosses.

Document 3 Launch of a pirogue in the port of Nouakchott. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024

This sector relies heavily on the employment of foreign workers of three main nationalities: Senegalese, Gambians, and Malians share the jobs and the various sectors. The sight of the fishing port gives a concrete idea of the space in which the movement and departures of pirogues from the Mauritanian coast take place, an impression that will be repeated in the port of Nouadhibou. Thousands of pirogues follow one another for kilometres, their constant comings and goings managed by hundreds of small teams pushing and pulling the boats from the beach. Probably due to professional deformation, it seems impossible to tell the difference between a fisherman's pirogue and another who wants to travel to the Canary Islands. This scenario is confirmed by our interviewee, who explains that this is a genuine method of departure, enabling the boats to cross international waters without attracting attention. It is here, in this social space, that the manufacture of departures is played out, all caught up in an internal contradiction (which will also follow us to Nouadhibou: the criminalisation of departures clashes, on this scale, with that of the fishing economy, on which Mauritania is very dependent. Stopping one inevitably means stopping the other, so stopping departures seems a pipe dream.

By looking at the city of Nouakchott, we can see how the segregated city contributes to the creation of movement by connecting relegated populations. While the fishing sector appears to be directly connected to the migration industry that operates throughout Mauritania, it is also part of it and provides a glimpse of its scale: that of the migration routes linking Mauritania to Europe. An international route, then, but one that intersects with others, more discreet and new. It should be remembered here that there is nothing new about this migratory industry as such.

Mauritania has been linked to the Canary Islands by this route for some twenty years, and its economic strength stems precisely from this historical strength. Our contact, Abdoulaye, has been organising departures from Nouadhibou since the early 2010s, and he was far from the first. It was because the fishing sector was already older that this route was able to develop.

From fishing to gold, in search of routes

From the outset of our study, our exploration of the social worlds of mobility was echoed by the phenomenon of artisanal gold mining in Mauritania. Far from having been formed from the outside, it is through the Malian issue that the gold issue emerges. As luck would have it, the study revealed that Dida, a young Malian Tuareg, lives in our home. He comes from Timbuktu. He was the first person we met in Mauritania. He has refugee status in Mauritania for 2019 and doesn't admit to liking the country too much. He speaks Bambara, Songhai (he grew up in a Songhai family) and, of course, Tamashek. He also travels regularly to the M'bera camp; 20 hours by bus is a long way! For a Tuareg, nothing's far..." but he hasn't been back to Timbuktu since the war in the north intensified. During a discussion on the subject of our visit, the issue of gold caught his attention. He quickly told us that he knew many Tuaregs working in this sector in Mali. His status as head of an association and his network in Nouakchott had led him to make contact with other young Tuaregs moving between the Timbuktu region, the M'bera refugee camp and Nouakchott. Among them is Banoss, nicknamed "the man without bones" by his friends. We meet him in a small flat not far from the US embassy. On the living room wall hangs a painting of two moons entwined around a man on a camel. Tamashek motifs dot the room. These young people, half a dozen of them, are all Tamasheks and students. Banoss is 24 years old, a refugee in Mauritania and has a small career in gold, but "not in gold panning". He has been working for several years in the Intahaka mine in Mali, where he "infiltrated" thanks to his uncle, working there "as a family". He describes an economic organisation based on sectors that are mainly run by ethnic family structures. The Tuaregs managed supplies, the Bambaras "went into the holes", and the Sudanese bought the gold and processed it... According to him, the business was profitable but risky. In the beginning, they were content to bring back water because "you need a lot of water for gold". He and his cousin loaded up their pick-up with jerry cans and drove straight to the mine. At the entrance, they had to pay a tax to the group that controlled it. His testimony is an example of how a mine provides a window into the vicissitudes of the conflict in Mali. At the time, this group was linked to the Tuaregs through the GATIA, an ally of the Malian government opposed to the Tuareg rebellion. This control has fluctuated, sometimes through the intermediary of jihadist groups, such as the JNIM, and sometimes through those of rival Tuareg groups, such as the MNLA. Like all the people we spoke to on the subject, he says: "It's a dangerous and tough job because you never know who's going to stop you". Risk is an integral part of the job. He says he has seen people killed and soldiers and fighters arbitrarily plundering all the wealth on the ground. He describes a system where uncertainty reigns, where you have to hide your money. Orange money seems to be the only system that makes transactions secure. All that has changed, especially since rumours of a possible takeover by the Russian militia Wagner began to circulate. Since the takeover was

confirmed, Banoss and the others have put their business on hold. Banoss' account shows how the gold issue intersects with the Mauritanian migration space, which is built around both international migration routes and more regional movements. It is all the more interesting in that it reveals a new dynamic in the Saharan context: that of international Tuareg mobility and their involvement in the gold economy. On their own scale and through their movements between the Malian gold mines and the M'bera refugee camp, these young Tuaregs illustrate the way in which gold moves particular groups from Mali to Mauritania.

Banoss's story also reflects a second story told by a young Malian, this time from southern Mali. Diawara is a miner who, compared to the young Tuaregs, has a lot of experience. His career as a gold digger began in the Selingué mine in southern Mali, close to the Guinean border. In 2011, on a Tuesday in the village, a friend came back on a motorbike, carrying CFA francs and a piece of 20 grammes of gold. Diawara discussed the matter with him and learned that a mine had just been opened in the Sélingué region, where everyone seemed to be rushing. After discussing it with his mother, he packed his bag and took with him only a bit of food. Once there, he borrowed some equipment, mainly picks and shovels at first, then jackhammers and generators. As the years went by, the mine became more technically advanced. He also learned. In his opinion, the real winners from gold are the renters and the marabouts, two categories of actors that cannot be ignored. The first always comes out rich, "no matter what you find". The second is needed to open any well, at the risk of having the ownership of the well contested by someone else and, above all, of being buried: " You should always go through a marabout because he knows whether you're going to find gold or not". Often, the opening of a well requires the slaughter of a sheep, provided by the marabout himself; the service is not free, but it is profitable. The marabout's action requires the approval of the village chief, who is also the one who advances the capital needed for extraction: "Through the marabout, you are bound to the village chief, you can't escape and not repay your debt, it's impossible". In just a few years, his mine has grown enormously, to the point where "operators" have arrived from all over Mali, all the way to Bamako. Diawara worked in the mines of southern Mali until 2019 when he got married and had to leave Mali with his whole family. His arrival in Mauritania was complicated, mainly because he had no income. After two years of living from job to job, he heard about the Chami gold mines through a Malian friend. Two weeks later, he got into a 4x4 and headed for the Chami mines, which were "already poor at the time". Compared to Mali, Diawara found the Mauritanian mines much better. Over there, he was certainly housed, fed and laundered but "earned nothing": "At Chami, you only get paid from 40g; below that, you have to take out credit for everything, and you can only go home one day a week. That's a lot less than in Mali. You can use your 2 or 3 grams to buy a few things in town, but that's it." After two months, Diawara gave up and tried to find another job in the town's treatment centre of gold, where he had contacts. Here, too, the business was not profitable enough to support his family, who were still living in Nouakchott. Back in Nouakchott, Diawara wanted nothing more to do with gold panning.

When gold puts people in movement

The intersecting stories of Diawara and Banoss reveal two overlapping realities of the relationship between the gold economy and mobility, an approach that complements those relating to the fishing economy. The migration routes that cross Mauritania are anchored in economic spaces and are structured around different scales. The Malian conflict has imposed itself on the Mauritanian migratory landscape through two distinct temporalities: one, of long duration, is linked to the history of Malian workers in Mauritania, in the fishing economy, in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. The other, shorter story is that of the war, in which the gold economy seems to play a predominant role: people move between borders because of the resources offered by the gold economy but to where? Diawara's account is interesting in that it shows the role Chami has played in many Malian migratory journeys to Mauritania. This observation is confirmed by Abdoulaye, our guide, who knows that there is a Malian community group in Chami directly linked to the involvement of Malians in the gold mining economy. The sector is booming despite ups and downs.

Salah, a white Moor and a long-standing entrepreneur in the gold economy in Nouakchott was an interesting point of entry for grasping the interplay of distance and proximity that exists in these worlds: according to him, the history of gold began in 2015 in Mauritania. The first shop was opened by a Sudanese man who had anticipated the explosion of the country's market. He was running a small IT business next door but felt the wind turning and opened his own business. "You're not the first person to open a business in this area? No, the second," he replies with a smile. He claims that he only sells Canadian machines, even though the current market is almost exclusively held by Chinese materials, a virtual monopoly maintained by the Sudanese networks, who are both entrepreneurs and craftsmen. In his view, the gold panning sector is completely distinct from industrial mining. This "small sector" currently employs 250,000 people: Mauritanians, of course, who own the mines, but also Malians, Gambians, Senegalese... and Sudanese. The latter nationality is said to be over-represented in the country due to its long history in the business. Two days earlier, one of his employees told me: "The Sudanese are incredible; they can find gold with their eyes closed". His speech, that of a company director, reveals a clear social contempt for the workers: according to him, the workers in this sector are people "who have no level...". This would also explain the terrible working conditions in the mines and in the sector, in particular, the use of mercury and cyanide with bare hands without any safety measures. In his words, Chami is a "real mess" where prostitution and drug trafficking reign... all because of these nationalities who have no education. Salah tells us that the world of gold panning is currently in the throes of a social conflict due to the imposition of a one-stop shop that would like to concentrate the purchase of gold from the miners. According to him, only 20% of the gold extracted is sold to Maaden, the public company responsible for managing the sector, while the rest is sold on the black market, which is largely run by the Sudanese. However, in his opinion, all this is linked to prices that are "unfairly" set by the state: "Where there is injustice, there is a black market". The regular discovery of new sites is constantly transforming the market: in good months, he can sell up to 1,500 machines; in normal months, 20 to 30.

Chami

Our arrival in Chami represents a progression along the routes of mobility that we have explored up to now from Nouakchott. From the stories told by leaders of associations to the accounts given by some of the actors in the labour in this industry, Chami was beginning to establish itself firmly in our imaginations as a destination from which to re-enact the making of movement in one direction or another. In fact, it is around meanings and directions that our questions are beginning to crystallise. From Nouakchott, we know that Chami is a stopover, an anchorage and a destination for several categories of people on the move. Chami is where the two routes we have been trying to trace since the start of our project intersect. The first is the route linking West Africa to the Canary Islands, and the second is the route linking the east of the Sahara to its far west. These two routes are driven by economic systems that serve as relational support for the deployment of these mobilities, one by the fishing industry and the other by the gold industry.

Document 4 : Chami from the southern entrance of the town. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024.

The first observation is imbued with subjectivity: Chami is ugly, dull, windy and suspicious smells regularly remind us of the presence of a processing centre, "le grillage", where mercury burns permanently for a few grams of gold locked up. Chami is polluted, a dimension that grips us as soon as we arrive. But Chami is also cosmopolitan. A second, seemingly more anarchic town has been superimposed on the state town. Gold and migrants are everywhere. All the products needed to extract and process gold are sold here. As soon as we arrived, Abdoulaye introduced us to a Malian team leader, who, in turn, introduced us to the local Malian community leader. This team leader is a senior citizen dressed in military uniform and wearing a chel; this scarf is a fashion

that is widespread among the town's miners. This senior has "been to Spain" in another life. He understands Spanish but speaks it poorly. The community leader is a young man, well-dressed and wearing an elegant outfit featuring a photo of a sheikh, a reminder that religious affiliations are never far away on these social networks. The senior member then takes us into a small house where half a dozen miners are gathered in front of a TV showing a programme from Mali's national television network. Headlights perch on the wall, a sign that the mine is omnipresent. The processing centre is within sight.

The Malian social space of work and movement

Document 5 : A miner with his lamps in Chami. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024.

The same evening, we returned to set up the first collective narrative device. It worked: the camera attracted attention and encouraged people to express themselves. In this context, the issues relating to working conditions led to testimonies on all the difficulties that Malians encounter in the labour market: exploitation, suffering at work and the apparent lack of remuneration. At this point, mobility becomes a secondary issue, taken for granted. After all, what would bring so many migrants to such an unwelcoming town? But Nouadhibou is never far away. On the sidelines, a young man from Côte d'Ivoire approaches one of the researchers and asks what we're doing here. After explaining why we're here, he tells us why he's here: "I'm not Malian, I'm Ivorian, from Man! There aren't many Ivorians here; you can count them like that. I went on an adventure. I crossed Mali, Mauritania, and then I arrived in Morocco, and that's where they pushed me back because the first time you go to Morocco, you have to get there by plane. After that, I went to Nouakchott,

but I couldn't find any work there, so I came here for the gold. I'm not earning anything; I've got no money. I've been in Chami for two years and three months now, and I've barely got any money saved up to leave here... The Mauritanians here are tough, you work for them, and they don't even pay you; they don't give a damn".

The issue of working conditions is central and, *de facto*, focuses our attention. We are witnessing the consequences of this particular form of extractivism, where national preference, the apparent absence of regulation and the law of the strongest make the weakest - those who have no papers - vulnerable. And that's what these discussions are all about. Beyond a supposed relationship with employers, the issue of labour standards is raised by our interlocutors. The lack of legal recognition of migrants' employment contracts encourages exploitation. We were able to see this for ourselves the very next day.

Our journey to Chami led us to a curious meeting with the head of the mayor's office. Without expecting much, he gave us an original view of the situation in the town in a voice so thin it was almost inaudible. Originally from the Chami region and a former nomad, the deputy is a historical witness to the transformations of his town and region. Against all expectations, he has a definite aversion to the precious mineral. "We've been finding gold here for a long time. Back in the day, we used to find it in the jars we made, but tradition dictated that we put it back in the ground. Today, it's a malediction". His story, tinged with nostalgia for a past era, is nonetheless based on a recurring observation since our arrival in Mauritania: the city is subject to massive pollution, affecting the soil, air and water. His observations are based mainly on an unprecedented increase (so far unquantified) in multi-disabled births and multiple malformations, inevitably attributable to permanent mercury emissions from the treatment centre. It is this point that focuses his grievances while distancing himself from its management, according to him, devolved to the state authorities: "This centre is a disaster, and we have asked the national authorities several times to move it, far away, further south. So far, we haven't been heard because choices have to be made between economic development and people's health. For the moment, it's a development that has been chosen". This is an interesting observation and teaches us a fundamental point: the state machine is not as monolithic as it is supposed to be. It has its flaws, particularly at the local level, where, as usual, local and municipal authorities are crushed under the weight of the central apparatus. Chami is also the story of a region that had the misfortune of being in the wrong place on the map.

To the mining site

The next day, we set off for the mine in the early hours of the morning, accompanied by the first Malians we met on our arrival. Our convoy is so classic that it looks exactly like the countless pick-ups that come and go from the Tevragh Zeina mine. One of the researchers goes up with them, also to experience, in situ, what this moment of mobility is all about: getting to the mine is

something exhilarating, even for them. One of the miners said: "Even if this work is hard, it's like the lottery; you never know if you're going to get rich, so you keep going...".

Document 6 : On the road to the Tasiast artisanal gold mine with Malian miners. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024.

Before reaching the mines, we have to pass the site of Kinross, the fifth largest gold mining company in the world, following a track cut perfectly into the sand. The site is impressive and might even look like a mountain from a distance. The high level of protection leaves little room for doubt and shows just what a classic industrial enclave it is in capitalist extractivism. The area is overflowing with drones and monitored by cameras. All we see of Kinross are the long fences and a sign warning of the danger of cyanide; the company does not show any particular sign of identification. In front of Kinross, the kilometres roll by, this time on a much less well-trodden track.

Document 7: Kinross industrial gold mine in Tasiast. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024.

After several kilometres, the mines appear. From this road onwards, we pass only two types of vehicles, Hillux pick-ups and green trucks, loaded either with rocks or huge tubs of water. A few hundred metres from the mine, a man stands with a metal detector in his hand, probing randomly around him. A few kilometres further on, piles of earth gradually appear, accompanied by a lot of plastic waste, signs of a not-so-distant past.

Document 8 : Tasiast artisanal gold mine. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024.

The mines seem to be constantly on the move. From far and near, these mines have an obvious urban dimension, in addition to the fact that they move progressively in the gold panning corridor, as some are exhausted and others are discovered. We soon realised that what we thought was a mine was, in fact, a cluster of several sites (at least 4), themselves made up of several hundred "mines", holes dug in the ground in which miners go to look for gold. Here, each site has its own name:" Gravier", the most important, while our site carries the name of Israel. Why Israel? A miner replied, "Because the mines here consume a lot of people, just like Israel".

Document 9 : Wells were exploited by Malian miners at the Israel site in Tasiast. Author : Camille Cassarini, 2024.

Our arrival was laborious: the mine was waking up, and our presence attracted curiosity and a certain amount of annoyance. Not that this business is hidden, but there seems to be an idea that Chami's gold, while well known, is also a story for insiders and insiders only. It's 8.45 am. The air is still cool but full of the scent of dozens of generators powering the hundreds of jackhammers that have descended with the miners. The heads of these hammers are coveted... The plastic tubes in which they are contained are found everywhere on the ground. They are not thrown away. A few metres away from the mine, a man is busy re-shaping the cutting edge of the tip with a disc grinder. Recycling! Our mine is divided into two shafts, connected at the bottom. Around the shafts, there are three miners (6 in total), and two members of the team are present just in case they need to ensure the supply of water, tubes, and cans. Another miner listens particularly carefully, sometimes shouting to make sure he's heard. This music is repeated endlessly, minute after minute, hour after hour. The upper teams rotate every two hours, the lower ones every 6, 8 or 10 hours. Throughout the site, the mines operate according to a more or less similar system, but some mines are simple shafts not connected to galleries. These are the most dangerous because there is no air circulation inside. However, a clever system is put in place: at the top of the shaft, a fan is surrounded by a sheet forming a tube running down into the mine, allowing fresh air to be blown in at all times. Not far from the shafts, the miners go to rest in *Kailas*, small makeshift tents. These vary in size depending on the wealth of their owners. Not surprisingly, the white Moors have large Kailas that are well-protected from the wind. The Malians, on the other hand, sleep in small *khailas*.

Document 10 : Tents, goats and waste, Israel site, Tasiast. Author : Camille Cassarini, 2024.

It's inside one of these tiny tents that we improvise another group interview with the workers. Beyond the working conditions and the theft to which they are subjected, these interviews reveal an intuition that has been silently taking shape since our arrival here: could the quest for gold have an addictive dimension? The stories of exploitation and violence contrast with an obvious dimension: nobody is keeping these workers here. From Chami to the mine, everyone is objectively free to come and go or even to leave for Nouakchott. That's what Diawara's testimony is all about. After working here for two months, he left for Nouakchott of his own free will. These testimonies contrast with a practice that we have been confronted with from the outset: at the very moment when the exploitation and domination to which they are subjected by the white Moors is recounted, these adventurers take out their mobile phones and proudly show us the nuggets they have found at the bottom of the mines and the bundles of money they have been able to extract from them. The quest for gold is exhilarating and is, in itself, the driving force behind these gold movements. They all hope to find their nugget, which will allow them to be rich and show it off.

From a migration point of view, Chami is a laboratory for intra-African mobility, but its relationship to the creation of routes to Europe is more complex than expected. Chami can nurture migration projects through the circulation of economic capital that has few equivalents in the region, but it can also act as a "migration trap" by holding back people on the move through the circulation of this capital. This debate has not yet been settled, but whatever the case, Chami is de facto linked to the Saharan migration routes that run from the north of Libya to the Canary Islands and the south of Niger.

Document 11 : On the road to the Tasiast artisanal gold mine with Malian miners. Author: Camille Cassarini, 2024

Nouadhibou

On the road to Nouadhibou, from where all the commodities from the port of Tangier to Dakar and vice versa travel overland, at one point, we see a red flag waving and then large pipelines resting on the ground for kilometres and kilometres. Chinese workers are building some kind of water infrastructure. Further on, a train of endless wagons carries iron from the mines in the interior of the country to the industrial port; it is the railway built by the French at the end of the colonial era. We are in the middle of the desert, but this economic space is criss-crossed by global flows of all kinds involving capital and labour; in a few days, we have met or heard of companies or men from Mali, Canada, Syria, Yemen, China, Sudan, Morocco, Western Sahara, Italy … and many other origins that I cannot remember.

Arriving in town, Hassan, a Mauritanian worker at the hotel where we are staying, jokes about the *Guardia Civil*[24] patrolling the coastline: "Now there is also the Spanish plane that flies over us every day. Look also at those white people on the beach; you'll see that now they leave by putting their flashing lights on their cars. From here, you go to the Canaries with the fishermen. Some, without GPS, get lost. Thirty of them died recently. I have a friend who works in Italy picking tomatoes. How do you get a visa there?" Hassan's words take us back to a restaurant on the beach in Nouakchott a few weeks earlier:

> Behind us is a luxury hotel built by the Emirates; I do not understand if it is in operation. Suddenly, a large plane flies over the beach; it is the Spanish civil guard engaged in anti-immigration controls. I guess the same group of uniformed pilots we met yesterday in the hotel of our GNW. Shortly after, two police trucks speed south along the sand shore with a dozen or so armed men on board. The owner of the restaurant, a white Moor, jokes: "It's been like this for five days, always at the same time, the soldiers are sleeping here on the beach. EU gave us a 500 million Euro gift, and now we have to show that we are doing something. We let migrants pass by for three years. It's a bit ridiculous; Mauritania is becoming like Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia, Libya". (Extract from field diary, 11 February 2024)

In any case, we feel that we have arrived at the epicentre of the border regime and undocumented mobility.

The social organisation of departures

We follow Hassan's advice and go to the artisanal fishing port. Like the gold processing centre in Chami, this too is a city with its own inhabitants, its own hierarchies, and its own mobility. The size of the fleet seems immense; one port official tells us of 12,000 boats (including pirogues and other

[24] The presence of this Spanish police force in the city, with departure control functions, dates back to 2006. For a description of the border regime in Nouadhibou, see Ould Moctar (2023), cited text.

boats), another of over 5,000, but all converge, estimating 50,000 people employed in the fishing industry between workers and fishermen. Here, Abdoulaye, our guide, worked as a *pousse-pousse* (taking fish from the wharves to the buyers) and supplemented his income with that of a cokseur-assistant.

As in the case of the city as a whole that he saw from the car window, here, too Abdou is amazed by the transformation of the space that he seems almost not to recognise any more: “Everything is bigger, those buildings were not there, there are more boats, there were dunes at the end where the Malians salted fish, that factory with the chimney did not exist, the seawater was cleaner'. His gaze is also a sign of the *development* of this city, which likes to call itself the economic capital of the country and on which several global production chains insist, from iron to fish. The harbour is an expanse of boats that obliterates the view of the water; it almost seems as if there is no need for any kind of mooring because the pirogues hold together, one with the other. Activity has been at a standstill for a few days due to bad weather, and there are few boats out fishing that we see returning; their presence is signalled by small gatherings of motor-taxis and *pousse-pousse* rushing to unload the fish. We ask Abdou from where their convoys to the Canary Islands used to be launched: “Even from here, the fishermen were our friends; we ourselves worked in fishing. The petrol, for example, was bought by the fishermen so as not to be conspicuous”, and he shows me the blue 120-litre barrels whizzing past on a motor-taxi.

Document 12 : The artisanal fishing port at Nouadhibou, 2024. Author: Luca Queirolo Palmas

Sharing with Abdou everyday life has often allowed us to converse about the social organisation of departures and to grasp certain lines of structuring and transformation. Firstly, the growth of

professionalisation to increase the safety of sea voyages and the slow overtaking of self-management practices by passengers, so to speak of the power of the aggregate demand for mobility over its supply: "Now you have to rely on someone who knows the business before it was the villages or a kinship network that bought the boat and the captain".

Secondly, the convoys have become more and more mixed: Moors and blacks, immigrants and citizens leave together. Many of the various stakeholders from academia and associations comment with an accent of sadness and astonishment on the presence of Mauritanians, of citizens, on the pirogues.

Third, the organisation of undocumented mobility is, to some extent, a reflection of the social space within which it takes shape. In this sense, the figure of the *cokseur* and that of the organiser - the *chef de convoi* - are not marked by a national preference; only the captains are mostly Senegalese *piroguiers* due to their experience in the world of the sea and fishing.

Finally, the possibility of travel is always linked to a social relationship with the authorities: “Every good *cokseur* has direct link with the police and the navy. It is not the Moor who is the intermediary between the immigrant *cokseur* and the police. In fact, in that case, the journey is not safe, and it costs more”. The white Moor is a *cokseur* or *chef de convoi,* among others, even if he enjoys the privilege and the symbolic capital of nationality of being at the apex of social stratification: “if you travel with a white Moor, the boat is safer because they have closer relations with the authorities; but you also have more risks of being cheated, because you as a foreigner cannot denounce them. They enjoy immunity because they are citizens“. The Bidhans are the owners of wells and boats, but their hegemonic position is embedded in a market that remains open. The very term *chef de convoi,* which appears recurrently alongside that of *cokseur*, is a sign of a shift in meaning that alludes to an open and integrated logic, so to speak: he who finds customers and passengers, and has the right relationships and skills, also has the power to organise the trip to the Canary Islands, without being a citizen.

The relationship with police and authorities is built over the long term, it is not a one-off interaction. Abdou continues: “you have to make friendship with police, you don't pay them for a single trip, but it is they who ask you for gifts from time to time, for their daughters who have to study or for Ramadan holydays'. As Papito, the young Moor behind the departure of one of *Mainland*'s protagonists, had illustrated to us in Nouakchott, “If you pay, no problem. It's normal: if you leave the restaurant, you pay, right? Here if you leave the country, you have to pay the police and the navy”. After all, to inscribe these practices of remuneration within the category of corruption is a Eurocentric way of looking at the issue; for Papito, the act of acknowledging a favour received – *an exit permit* – does not evoke the dimension of crime, but a natural flow of social relations. For Abdou, the good *cokseur* is the one who has a solid relationship with the authorities, i.e., who has established loyalty with certain officials to whom he guarantees a stable income, paying a kind of rent to dispose of the relationship. These situations of encounter, trust and negotiation with the police fluidify undocumented mobility and go against any totalising and determinist reading of the border regime and the EU's externalisation policies. The state

apparatuses of control - both at the macro level, when negotiating big deals against trafficking or illegal migration, and at the micro level as an income supplement for street bureaucracy - are paradoxically, after the migrants themselves, among the main *no-border* subjects in the global south.[25]

In this sense, it is relevant that there is no trace in Abdou's account of some external moloch that impermeably closes the border; instead, his words, like those of many others, depict a porous and constantly shifting space of balances and oscillations, conflict and cooperation with the authorities, between *laissez passer* and blocking; in this vein, it is a question of opportune moments and timing. The police who are paid to pass by the *chef of convoi* and *cokseurs* are the same ones who cooperate with EU agents to enact the deportation pipeline. For example, during one of the repeated courtesy visits we have to devote to authorities in order to do research, we find ourselves inside police headquarters:

> At the entrance, two white minibuses for transporting people. We see several officers without uniforms walking around, speaking Spanish. At the left of the entrance, a number of young people inside a semi-enclosed space are detained. Some are escorted by a Mauritanian policeman towards the interior of the main building for interviews or to go to the toilet. With some of them, we exchange glances; with one, we stop to talk before an officer interrupts the start of a conversation. He is a deportee. "There is no justice in this country", he tells us. Many boys are shoeless or in tattered clothes. They wait for minibuses to take them to the border with Mali or Senegal. Meanwhile, we are received by the police chief, a white Moor in traditional dress. Words of circumstance on the one hand, words of protection and control on the other: "We know you were at the port today; we are here to protect you and make sure you can do your job". However, he declines any further exchange: 'For an interview, you have to ask for permission from the Ministry. All our work is private and confidential". When we leave, the deportees are still down there, as are the Spanish national police officers. (Excerpt from the field diary, 21 February 2024)

Life as a cokseur

With a long-filmed interview - a kind of life story that starts from his childhood and arrives in the future - we try to close our travel experience with Abdoulaye. In his account, many elements that have run through our informal conversations over these six days reappear; at the same time, other dimensions emerge that had remained latent, in particular, the magical gaze that structures the journey itself: "Every good *cokseur* has his marabout. One sets off by consulting him. The convoy can be delayed if there are ominous signs". Magic builds a kind of weather, an atmosphere,

[25] On police, state and smuggling in the Maghreb see: Mériam Cheikh et Audrey Pluta (Sous la direction de, 2023), L'ordre et a force. Police, sécurité et surveillance au Nord de l'Afrique, *L'Année du Maghreb*, no.30; Max Gallien (2024), *Smugglers and States. Negotiating the Maghreb at its Margins*. New York: Columbia University Press.

a landscape on adverse or propitious fortune, just as it prescribes propitiatory actions to try to govern fate.

Abdou was part of three *reseaux,* three different ways to pierce the border*:* the first is the less expensive and riskier one of pirogues. The second, the most expensive and safest, bets on buying passage from the captains of merchant ships or industrial fishing boats. The third consists of clandestine access to ships in the commercial port: "You have to swim, then climb up with ropes. We had to trick the guard dogs by throwing meat or fish at them. Once you are hidden inside and have passed national waters, you come out of hiding and go to the captain".

Document 13 : On the walls in the Senegalese neighbourhood. Author : Luca Queirolo Palmas

Each *cokseur* has his reputation fluctuating according to the convoys he has organised and the outcomes: "it's a kind of port statistic. Everyone knows it". Among these mobility facilitators, there is not only competition to attract customers but also cooperation aimed at improving collective safety: "Sometimes we set off many boats together. So if a *pirogue* had a problem at sea, we would mutually support each other among the various organisers, reducing the risk for passengers".

Abdou's activity came to an end when a convoy, on which a friend from the village had set off, failed to arrive: "We launched a lot of them, about fifty in about four years. But on this last one, there were all the adverse signs. The marabout had said to delay it. The passengers were rushing

us. Usually, in 3 to 4 days, you see a result, but here, after twenty, we still knew nothing. Everyone is dead. When there are *degats*, the families accept because they are the ones who push the young people to leave. They know the risk from the beginning". Thus, he decided to give up and leave Nouadhibou, as did his chief *cokseur* who returned to Guinea. "He went crazy, we never had *degats*". In his speech, Abdou often euphemises death, preferring to speak of accidents and damage. His entire narrative revolves around a habitus of adventure and an ethic of the cokseur who takes care of his passengers, not least because there are multiple networks and family connections that bind the people on the journey to the different facilitators of undocumented mobility. At the same time, Abdou describes his activity as a minute job; "I had to gather people, find customers; it's not that I earned a lot. I had to do the *pousse-pousse* for a living". I also note that he never uses the term migrant, only traveller, foreigner or adventurer. He himself feels like he belongs to this last category, even though he currently resides in Nouakchott with his family. "You enter into the adventure every time you leave your home; you can also be an adventurer in your own country. You leave with your mother's blessing and after consulting the marabout".

Solidarity and adventure

The moment Abdou describes his adventure, he immediately recalls the concept of solidarity as hospitality due to the passing stranger - the traveller, the adventurer - and inscribes it within a religious context: "We say that a stranger is always better than you because he has come from far away. In the villages there are special spaces to welcome him". Hospitality is compulsory because in the future every member of the village could face a similar situation; the name in Bambara for this first form of solidarity is *dounan - djikin*, a term made up of a condition and an action (foreigner - take the baggage to). This social relationship with the passing other is a habitus inscribed in bodies and practices through education.

The second form of solidarity binds people who are part of neighboring social groups, not completely anonymous, such as the family, the tribe, the village. This too is a mandatory form for the giver and the receiver. And the Bambara term for this practice refers to the concept of sharing and mutual help: *gnokondémin*.

In general, for Abdou, in a kind of common-sense rhetoric that we have heard many times, solidarity is Africa's way of life. When I ask how he can explain the swindling *cokseurs,* the swindling marabouts, and in general all the forms of scam, oppression and deception that constantly mark the journey, the answer is that it all relies on education, not that of the school but that of the family/village. "You can have the highest titles in the world but not be educated". Solidarity rests on a belonging that exceeds the individual; "if you escape education - that is, if you are not *captured* by the norms and tradition that govern social relations - you are not in solidarity". For example, the departure or return home to the village is dictated by a series of rituals of courtesy that serve to reaffirm the collective belonging to the space within which the subject is inscribed: "To leave takes at least a day; you have to say goodbye to everyone and knock on all the doors".

The whole field of decision-making exceeds the individual, but also the blood family itself, and develops within an extended network encompassing extended kinship: "At the village, it is the uncles who are in charge. They get together, and then your father has to make that decision".

Adventure springs off for those who come from the rural world, a collective feeling of loyalty and indebtedness - *they sold four cows to make me leave*, he often repeats to me; but at the same time, it is precisely the adventure that shifts the subject onto an individual dimension, of the transformation of subjectivity in the very experience of the journey, something that can often lead to choices that diverge from family/kinship expectations; "I have a problem because I didn't go to Europe and everyone is counting on me. I went out for a cause, the cause of *clandestinity*, but I failed. And my success concerns not only me but the village because making my people better depends on me too".

The idea of adventure, being able to face the demands it imposes, was born in Abdou at school, seeing a friend leave; imitation is the basis for the production of an imaginary. Going to primary school meant for him to leave the village at the age of seven and to be entrusted with a part of the extended family; on the one hand, it already meant entering into adventure and beginning to rely on the resources of solidarity within a broader circle. He subsequently attends high school in an even more distant village where another part of kinship takes him in. Then, once his strength has been tested, he is chosen by his relatives as a *candidate for migration*; thus, the decision is made to leave for Europe and interrupt his studies. The context of this solidarity is the scarcity of resources, as well as the similarity of social conditions; Abdou often repeats, "We are all poor, all poor together". It is the dimension of feeling that is part of the same whole - something Durkheim would have called a mechanical bond - that characterises solidarity. To this day, his village continues to live thanks to those who left it: "It is with adventure that we pay fertilisers and manure".

Often, Abdou returns to what we saw together in order to make the concepts clearer: "When we were at the pits site, I spoke to a miner who had been there for six months and had nothing, not even one Oughia. He was eating thanks to the comrades". I think back to how we fed ourselves together using our hands all those days; already, at mealtime, the individual is abolished with his dedicated plate and fork. In his narrative, often the political claim is legitimised through the religious: "It is a religion that establishes equality and freedom of movement. God does not look at the wealth but at good works". Before closing the interview, our guide wants to send two messages, the first to European rulers and the second to African rulers. For the former, "open the borders"; for the latter, "do not steal the people's money, do not take advantage of your position. To each his part".

This long narrative holds together his past as an actor in the departure industry, with the present, the familiar and the domestic. On the one hand, Abdou shows us a video of a happy friend on a pirogue with Gran Canaria and *Salvamento Maritimo* behind him, and on the other, he tells us about his wife's brother who is waiting to pass: "he paid half the sum to leave, in all the cost today is 60,000 MRU (1400 euros). He left our house to go to the bunker, where the passengers

gathered. But I don't trust his *cokseur*, I told him directly when he came home. Besides, I have never seen a *cokseur* who goes to customers' homes. It's not a sign of professionalism". Abdou does not want to take responsibility for his family member's trip: "You understand? Then I become the owner of the debt or the outcome. These are things that can destroy your name in the village". It's a matter of reputation and obligations, such as having to keep home open to travellers at all times, thus generating an infrastructure for mobility by those who are immobile: "everyone from my village passes at my spot. It's a duty; it's solidarity. I cannot say no". Is it *dounandjikin* or *gnokondémin?*

Brotherhoods and travel infrastructure

Malik, the Senegalese guide whom we meet in Nouadhibou after Abdou's departure, listens attentively to what we have learnt, not at all surprised by the magical dimension we evoke – "of course, we always consult the marabouts before each border passing" - he decides to lead us into another kind of infrastructure for adventure. "There is one thing you must know: the first thing a murid does when he arrives in a town is to look for the house of Serigne Touba: in it, the passing traveller can find hospitality. He can stay for up to a month, eat and sleep".

The next day – Friday, a festive day – after being subjected to a long and polite access ritual, we sat in a huge hall with a red carpet on the floor and large sofas along all the walls. On the wall stand photos of the prophet - Cheick Amadou Bamba - and the many sons who replaced him; the story of the murid brotherhood founder is marked by exile (Gabon, Mauritania, Congo) and religious resistance to French colonisation.[26] ; houses built in his honor are scattered everywhere, and there is a Murid diaspora. The head of the house - *djourin* - explains to us the basic principles of the brotherhood. "Everyone can come here, we have no right to ask who they are or what they believe in. Christians, Muslims, with papers or without. If you want to pray in your religion, here you can, no one prevents you. We do not ask for anything. The resident believers tax themselves to maintain the house".

Two older men enter and join our conversation: "The house was full of travellers a few months ago, from Senegal, Mali, Burkina... the authorities wanted to close us down. We had to temporarily reduce hospitality, but we will resume. It is the spirit of this place". They proudly retrace the steps of the construction of this building that has now become the property of the brotherhood: "I have been here for 50 years before there was nothing. The house was a tent. We came and built Nouadhibou; we were brought here from the south to build it. They go on to talk about the iron, the train, the port, the fishing. "When the authorities and the owner wanted to send us away, in

[26] See among many: Mayke Kaag (2023), Faithful Journeys. Unpacking the Religious Luggage of Senegalese Murid Migrants in Europe, *Islamic Africa*, 14(1), pp. 79-97; Ante Babou (2002). Brotherhood Solidarity, Education and Migration: the Role of Dahiras among the Murid Muslim, Community in New York, *African Affairs*, 101(403), pp. 151-170.

one month, we raised the money to buy it. And then we expanded it and made it so beautiful thanks to the voluntary work of all of us."

Document 14 : The reception hall at Touba House. On the walls in the Senegalese neighbourhood. Author : Luca Queirolo Palmas

Solidarity with those in transit is first and foremost dedicated to the religious trajectories of the various priests (Serigne) who circulate along all the routes of the Murid diaspora; by extension, all those on the move can find temporary shelter here. In a framework of religious legitimacy, once again, the stayers support the movement, thus creating an infrastructure that can be used and that circulates resources of different kinds among anonymous subjects but connected by a common feeling. As Malik sums up, “God is always fundamental on the road”. At the same time, escape is inhabited, and in its progress, it produces and uses spaces that make it possible and that project it within a web of material support relations. From this perspective, Abdoulaye's home and the Touba houses are all stations of passage and solidarity, dense with relationships that can be activated. I ask Malik which words in Wolof designate solidarity, and the dichotomy that has already appeared in Bambara returns: on the one hand, teranga, that is, hospitality towards the foreigner, the anonymous, the unknown; on the other, mutual aid between equals, between like-minded, between known (dibelileneté in which the matrix is the verb dibeli, to help). The solidarity produced by this murid confraternity overlaps the two planes, inserting the anonymous stranger within the category of neighbour/similar by virtue of a religious type of legitimation.

On the streets of the migrant neighbourhood where the Touba house is located, we meet several travellers wandering around. Ibra, for example, shares with us his long odyssey: from prison in

Libya, he managed to escape and then return to Senegal via Mali. His parents had lost track of him and thought he was dead. He tells of a recent attempt, but the pirogue lost its way and ended up in Cape Verde. Now, he is again on an adventure and trying to cross over. What is striking about his story is the obstinacy, the stubbornness and the determination to continue. He, too, relies on the Murid infrastructure as a support network. Mariam, on the other hand, wants to denounce institutional violence: "The Moroccan police shot directly at the passengers. They killed several people. It was a mixed convoy; there were also nationals. We collected money to pay for the surgeries". Finally, Ezekiel, a young man who works in the fishing industry, sends videos and information to several no-border networks in Europe and emphasises how crucial it is to take concrete action to support those on the move.

We tell them about the outcome of a meeting we had a few hours earlier with the spokesperson of a migrants' association in the harbour area and how the conversation had immediately stalled on a level of formality. Ezekiel comments, giving us another proof of how important it is to read solidarity in a materialistic vein: "The community leaders know everything about the departures, but they will never say it in an interview like you do. Sometimes they are the ones who take the money for the trips and act as collateral for the *cokseurs*. In return, they get a commission". The cokseurs are also the *settlers*, those who - because of the role they play and the time they have accumulated in the host country - enjoy a social capital that puts them in a continued communication with the local authorities. We also understand that Ezekiel is interested in following the stories we are collecting and helping us in interpretation, however at distance. His background combines religious training in the Islam of brotherhoods with relevant participation in activist networks related to civil and sea rescue. "We are criminalised; our work is associated with that of facilitators. We have to do everything discreetly". He defines his commitment as awareness-raising within the industry of passage: "Those in the *reseau* who organise departures, I know them all; don't be surprised, any traveller knows them."[27] .

Deterrence and integration

Even when we move to a neighbourhood predominantly inhabited by Mauritanians, the idea of departure is everywhere, in every casual interaction we come across. Like when we talk to the security officer in front of an ATM: "I studied cooking, I know how to use machinery to move earth. I want to leave, no matter how. If you take the pirogues, it's full of scams. I'm searching, studying, waiting, the good way, the good convoy". Or a cleaning worker: "Can you give me a visa for Italy or Spain?". Or the same waiter in the hotel where we are preparing the GNW with the associations dealing the migration issue in Nouadhibou: "I am waiting to leave, I have already paid for my trip".

On the other hand, the common register we are confronted with whenever we encounter the world of NGO and associations, be they immigrant or national, is *deterrence*. The context is what

[27] His experience can be defined as subversive solidarity. See: Sebastien Bachelet and Maria Hagan, 2023, Migration, Race, and Gender. The Policing of Subversive Solidarity Actors in Morocco, in *L'ordre et la force*, cited text.

William Walters has termed a humanitarian border in which, paraphrasing Bourdieu, a set of actors[28] constitute the left hand in the governance of mobility.

The local Catholic mission, for example, is an integral part of this. Roberto, on his way to an IOM training in Nouakchott, describes their philosophy of action as follows: “We tell migrants that they must be content, that they must not be in such a hurry to leave. We work with IOM for return aid; we do awareness-raising and training. We cannot give accommodation to people on the move; the authorities do not allow us to do so”. On the premises in front of the church, Amsatou - the president of the *Organisation de Appui et de Assistance aux Migrants et Refugiés* (OAMR) - introduces herself in front of a camera by highlighting her past as an adventurer. "I am the image of clandestinity," she says, as she herself arrived in Nouadhibou to reach Europe. "Then I saw a film about a Senegalese who died buried by snow in Europe, and it changed my mind." From here, the conversation shifts, emphasising the need for deterrence: “You also have to make a film to explain to people not to leave, you have to show the exploitation, the risks of clandestinity, migrants who are clochards, who sell drugs and women who prostitute themselves. This is the reality in Europe. You have to restrain and contain the flow; you have to show the death, the danger”.

It is no coincidence that the activities of OAMR, which brings together association leaders of 24 different nationalities, are supported by several international agencies and governmental actors. On the walls of the bureau, I see advertisements of joint projects with the US Embassy; on the next door, there are plaques from Unicef and the French Red Cross; on the desk, awards she received from various European embassies. She herself has just returned from an international conference “against nefarious immigration” in Nouakchott and is about to attend IOM training together with the Catholic mission leaders. "We want to manage immigration together with the authorities," she tells us, "and to raise awareness, for example, with a radio programme, to discourage departures”. The opposite of *illegal* migration is repeatedly referred to as *clean* migration. What does Amsatou's organisation do beyond deterrence? It uses integration as a tool to anchor people on the move to a territory that is a transit platform; it tells us about a foyer to host vulnerable people, an educational centre for lonely children, an entrepreneurial project for migrant women, and many sports activities. The discourse we hear fits well with the EU's interests in terms of externalising the border; in Europe, both the post-fascist right as well as many progressives on the left would subscribe to Amsatou's words without hesitation.[29]

During one of our courtesy visits to the authorities to present our research project, we are received by a high-level city officer and her communication staff. Her speech describes how

[28] For example, those who can be defined as entrepreneurs of immobility or professional migrants. See: Ould Moctar, (2023), cited text; Camille Cassarini (2023), Les entrepreneurs de l'immobilité. Ascensions sociales, participations et contestations dans la lutte contre l'émigration irrégulière en Côte d'Ivoire, *Politique Africaine*, 171-172, pp. 195-2015; William Walters (2010), *Foucault and frontiers : notes on the birth of the humanitarian border*, in Governmentality. Currents Issues and Future Challenges. Edited by Ulrich Brockling, Susanne Krasman, Thomas Lemke, New York: Routledge.

[29] After the early February visit of Sanchez and Von der Leyen, the EU began negotiations with the Mauritanian government on the use of the more than 500 million euros promised. A statement from the Ministry of the Interior affirms “we will not be Europe's refugee camp”, in order to negotiate, raising the stakes. See: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240221-mauritania-denies-plans-to-settle-irregular-migrants/

Nouadhibou is overwhelmed (*debordée*) by migration by sea, placing the phenomenon under the lights of alarm and spectacle; immediately afterwards, however, the welcoming dimension is emphasised: “We treat migrants like nationals. Access to health, also thanks to an agreement with the French Croix Rouge, and to education is always guaranteed. We dedicate ourselves to the documented migrants; that's our competence. For the rest, it is the police who take care of them”.

According to the estimates they provide, there are about 50,000 migrants in a population of 130,000. The feather in the administration's cap is the civil status desk for migrants; “they come here and get a certificate of residence; it's simple”. What documents do they need? “either a card issued by IOM, UNHCR or a passport with an entry and exit stamp and a residence permit in Mauritania”. We understand that the policy is to try to keep track of every presence. In a city of transits, arrivals and departures, it seems that integrating - whatever the term means - is a way of blocking and curbing unpredictable movements.

These settling processes are based on the involvement of migrant associations, which often become a useful interface for local authorities and embassies to solve different kinds of problems. For example, the representative of one of these *communities* (an emic term used by all our interlocutors) says: "They (the migrants) only come to us if they have problems. If they want to leave, we don't even see them. For everything the authorities call me, yesterday, for example, I took care of a funeral, often the problem is the documents. To get the papers in order, the authorities ask you for two guarantees from Mauritanian citizens”. This account radically diverges from that of the municipality officer and highlights a further layer of subjugation to nationals that operate on migrants through administrative procedures.

Document 15 : Courtesy visit to the municipality of Nouadhibou. Source: city town social networks

You encourage departures!

With the exception of a few *adventurers* we invited, the humanitarian border actors constitute the main component of the GNW. The main reaction to our video elicitation exercise is composed of rejection and discomfort. The main plot of the film - showing the solidarity-based reception by civic initiatives, often informal, and portraying the landed migrants to Canary Islands while avoiding using the exclusive figure of the victim - is perceived by the participants as a transgression from the dominant discourse, the one to which they have been exposed and trained by a set of initiatives, meetings, micro-policies, projects and investments; therefore, as Goffman taught us, they immediately commit themselves to restoring the broken order. Here are some comments:

> "The film does not reflect reality. When you see it, people's comfort comes to us. So, it only encourages migration". (Man, City officer)

> "You have not shown the bad things about migration, so more people will come. You are just inviting people to leave with your film. If there were thousands of Europeans dying at sea in pirogues every year, what would you do?" (Man, head of a Mauritanian human rights association)

> "You have to stop this scourge. Why didn't you show what really happens at sea. People become cannibals". (Man, head of a Mauritanian migrant support association)

> "I was impressed by the mother who forces her son to leave. As a woman, as a mother, as a wife. That is not the reality you have shown. You have to show the deaths; they die like flies in the sea. We must discourage! The solution is training and training to give opportunities to young people and make them stay here. (Woman, head of a Mauritanian Association for the Promotion of Women)

> "With this film you are encouraging Africans to do illegal migration. But that is not our goal. Africa is full of jobs. We do not have vines and grapes as in the film, but a thousand other crops. Why don't those who want to leave do these kinds of jobs here?" (Woman, head of Mauritanian Human Rights Association).

Document 16 : Participants at the Nouadhibou GNW. Source: José Gonzalez Morandi

On these broadly shared assumptions, at least three more layers are progressively added. The first concerns freedom of movement and its relation to the right to stay: all those who experienced the film's discourse as an outrage, at the same time demanding more legal travel opportunities and more open borders. As many say: “If you want to curb movement, you have to have more visa freedom”. A woman continues: “The solution? Open the borders, so people go and come back when they want”. And again: “Europe must not be a trap that you can't get out of. Many are ashamed to return if they have not achieved anything for their families”.

The second layer introduces the youth issue by articulating it with a distributive-claiming topic, placing the issue of corruption of the political machine at the forefront. As Malik, our guide, says: "There is a lack of policies for young people. Why do we complain if they leave? Governments are familistic, they don't think of the good of all. The Eldorado? It could be here”. Others follow him on this line. For example: “Let's face it, the problem is our governments, their use of resources”. Or: “We have to go to the roots of the evil... the problem is the looting of resources and the misrule of the African leaders”. Mariam, whom we met yesterday in the Touba House neighbourhood, claims for redistribution and jokes about deterrence on the basis of her own experience: "I was an undocumented migrant in Morocco; I saw everything. I have lived in the forest and been a beggar. I have tried to cross the sea dozens of times. The problem is our governments. Last year, thousands of people died. We all know this, yet young people keep leaving, no matter what you say”.

The third layer is moral and pedagogical; according to this narrative, the problem would lie with families who do not raise their children's awareness and who do not counteract – indeed even support – the option of the exodus. The discussion revolves around how to make deterrence more effective, building targeted, and not generic, campaigns on the risks of the journey and deaths at sea. But, in a sometimes disconsolate way, many participants take note of a material dimension: “Let's tell it like it is, in Africa, workers are not paid as they should be”. How, then, can we fix young people through projects and training? How can a mobile labor force be fixed in search of more opportunities? We also sense, from the vehement turn of the debate, that many of the participants

are competing to attract the few resources that the border apparatus reserves for them here. It is as if all of a sudden, these actors of the humanitarian border have begun to reflect on the crumbs that are allotted to them as the left hand of the border, on how the pastoral idea of deterrence to which they have long been socialised cannot hold up on a purely moral level but needs a material transformation in order to challenge a traditional, familistic way of distributing resources. As the head of a women's rights association concludes: “I don't tell European governments to open their borders; I first tell African governments to distribute the spoils'. However, this material transformation to make deterrence effective seems to diverge from the concrete effects of the border machine on labour markets in the global south.

The work of the border. In search of fish factories

We are in a café, a meeting place for businessmen and traders, diplomatic personnel and policemen. We would like to film in one of the many fish factories whose owners are Europeans; the city's economy revolves around this activity, catching fish at sea, processing it for export, and producing feed and flour for farming. The wife of a consulate officer who greets us with curiosity and kindness exclaims: “Don't get me started on immigration. But can't they stay here? With the thousand euros they spend on the trip, do you know how many things they could do?" He also tells us that on Sundays, he goes to the Catholic mission to help with activities. In the background, a young Spaniard who works in the sector is busy doing accounts; when we explain to him who we are and what we do, he is very wary and, at the same time, sincere. "We don't want journalists to show the working conditions".

And indeed, the doors of all the Europeans factories remain closed to us. However, we managed to meet Celestino, an important intermediary and wholesaler who introduced us to the folds of these economic relations and exchanges. “Do you want to talk about fish or migration? Who are you? Journalists?" We want to talk about everything because fish and departure are intimately related. In half an hour of monologue, Celestino alternates between two narratives - that of fishing and that of migration - as he continuously answers the phone to buy and sell fish, settle debts and collect credits. The coordinates of his language are tons (of fish), containers and money. From his narrative, we understand that everything is integrated: there is no difference between artisanal pirogues and industrial boats. Everything ends up in the same stream that then arrives on our tables: “In less than three days, the fish is in Barcelona'. Wholesalers like him buy everywhere to make volume. “Here, there are 40 fishmeal factories and 80 processing plants for export. Five thousand pirogues, tens of thousands of workers and fishermen, almost all immigrants. A worker? Don't make me laugh, it costs 10 euros a day, and there are no hours, he works as much as you want. Look, forget to film; my friend told me he would never let you enter his factory. They're all afraid to show how people work in European' companies”. Departures? "It's a show," and he laughs. "The civil guard and all the other European police officers? They get thousands of euros in monthly reimbursement on top of their salary. They enjoy with women and have the alcohol market in their hands. But what do you want them to do with migration?" The local authorities:

“You pay them, and you pass. Need I say more? I even have photos”. The best way to pass? “With the boats that go to the Canaries for storage. You put some on the crew list, and once you're ashore, they disappear. You have to talk to the owner and captain, pay and go". In addition to fish, Celestino also works with visas: “It's all legal. You have to study the dossier carefully. You put together the right documents. But with me, they all pass. I don't make fake work contracts; they come in as tourists with me”. After extolling at length the mobility of goods and people in the name of the god Money, Celestino closes with a cynical political proposal to manage the issue: “The only solution is this. You put a military vessel in Gibraltar and fire on a *patera*. You kill a hundred poor christs, but do you know how many you save? Think of all those who die at sea. No one would come if they knew we were shooting at them”.

Document 17 : Fishing industries global chains, port of Nouadhibou. Author: Luca Queirolo Palmas

When we reflect on this encounter, Malik, our guide who now lives thanks to transnational trade, takes us back to his working biography to explain the origin of his social commitment: “I was a worker in a textile factory. I couldn't stand injustice. I became a reference for others, an activist”. During his school years, he worked in textiles and fishing, like many boys in his village. He dropped out of school to work and then, against his father's advice, also left for adventure. He entered Morocco illegally, where he joined a friend and was employed in all kinds of jobs. Among them are street vendors, waiters, and construction workers. "Every month, you had to fight to get paid. The boss preferred us Senegalese as labourers. Because we worked harder than the locals and he could pay us less”.

The issue of work - in fishing as in gold - is fundamental for several reasons: on the one hand, for people on the move, this is the way to dispose of the resources, as well as the social capital necessary for mobility. Routes are built along the commodities flows connecting more or less distant spaces; from this perspective, Nouadhibou is a global city, i.e., integrated through the fishing, iron, and border industries to multiple other urban spaces. On the other hand, as Ould Moctar[30] points out, "the EU border regime's legalisation of migrant labour plays a key role in facilitating these transnational flows"; that is, it blocks and makes available - for Celestino and the entire global and cosmopolitan business world settled here - migrants at 10 euros for days with no working hours and no social rights. If the border did not operate, wages would have to be higher in order to retain and settle the workforce. Border containment acts as a supplement to business profits. We saw the same mechanism operating in Chami, where a Bidhan owner of pits so lucidly commented on the recent visit of Pedro Sanchez and Ursula Von der Leyen to Mauritania: 'Europe must not give money to our governments, they eat it all up with corruption and their families. They have to give it to us here to buy and improve the machines. So we keep the workers there, and they don't escape to the Canary Islands". These words are an indicator of three important phenomena: the bosses have the problem of a labour force that is too mobile; exodus is for the workers a form of resistance to oppression; border policies are also policies on the labour market and allow value extraction within the global chains of production and distribution.

[30] Cited text, 2023, p.67.

Dakhla

Crossing the border together

Leaving Nouadhibou, the two neighbouring states are separated by what many call no man's *land*, a transition zone between one sovereign space and another. Mauritania has a *laissez-passer* policy with undocumented heading to Morocco. For example, a Bidhan head of a local NGO states: "The migrants go there where the asphalt ends. We cannot do anything to stop them". I see long lines of refrigerated trucks bringing fish northwards and a large customs car parking with a hundred European cars waiting to be taken to second-hand markets. More commodities than people mark the rhythm of this border pass.

Document 18 : The border and the global chain of fishing industries. Author : Luca Queirolo Palmas

The infrastructure on the Moroccan side evokes that of Ceuta and Melilla, with long, narrow, open-air corridors protected by walls and barbed wire. Crossing the border takes about two hours due to the multitude of controls we are subjected to. All this extended time is an opportunity for conversation and learning. I share the rite of passage with Regina, who now lives in Mauritania trading in cosmetics and other products but who spent a long time in Morocco doing *boza*. So she tells us, after having to stretch a 10 euro note to get an exit visa in her passport:

> In Tangier, I tried it 19 times, 17 by rowing and two by motor. It costs between 100 and 150 euros. I worked as a waitress for about 15 days, collected the money, and tried to pass. The Moroccan *taxi mafia* takes you to the spot and gives you the equipment. And then you try, you row! The Moroccan navy always blocked me, unfortunately. We lived in a *cité* that we had occupied together with other adventurers. Then, the Moroccans organised a march to protest against us, and the governor evicted us and sent us south. When we returned, we went to live in the forest. We had built tents and lived camped on the edge of town. I used to make the rounds of all the camps to give everyone the numbers of the civil sea rescue. In 2019, with Covid, I could no longer work, and I decided to quit. I went back to Mauritania, where I am now a transnational trader.

In his account, the practice of passage is sustained by individual work and perseverance, as well as being variably protected by a network of solidarity that unites those on the journey. There is no a priori opposition, material or moral, between solidarity within the group, individual determination and the interests of the different facilitators; it is rather a matter of seeking the right combination or the effective articulation between subjects and resources capable of opening up the passage. The naturalness and legitimacy of all these paid services recur in every conversation. The issue is not that the route has a price, but rather, there are a lot of scams along the routes.

Sitting in a café on the Moroccan side, waiting for the bus to Dakhla to fill up with passengers, we converse with Ezekiel at a distance about the smuggler who first brought him to Morocco. "He was a black migrant with a long experience in the Kingdom; he had started with the goods and then made friends with all the guards. He paid them for stamps. He pierced the border for thousands of people; all it took was 100 euros, and you were on the other side. They arrested him several times, now he has changed business and with all the money he made, he opened a big boutique".

Between tourists and intercepted

After a four-hour journey on an asphalt track with the sea on one side and the desert and dunes on the other, we arrive in the Dakhla peninsula. Now and then, a checkpoint interrupts the journey; the coastline is manned by a network of military installations to prevent departures. A passenger in the van laughs: "You just have to pay to get through. If they really want, the authorities could block everything in one day". Then, the tourist infrastructure for Europeans appears; many luxury hotels are under construction; on the beach and in the sea, hundreds of kitesurfers' sails. I ask Malik, our guide, what he thinks: 'It's an injustice. They are free to move around, and we die on the pirogues".

Beyond the tourist area, several black boys are sitting on the street waiting, others walk in groups towards the city: "they are the ones in the detention centre, the blocked *piroguiers* coming from

the south. During the day, they are free, so they can work in construction, 8 euros for 12 hours… sometimes they run away from the centre and resume their journey", Malik continues "You know, Dakhla is factories, fishing and tourism".

In the evening, we walk around the city; There are no tourists; they all live in the hotel area. The streets are full of black workers, and the cafés are crowded. From the *corniche*, the seaside promenade, we see the long pier with the Royal Navy's military units patrolling the coast. The *boza* pirogues, which have set off from Senegal or Mauritania, if they arrive in Dakhla, it means they have failed: either because they have navigation problems and asked for rescue or because they are intercepted.[31]. Safe or Intercept? I note that there is always some confusion about the terms among our interlocutors, and the authorities themselves use both interchangeably. According to Malik, it can happen that even if you are in international waters or in the Canary Islands waters, the Spaniards give your location to the Moroccans, and so "they rescue you in order to push back you". Passengers often play on their nationality as a form of resistance: "If you're in Morocco, you'd better be Senegalese because you know there are good diplomatic relations and you'll get good treatment. If you're in the Canaries, it's the other way around because you're afraid of the readmission agreement that Spain has signed with Senegal".

Dakhla thus serves as an interception and repatriation area for those travelling by sea. There are three detention camps in Western Sahara for the purpose of refoulement, and over 4,000 people transited through these facilities during 2023, according to the officer of the local Senegalese consulate. An important indicator of the border regime's grip is the widespread consular presence in the city.[32]. However – as the same officer exclaims while waving a sheet of paper with a list of names ready for repatriation – the migrants… "ils nous lachent pas": they do not give up, and they are stubborn. The logistical route of repatriation involves a Moroccan bus accompanying the intercepted migrants to the Mauritanian border, where the human cargo changes hands and responsibility to reach other countries, mainly Senegal, Mali, and Gambia.

The diplomatic officer goes on to analyse the social demographics of the pirogues and relate it to European policies: "The passengers are from different social backgrounds. Every type of person is on board. What unites them is that they are all young. There are also many women now. Even for the middle class, it is impossible to go to Europe. Human movement is like the sea. If you close the borders to regular immigration, then it is normal for people to resort to irregular immigration". According to him, "the consulate is at the heart of illegal migration", in the sense that all daily activities revolve around health, prisons, hospitals, deaths, deportations.

The centre where the intercepted/rescued are located is a large, colourful building with a decadent sign reading *holiday colony*. Next to it, there is a large abandoned children's playground,

[31] According to a Royal Navy press release, in 2023 "The intensification of surveillance and control operations in waters under national jurisdiction made it possible to provide assistance and support to more than 22,000 potential illegal migrants, often on-board of precarious boats in distress, during the same period". See: https://apanews.net/47-sub-saharan-migrants-rescued-off-moroccan-coast/

[32] The city of Dakhla, and the entire Western Sahara in general, are the object of major investments by the Kingdom. The establishment of consulates also has the function of gaining the international legitimacy of the Moroccan presence in the territory; university scholarships are often offered to African countries that establish a diplomatic presence.

opposite the seafront, with dozens of luxury hotels under construction; behind it is the local prison. We see no surveillance and stop to talk to two young men, one Senegalese and the other Mauritanian: "We got lost at sea. Then we ran out of petrol and food. We stood still, waiting for rescue. We were 140 on board. They have to repatriate us the Senegalese this afternoon. We went to get tea and sugar for our comrades at the centre. We show from the phone several photos of some missing persons that the families are searching for; they don't recognise anyone. Then they show us the sores on their hands and feet caused by the contact between salt water and petrol; '" It was hard, but luckily we are on land now". The conversation is imbued with fatalism (*that's how it went*) and happiness (*we're alive*), determination (*we'll try again*) and solidarity and cohesion, traces of the collective care that they have had to experience as a crew in the face of the difficulties of the sea, of life and death.

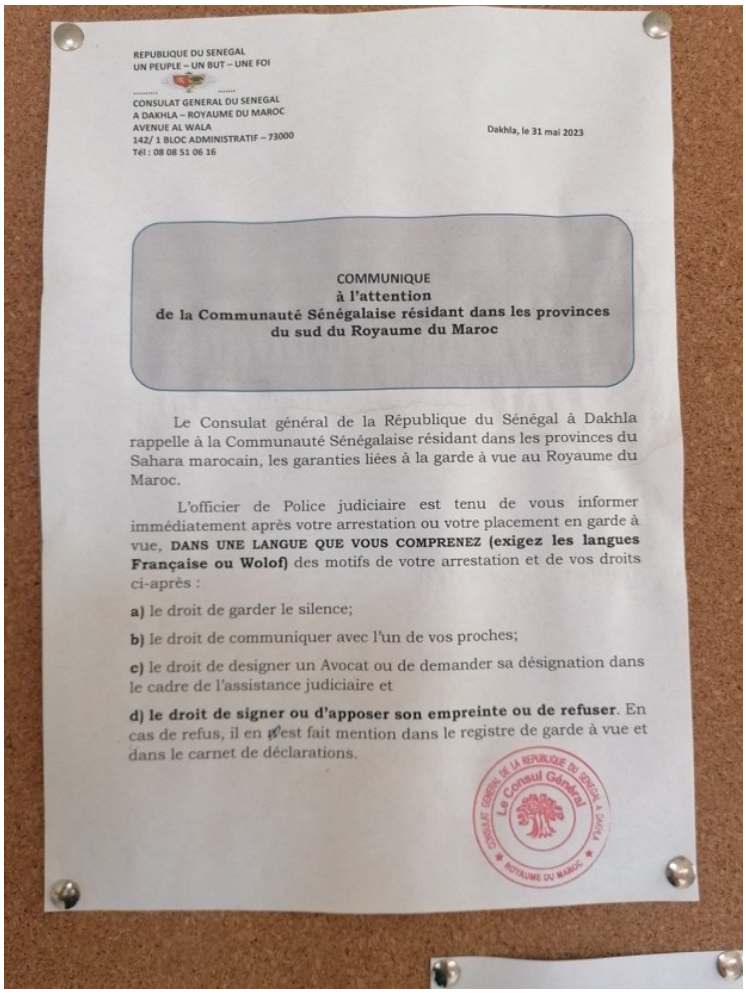
Ezekiel, with whom we continue to chat via WhatsApp, inscribes the topic within the massive social movements that are crisscrossing Senegal: "It is the young people who are contesting the president who are the *piroguiers*. He then tells us that thanks to his experience, in the world of fishing, he sometimes acts as captain at distance: "when it is possible, I listen to those in the boats and try to understand whether it is better to be rescued and then pushed back, or to continue sailing to the Canaries". As if, in a similar way to the sailing boats of ocean races or the search and rescue vessels of the civil fleet in the Mediterranean, the pirogues also have, in some cases, a land crew for weather, route, technical problems, a possibility that is tied to the availability of satellite means of communication.

Raids, bribes, fishermen and organisational logic

If the fate of those who arrived by pirogue, unless they flee out of the facilities, is repatriation, *pingpong, on* the other hand - according to Malik's curious definition - applies to over-stayers on tourist visas, something closely reminiscent of what Martina Tazzioli has described with the formula *governing migrant mobility trough mobility*[33]; "local police organise recurrent raids, enter houses and pick up people, and then they move migrants thousands of kilometres away, but always within the national territory. It is just a show they want to perform. They are fighting illegal migration. They have to make numbers, they keep you in the country, and they can use you as an asset dealing with the EU". The diplomatic officer described these raids (*rafles*) as preventive operations. What would be the crime? Being a potential migrant, *a candidate for departure*, a category that does not exist as a criminal profile but is prosecuted based on arbitrary and recurrent practices by the authorities. Dakhla is full of *candidates for departure* who are currently working in the fishing industry. Malik continues: "Here, you don't stay in bunkers or camps. You stay in the city, you work, you blend in, and when it's time to leave, the taxi mafia takes you to the right place for embarkation". I think of Simmel and the guarantee of anonymity that the city can

[33] See Martina Tazzioli (2020), Governing migrant mobility through mobility: Containment and dispersal at the internal frontiers of Europe. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 38(1), pp. 3-19.

provide, of Delgado and the right to indifference[34] as a form of resistance to racism: urban space as a possible guarantee of freedom, of protection, allowing people on the move to hide and get the proper invisibility.



REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL
UN PEUPLE – UN BUT – UNE FOI

CONSULAT GENERAL DU SENEGAL
A DAKHLA – ROYAUME DU MAROC
AVENUE AL WALA
142/ 1 BLOC ADMINISTRATIF – 73000
Tél : 08 08 51 06 16

Dakhla, le 31 mai 2023

COMMUNIQUE
à l'attention
de la Communauté Sénégalaise résidant dans les provinces du sud du Royaume du Maroc

Le Consulat général de la République du Sénégal à Dakhla rappelle à la Communauté Sénégalaise résidant dans les provinces du Sahara marocain, les garanties liées à la garde à vue au Royaume du Maroc.

L'officier de Police judiciaire est tenu de vous informer immédiatement après votre arrestation ou votre placement en garde à vue, **DANS UNE LANGUE QUE VOUS COMPRENEZ (exigez les langues Française ou Wolof)** des motifs de votre arrestation et de vos droits ci-après :

a) le droit de garder le silence;

b) le droit de communiquer avec l'un de vos proches;

c) le droit de designer un Avocat ou de demander sa désignation dans le cadre de l'assistance judiciaire et

d) le droit de signer ou d'apposer son empreinte ou de refuser. En cas de refus, il en est fait mention dans le registre de garde à vue et dans le carnet de déclarations.

CONSULAT GENERAL DE LA REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL A DAKHLA
Le Consul Général
ROYAUME DU MAROC

Document 19 : On the Consulate's notice board. Advises for protection against rafles. Author: Luca Queirolo Palmas

Unlike Mauritania, the undocumented travel industry is here structured along different lines; this is prompted by the fact that migrants only act as cokseurs, those who gather passengers. However, the police and the authorities, here as in Mauritania, remain key players. Ezechiel writes: "The core business is in the hands of the Moroccans; they are the ones who have the boats, the materials and the relationships. The coast is all guarded, even with drones; you only leave through corruption". Even a diplomatic source from another African consulate tells us: "Here, no sub-Saharan can put a boat in the sea. It takes complicity that the migrants do not have. Our fellow citizens here are only travellers. The Moroccans are the masters of the journey". The long-distance conversation continues, and Ezekiel recounts: "Because of the repression, many moved to Tan Tan opposite the Canaries, but even there the police dispersed our people. Now, everything has been blocked for two months. An organiser I know told me that he has slowed down the work. He is waiting for a signal". I understand that somehow it is a police officer who has to give this signal to

[34] See: Georg Simmel (1971), The Metropolis and Mental Life, in Levine Donald (ed.), *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*, Chicago University Press; Manuel Delgado (2007), *Sociedades movedizas. Pasos hacia una antropologia de las calles*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

say when to leave and when not to; after all, it is nothing distinct from the hidden *laissez-passer* policies that all European states do on their internal borders[35]. Then he followed with a *lesson on procedures*: "There are *convoi* insured. You pay EUR 6,000, you put the money in the hands of a guarantor, and the money is only released when you are in the Canary Islands. The arrival is assured, and the police are part of the system; many Syrians, Bengalis, and Comorans have left like that. For blacks, it is more difficult". Ezekiel finally adds: "I used to support the passengers, then I realised that it is useless. To secure a boat, the organiser and the captain count; they are the ones who have power on board. They are the ones you have to talk to so that there is a phone, life jackets…". We could interpret this philosophy of action as an example of harm reduction that includes a *pedagogical* dimension of smuggling.

In Morocco, those who leave and those who conduct passengers and captains, those who organise and those who support, even without any kind of reward, are subject to heavy criminal penalties; the penalties are even higher if the crime is committed with the complicity of public officers.[36] . As the Senegal Consul reminds us, "Moroccan prisons are full of boys with sentences of 5 and 10 years. Their mothers and families call us all the time. We go to every prison to get some relief, clothes, or whatever. Unfortunately, extradition is not possible".

A further variable useful to decipher the functioning of the departures industry is related to fishing: migrants who have access to those labour markets and seafaring professions, as is the case of Mauritania, can act more independently as service providers in the field of undocumented mobility. But in Dakhla, migrants are workers in fish processing factories, not fishermen. The following fragments depict part of our experience at the industrial port and the artisanal fishing area:

> Hundreds of boats are in the harbour. Some are for fishing sardines, others for catching bigger fish. The weather is bad today, and no one has gone out. The factories are also at a standstill. It is a kind of just-in-time line connecting sea, processing, and distribution abroad. The crews are all Moroccan, the industry is closed to immigrants. Some boats are preparing for a long embarkation. We see food being loaded and a hold filled with ice unloaded from a truck. The access to the fishing port is manned by police. On the way out, the driver of a van hands over a crate of fish to a man in uniform and then drives off. (Extract from the field diary, 1 March 2023)

> We arrive at the southern end of the peninsula. Another checkpoint gives us access to what looks like a fishermen's encampment. It is enormous. We first see some forty tractors, then a vast area of low shacks, the outer edge of which is dotted with a few small businesses; then, on the sandy shores, hundreds of fishing boats, without engines, parked in long rows neatly arranged like cars. The village is called Sarka. I think of the cemetery in the Canary

[35] See Luca Queirolo Palmas, Federico Rahola (2022), *Underground Europe. Along Migrants Routes*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
[36] Law 02-03 (11 November 2003), Title II, penalizes those who enter or leave the territory clandestinely with a fine or imprisonment from 1 to 6 months; from 6 months to 3 years imprisonment for those who organize or facilitate; from 10 to 15 years imprisonment for those who facilitate or organize on a habitual basis; in the case of death of a *clandestine* passengers, life imprisonment is sentenced.

Islands where I have seen those same boats piled like rubble, one on top of the other after having crossed the sea and become scraps to be demolished. A young Malian man we met at the café warned us: "I go there sometimes to work, to unload the catch. The police harass you if you are black and are getting there. The shacks are for materials, engines, and nets. Only the guards live there. Some fishermen work with illegal migration, but now it is dangerous because of the tighter control of the authorities. We immigrants are not allowed to work in the fishery. They are afraid we will set foot in the departure organisation'. (Extract from the field diary, 1 March 2023)

Document 20 : Sarka, the artisanal fishing village. Author : Luca Queirolo Palmas

Artisanal and industrial fishing are integrated within processing and export machines, and European companies play a significant role in this. The same happens a few hundred kilometres further south, in Nouadhibou, where foreign capital is, however, also more visible in the field of sea catching, with the presence of Turkish, Chinese, Russian and Spanish companies. As Malik constantly repeats: "You come here to work. To earn money and then leave and pay the price of the route. Even from the north of Morocco, people come down here to work".

A failed workshop in a church

Migrant work matters. When we visit the local Catholic church and suggest to the head of a migrants' association to run an art workshop together thanks to the presence of the Caravan cartoonist: 'They don't have time for these things. They have material and basic needs. Drawing doesn't interest them. They work all the time in *frigos* or fish factories, paid on a fortnightly basis. It's not easy, even for us, getting them to come here. We only succeed in health issues with women. For specialist visits or access to drugs". According to this informant, lack of time and little interest in non-material matters are the crucial factors. A woman adds: "There is no written contract; it is all on the word. The migrants in the *frigos* are often the same ones who then leave to Canaries. They collect the resources to pay for their journey". In short; blue collars are the candidates for migration. A parish volunteer enters the discussion: "We have difficulty doing anything because they are obsessed with leaving; that's all they see. Then maybe years later, they are still here".

We quickly understand that our workshop proposal arouses neither interest nor enthusiasm. Even in the meeting with the spokesperson of another migrants' association, we pick up just words of circumstance; we have the same feeling of empty courtesy as many of the meetings held in Nouadhibou.

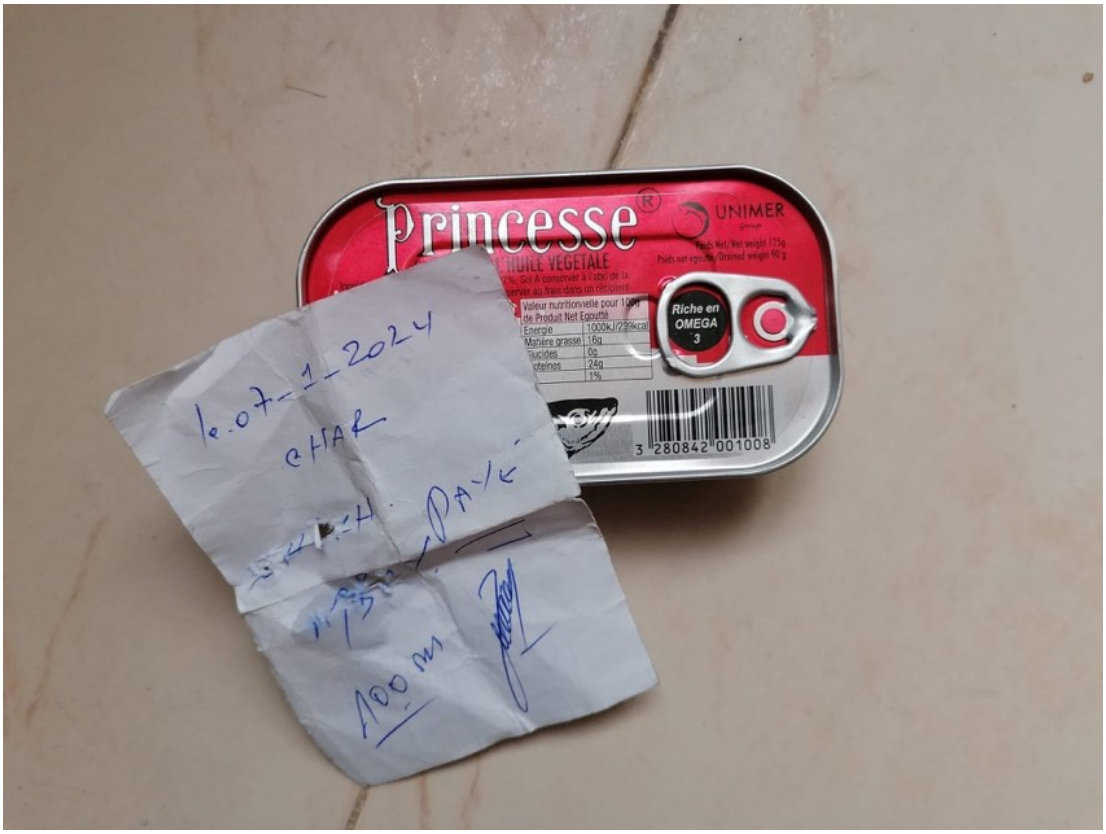
Document 21 : At church. Author : Luca Queirolo Palmas

Ezekiel points out: 'The spokesmen of these community associations will never tell you anything. They are our elders; they have been abroad for a lifetime, they know everything, and everyone knows them. They have continuous relations with all the authorities. They will never say anything against the authorities. They don't want any trouble; they put their safety first. I understand them. These community associations assist if they can, but for sure, they don't want to change things, and even international NGOs, or the same church, are afraid of being expelled from Morocco as happened to Doctors without Borders a few years ago. I want to fight for rights; that's why I decided to speak on my behalf".

An unexpected workshop in a workhouse

Yet, after all, and without any planning, simply accompanying a street vendor to meet his compatriots, we make a kind of drawing workshop in the home of Lucky, a labour recruiter and blue-collar himself, in the fish factories. We sit on a couch around a low table sipping *touba* coffee; the group consists of two women pickers in an export greenhouse of tomatoes, a cleaning worker in a tourist hotel, a transnational second hand car-trader and former worker in the *frigo*, and many children. Andrea draws portraits and distributes them among the participants as the conversation progresses. Now and then, a phone call via WhatsApp brings some relatives to Italy, France, or Spain. Lucky describes how the *frigo* system works: "There is always work in the factories except for December, January and February when the sea is brave, and boats have difficulty getting out. Ownership is often mixed; many companies are Moroccan-Spanish. The women do the cleaning of the fish, while the men do the packing and loading. You get paid every 15 days; the rate varies from 100 to 120 dirham (9-12 Euro) for a 12-hour shift".

There is no written contract; all of a sudden, they show us a crumpled piece of paper with a stamp on it. It is the proof of a day's work. "They don't ask you for an ID to get paid, just present this slip of paper". And if you get hurt? "They take you to hospital. If it is more serious, then maybe they give you a contract on the spot to protect themselves from legal procedures". Moroccans work under the same conditions as migrants, without any contract. But for the migrants, the work contract is necessary to have a legal residence permit and therefore, in its absence, a spiral of precariousness/illegality takes effect. What about the trade unions? Are there any strikes? I ask. Lucky laughs, "My friend, this is a kingdom, and even if you produce commodities for Europe, you can't... you can't demonstrate; they have the police, and you are an immigrant. And then those who are here just want to earn something to leave, to make money to pay the route". Escape as a form of resistance, something we had already heard among the miners of Chami.



Document 22 : Ticket for a day's work in fish factories. Author : Luca Queirolo Palmas

For women, the best work is in hotels, where they earn 3000, 3500 dirham (270-320 Euro) a month. The worst is in the tomato greenhouses.[37]: "But we don't last long there", says Amina, "the pay is 80 dirham (7.3 Euro) a day, and then you have health problems because of the chemicals you have to use". She adds: "They steal your days. Maybe you worked 15, but they paid you 12. You can't do anything about it. Your boss is a Moroccan. He shouts at us to work and controls us. We have no right to a break or to eat. All day bent over tomatoes going to Europe, we all have backache". They, too, like the two boys of the pirogues, show us their hands and the irritation caused by contact with pesticides. The car trader of the group, on the other hand, tells happily of having given up factories, "too little money for too much work". The women are more determined to criticise the living and working conditions in Morocco: "There is racism, immigrants are not given contracts or are given false contracts, women are often assaulted, and when we walk alone early in the morning in the industrial area, we are robbed. I would like to leave; I have an aunt in Italy. How can I?" They all want to leave; they dream, rightly, of somewhere else that is better. Andrea signs the portraits, and we say goodbye.

[37] On Saharan tomatoes, see: WSRW 2022 - https://wsrw.org/en/news/agriculture. On natural resources in the western Sahara see: Joanna Allan & Raquel Ojeda-García (2022) Natural resource exploitation in Western Sahara: new research directions. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 27:6, 1107-1136, DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2021.1917120

Departure

The plane from Dahkla is for kitesurfers returning to Europe, dozens and dozens with their boards. I chat with a veiled Sarawi girl with lacquered nails and lipstick on her lips next to me. She is on her way to Casablanca to apply for a tourist visa for overseas. "I am a technician in a factory. The ownership is foreign. I have a permanent contract and earn 4,000 dirhams (365 Euro) a month". She goes on to address working conditions: "There is no humanity here. Many work without a contract. In the *frigos,* it is terrible. Recently, a girl on an internship fell into a pool of hydrochloric acid. She died, but nothing happened. If you get hurt, you have no rights". She is also a candidate for illegal migration: "Many leave by boat. I try with a tourist visa. And then I'll stay there. I am the oldest in the family; I have a responsibility".

The plane from Casablanca to Milan is full of black workers, Senegalese and Malian, returning to work in the factory after their holidays. We take advantage of a long delay in chatting with many of them. Here are some extracts from the conversation: "A Malian works as hard as two workers"; "I have never taken a day off, what am I doing at home?"; "I have to support my family; I have five children and two wives"; "the boss forced me to take sick leave, but after two days I came back, I prefer to work". They all chose to keep their families and children far away and to devote their entire lives to work and immigration. I seem to be re-listening to the dialogue between the two Senegalese workers who arrived in the Canary Islands, the ending scene of *Main-land*, and the film for the two GNW video-elicitations.

> -A man is a man. When you leave the house to have a better life, you have to be able to endure the hardship. Because if you think you are coming here and that it will be easy, you are wrong.
>
> -We left our fathers and mothers behind for a reason; nothing can stop us (...)
>
> -In September, if I don't find a permanent job, I will go to the *Peninsula* to look for work. I'm not going to stay here just to go to bed and get up. I can't; there are many people counting on me. You know that.
>
> - For the Holy Sëriñ Modou Kara Mbaaké Noreini. If you only follow what the toubabs tell you, you will get lost. The things they want you to stay for are not of interest to us.
>
> - When they tell you: 'What you have here, others don't have, you have CEAR aid, an aid card'. When I left Senegal, it was not for CEAR (Refugee Aid) or to receive aid. I did not come here to ask. I came here to work; to earn a living, you have to go to work and earn a living.
>
> -You are right. In order to live with dignity, a person needs to work to earn their life, not to be given by someone else. One has to earn by the sweat of one's brow. If you depend on someone, you will be helped for the first few days, and then it ends...

- If you want to rest, you can rest when you go home with your family, and it is better to rest at home with your family than to rest in a country where you have come to find work.

Solidarity, as we have learned along the different stages of this caravan, is something that primarily involves the networks of extended kinship and family and generates expectations and obligations; this is the strength and the mobile energy in every journey. I think back to Malik and the last conversation in which he describes himself as a freedom of movement fighter and criticises the politics of deterrence of many NGOs: "I am against all those who discourage people from leaving. The world was created by the adventure. I am just one traveller among many. We did not leave for ourselves but for our families. There is no other possibility for the future. Close all your, our, borders! But remember, either we all live together, or we all die together".

Conclusion and opening

At the end of this collective ethnographic experience, several points can be summarised, dealing with both methodological and theoretical dimensions. The first, common to all our ethnographic steps, concerns the unsettled dimension of the categories through which we tried to grasp the fabric of migration routes and solidarities. The wide variety of categories we encountered (migrants, workers, nationals from near and far, undocumented migrants, refugees, fishermen, students and minors) shows both the extent to which migration routes are fragmented into different social worlds and the extent to which they are embedded in particular historical and political layers. The place of the Senegalese is a case in point: at once workers, foreigners and undocumented migrants, their preferential inclusion in specific segments of the labour market (neglected by nationals, such as fishing and gold panning) has enabled them to settle and manufacture social and geographical anchorage in all Mauritanian towns, all the way to Morocco. However, Senegal's migration infrastructure is now allowing other categories of actors to move around and become mobile, both Senegalese (who do not wish to settle permanently in Mauritania) and, more broadly, from the Gulf of Guinea (Gambia, Guinea), who are seeking to reach the Canary Islands. This clearly shows the limits to the use of these categories and the extent to which the migration routes, places and centralities produced by some people feed a migration continuum used by others.

These categorical limits echo those of the associative actors involved in migration issues, who now dominate the construction of narratives linked to migration in Mauritania. As we have seen, the two GNWs previously organised with association and civil society actors suffered from misunderstandings linked to our position (European researchers coming to understand migration) and to the long-standing border apparatus in the country: most of the actors we met during these GNWs sought to produce a discourse in line with the expectations of international actors linked to the governance of migration. At the very most, a critical and attentive look at the exchanges confirmed (as other studies have shown elsewhere) the extent to which the border apparatus functions around a system of competition between local actors in migration management while reproducing local social hierarchies. This is exactly what happened in Nouadhibou: the migrants' associations criticised the white Moorish and citizen actors for monopolising international financial and technical resources to their detriment without questioning the ideological basis of the migratory deterrence actions they were implementing. Conversely, the only unplanned GNW, organised in Chami with Malian miners, led to the emergence of particularly rich narratives of mobility and related imaginaries.

A conclusive point is that migration industries and the logic of solidarity are intrinsically intertwined within economic apparatuses of varying size and anchorage, regulating the endogenous forms of employment of subaltern groups (national or foreign). The fishing industry (which could constitute a comparative area in its own right) and the gold industry have shown that migratory projects are always set in motion and reconfigured through contact with relational densities that provide the resources and information needed to continue the journey. But there is nothing free or unpredictable about these contacts: they always take place within constrained

labour markets, where various forms of domination are exerted, linked both to the performativity of the border apparatus and to the historical deregulation of economic sectors open to foreigners.

Annexes

1) Illustration Table

2) Encounters and filmed interviews

	Organisation profession	Genre	Country provenance	Type interview	Place
1	AMPEF - spokesperson	F	Mauritanie	film	Nouakchott
2	Mauritanie Perspectives - spokesperson	M	Mauritanie	film	Nouakchott
3	Alarmphone Sahara - spokesperson	M	Niger	film	Nouakchott
4	Association Mauritanienne des droits de l'homme	F	Mauritanie	film	Nouakchott
5	AMPEF - volunteer	F	Mauritanie	film	Nouakchott
6	Touareg student	M	Mali	conversation	Nouakchott
7	Restaurant owner	M	Côte d'Ivoire	film	Nouakchott
8	Migrants' Association - taxi driver	M	Mali	Film et conversation	Nouakchott
9	Artisanal miner	M	Mali	conversation	Nouakchott
10	Gold entrepreneur	M	Mauritanie	conversation	Nouakchott
11	Touareg trader and student	M	Mali	conversation	Nouakchott
12	Compass men	M	Cameroun	film	On-line
13	Captain (from a Libyan jail)	M	Cameroun	film	On-line
14	GNW	M-F	Numerous nationalities	film	Nouakchott
15	Artisanal miner	M	Mali	film	Chami
16	Artisanal miner	M	Mali	film	Chami
17	Artisanal miner	M	Mali	film	Chami
18	Artisanal miner	M	Mali	film	Chami
19	Public officer at city town	M	Mauritania	film	Chami
20	Officer of State Gold Company	M	Mauritania	conversation	Chami
21	Artisanal miner	M	Mali	film	Camp d'Israël
22	Pro-migrant NGOs	M	Mauritania	conversation	Nouadhibou
23	Leader of migrants association	F	Cameroun	film	Nouadhibou
24	Hotel waiter	M	Mauritania	conversation	Nouadhibou
25	Catholic priest	M	Congo	conversation	Nouadhibou
26	Local officer	F	Mauritania	conversation	Nouadhibou
27	Transnational trader	M	Sénégal	Film and conversation	Nouadhibou
28	Activist and transnational trader	F	Sénégal	Film and conversation	Nouadhibou
29	Traveller	M	Sénégal	film	Nouadhibou
30	Migrant association spokesperson	M	Mali	film	Nouadhibou
31	Entrepreneur in the fishing industry	M	Europe	conversation	Nouadhibou

32	GNW	M	multiple	film	Nouadhibou
33	Consul	M	Sénégal	conversation	Dakhla
34	Parish volunteer	M	Italy	conversation	Dakhla
35	Refrigerator worker	M	Senegal	conversation	Dakhla
36	Greenhouse worker	F	Senegal	conversation	Dakhla
37	Tourist hotel worker	F	Senegal	conversation	Dakhla
38	Industrial white collar	F	Morocco	conversation	Dakhla
39	Migrant association spokesperson	M	Senegal	conversation	Dakhla
40	Car mechanic	M	Mauritania	conversation	Nouakchott

3) A short narrative article for a trade union journal in Catalunya

From 7 February to 26 February, a collective of researchers and art-ivists from the Solroutes project (Solidarity and Migrants' routes across Europe at Large - www.solroutes.eu) travelled to Mauritania. Gold immediately emerged as a crucial resource for many people on the move. What follows is a diary of our meetings with the miners...

1. Prologue, a house of students, refugees, Malians, Tuaregs.

Ibbu was a water carrier in the gold mines in Mali. Today he is a university student in economics. He tells of the mining sites as cosmopolitan places, where a thousand languages are spoken, but also riddled with all kinds of security problems. The military group on duty taxes every product coming in and out, food as well as gold, in exchange for protection. With him we try to follow the value chains of gold: 'in the mine it sells for 25,000 cfa per gram, in the city in Bamako for 50,000'. Someone among the other students listening tells us that the boat to the Canaries costs 300,000 CFA. The trip is therefore worth 12 grams of gold, if that money all went to the miner. Now the university is on break and this group of Tuareg students tells us that for the holidays they are going to visit their parents in the M'Bera camp, where several tens of thousands of Malian refugees live. For Abdoulaye, who will accompany us tomorrow to the mining centre of Chami, gold is something familiar, but dangerous at the same time: 'everyone in my village works in gold when agriculture stops. It is a seasonal activity. There is gold everywhere in Mali. When it rains, you find gold in the mud. Even under my house. But we don't want it. Otherwise a well will swallow us'.

2. What are you doing with our words?

On a dusty road in Chami, we are asked a simple question: 'what are you doing with these interviews? We want everyone to know what is behind the gold'. The word most repeated by the miners in Bambara is 'boss', while the concept is oppression and exploitation. "We make a deal for 25 per cent, but when the well starts yielding we only get 20 per cent". The boss, who has been granted a plot of land by the state to dig, deducts all the costs and then leaves the workers' teams a minimal share of the profit. Everything is based on informal agreements; there is nothing written. People work day and night; the most common accidents are related to cave-ins and electricity making contact with water. The bosses are Mauritanian citizens, and the workers are migrants, mainly Malians; this is the organisation of work. 'They feed us a tin of sardines a day'. Abdoulaye comments: 'at least the slavers ensured you were fed, it was better'. Another miner: 'we tried to go on strike, to protest. But the bosses sent us against the police who are at their service'. Some want to escape to the Canaries, some want to go back. But the truth is that most are stuck here and cannot move. We dare to ask how much they earn per month and the answer is 'nothing, a sardine'. The rest depends on luck.

3. Strike! Strike?

"In Mauritania racism and oppression are everywhere. They say, *citizens first*. And I as a foreigner have no right to revolt. I told the miners. The problem is you who are not organised. The boss is only the second problem'. Abdoulaye alternates the idea of the possibility of a strike, and of support from European trade unions to start a promising and encompassing protest, with a more resigned speech: 'we are migrants, not citizens. We can only go to protest in front of our embassy and demand to defend ourselves'.

4. Cursed be the gold!

"Gold is diabolical. We have never wanted to collect it. You have to choose between economics and people's lives. And here they have chosen economy. The *grillage* in the middle of the city, the processing centre where the material arrives from the wells, is monstrous. The sand, the air, the water, it's all contaminated now'. This elderly Moor, an official of the municipality, tells us about health and pollution by mercury and cyanide that are everywhere. Without them you cannot separate gold from sand. "What can we as a municipality do? It is the state that must intervene, but they have done nothing'. He tells us about neonatal diseases and deformations of foetuses, even though the mining is recent and only in a few years it will be possible to have a real estimate of the health effects.

5. Re-appropriate

Before arriving at the artisanal pits, 80 km north of Chami, one has to pass in front of Kinross, the world's fifth largest gold mining company. There are numerous checkpoints; the artisanal miners explained to us that they are all control stations, sieve stations, to prevent the gold from going back to the workers. Subtracting gold from the bosses and the state, or regaining possession of the gold that has been mined, is in fact the first form of miners' resistance; both in the artisanal and multinational sectors. Both sites are only a few kilometres away from each other. The company, which speaks of itself in terms of ethical mining, never responded to our request to visit the site; but informally an executive told us: 'we protect ourselves with drones, cameras, scanners from the constant theft', from worker re-appropriation. Then the Kinross gold takes flight via a private runway inside the site. It is an enclave that yields a sum of money unknown to the Mauritanian state.

6. Space is a gruyère

Proceeding further, there appear the camps made of tents, the dwellings of the workers, and stalls where clothes, water and food, cigarettes, work tools can be found. The sand is an accumulation of rubbish: plastic bottles, sardine cans, batteries, shoes, gloves, ropes. Everywhere chickens and goats scratch about. More in the distance camels. The continuous noise is that of the generators running the machines in the tunnels and the ropes sliding on improvised and lopsided winches. And then hundreds of circular perforations – about a metre and a half in diameter – around which the living presence of labour crowds in. The space is a kind of gruyère. The miners are all black and organised in teams of six; the site works on a continuous cycle, H24. The descent into the pit is by

hand, by rope. Manual winches would not hold the weight. Underneath they dig with a jackhammer, from above the crew lowers what is necessary.

7. We'll keep the migrants

In this moonscape, dozens of turbaned and dressed Moors wander everywhere. They are the masters of the wells or their proxies. They guard the area to check that the spoils of the excavation go into their hands. The mosque with a loudspeaker is the largest structure in the settlement around which they gather. One master comments on the recent visit of Pedro Sanchez and Ursula Von der Leyen as follows: 'Europe must not give money to our governments, they eat everything. They have to give it to us here, to buy machines for the mining. That way we keep the workers stuck there and they don't run away to the Canaries'. What he says is an echo of two important phenomena: the bosses have a problem with a labour force that is too mobile; escape, migration, is for the workers a form of resistance to oppression.

8. We call him Israel

We saw them hoisting the material into the yellow bins, climbing up tens of metres deep with arms, their faces full of dust and their bodies sweating. They re-emerged from the darkness with Abdoulaye cheering them on, shouting 'welcome warrior' one by one. We saw them sit for a few moments, to catch their breath, get used to the light and then return to load up with all the other comrades. Under a tent, which is also home, they continue to tell us about their conditions in the camp: 'we call it Israel. Because of the amount of dead it does. It is the most dangerous, where there are the most accidents. Last week three people died'. The name leads back to Palestine, to Gaza, as does the underground, which is marked by a web of corridors. 'We are the living dead, every day we descend into our grave and then rise again, God willing'. Insecurity and oppression are the recurring topics, while *boss* and *fare* are the words that return again and again. "Of what happens underground, the Moors know nothing. They watch and control above. Our way out is to steal some stones and take them to the Sudanese'. We understand that it is the Sudanese who are at the centre of all the exchanges: on the one hand they feed the black market through the gold re-appropriated by the workers, on the other hand they are in cahoots with the bosses to declare less gold, than is actually worked, to the state office that has the monopoly of purchasing it. For the bosses, the overall mechanism of exploitation is simple: subtract as much as possible as costs and lower the percentage rate due to labour. In the end very little of this fee will remain, not least because the miners do not know how much gold there is in the sandbags they extract. Once out of the bowels of the earth, the excavated material no longer belongs to the miners but to the bosses. "Why don't you go on strike and impose a single tariff for all the wells?" They answer: "We cannot. The last time, five months ago, they deported us and then with the excuse that we wanted to go as illegal immigrants to the Canaries they sent us back to Mali or put us in prison."

9. *At the grillage*

Chami is the *grillage*, the centre par excellence of processing and pollution. In fact, the *grillage* is a city within a city, a factory city where workers live in shacks that the bosses have built next to the machines. The official who accompanies us says: 'we know how many sacks come in and how many go out for the companies - Yemeni, Sudanese, Chinese - that do the second washing, how much gold the owners of the machines sell us, but impossible to say how many workers there are. We are the only ones wearing masks in this open-air space where dozens of *projects* - that's how they are called - burning and mixing mercury and cyanide, pull grams of gold out of tons of sand. As in the mines, here too the workers live on the job. Here too the work is black and migrant and the bosses are white Moors and Sudanese. Here too, no safety measures: no gloves, no shoes, no masks, no helmets. The workers naturally put their hands and feet into tanks full of mercury and cyanide. Near the machines, groups of children wander around, begging. They are Syrian refugees; they also live in shacks not far away. The grillage is a work camp and a space of refuge, as well as a place that is toxic to life, but from which gold comes out, the same gold that by different routes is destined to join the *clean*, *ethical*, *modern gold* of Kinross in global circulation.

10. *Epilogue, a box of resistance*

The miners who have given us their stories have a deep class consciousness. They want to show the work behind the goods and denounce exploitation. They have always addressed themselves as workers, never as migrants. They also know they are a collective power, because they are thousands and they live along the main artery that leads all kinds of goods up and down between Tangier and Dakar. Repeated attempts to date to break the chain of exploitation have all been unsuccessful; but the idea continues to hover in their imaginations and they are looking for support; such as a resistance box that can sustain a prolonged work stoppage.

4) Dakhla's postcard

CARTOLINA DA DAKHLA, MAROCCO

SIAMO A DAKHLA, UNA CITTÀ DEL SAHARA OCCIDENTALE, TERRITORIO CONTESO FRA IL MAROCCO E LA REPUBBLICA DEMOCRATICA ARABA DEL SAHRAWI

SPAGNA

RABAT

CASABLANCA

MARRAKECH

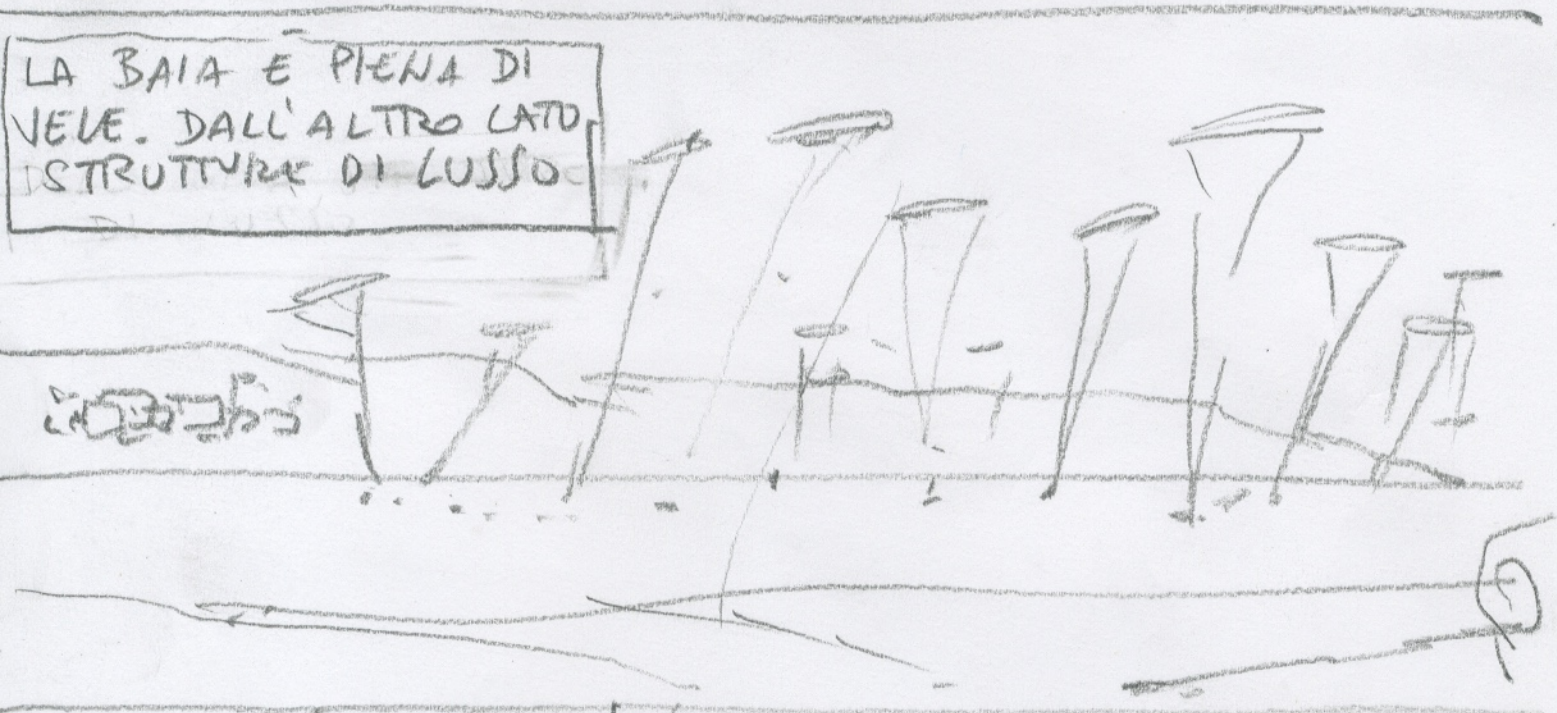
ISOLE CANARIE

SAHARA OCCIDENTALE

DAKHLA

LA RADIO DELL'AUTO SALTA IN CONTINUAZIONE. A TRATTI CAPTA FREQUENZE MAROCCHINE A TRATTI FREQUENZE SPAGNOLE, DELLE ISOLE CANARIE

USCITI DA DAKHLA CI STIAMO DIRIGENDO A NORD. CI IMBATTIAMO NELLA ZONA TURISTICA



TORNANDO VERSO LA CITTÀ INCROCIAMO DUE RAGAZZI - UN SENEGALESE E UN MAURITANO

CI SIAMO PERSI IN MARE

POI È SUCCESSO QUALCOSA AL MOTORE

HO LE MANI DISTRUTTE - CREDO DAL MARE E LA BENZINA

MA CI HANNO TROVATO -

PER FORTUNA SIAMO VIVI ... MA NOI VOLEVAMO RAGGIUNGERE LE CANARIE

JUVENTUS

PROSEGUIAMO DOPO AVERLI SALUTATI. COSTEGGIANDO IL LATO OCEANICO. FABBRICHE E FABBRICHE DI PESCE. MOLTE LAVORANO PER ESPORTARE IN EUROPA

MOHAMMED CI DICE CHE A DAKHLA SI VIENE PER LAVORARE

GUADAGNARE I SOLDI PER POTER PARTIRE

CHI ORGANIZZA LE PARTENZE NON STA PIÙ QUI

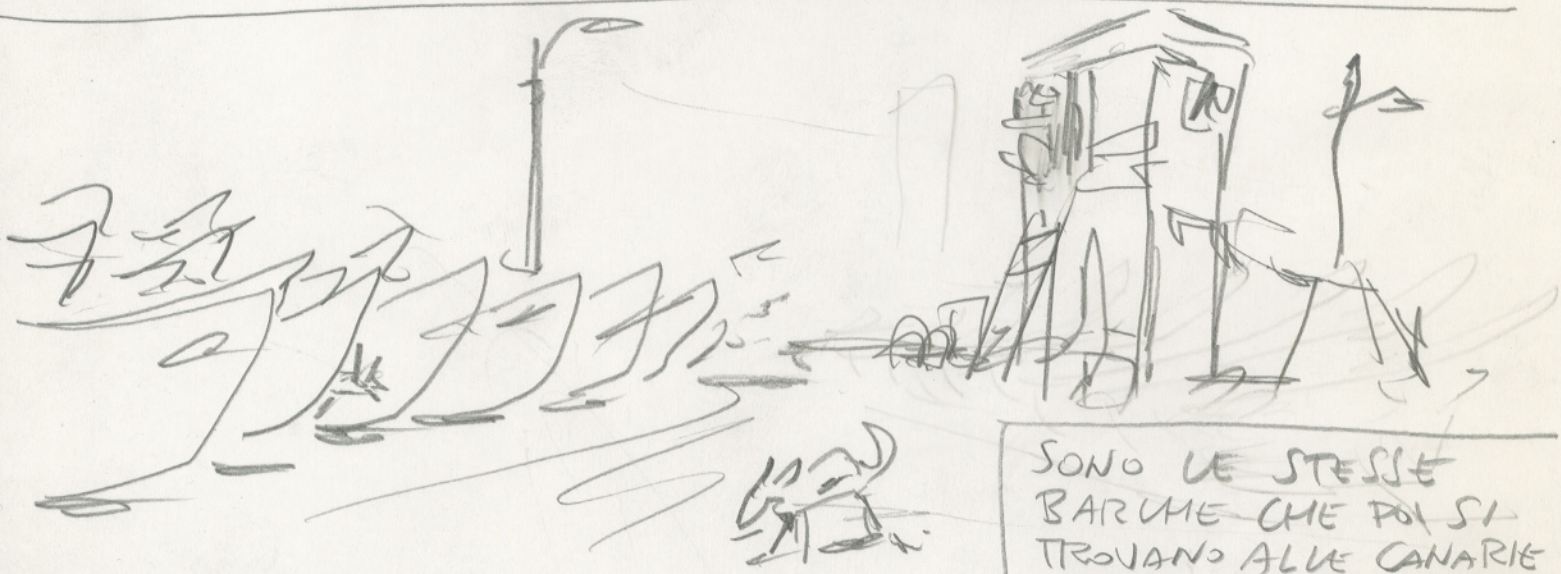
QUA CI SONO I COXEUR CHE METTONO INSIEME I GRUPPI

PRIMA SI PARTIVA DA TAN TAN DAVANTI ALLE CANARIE ...

MA ORA LA POLIZIA HA DISPERSO TUTTI

ARRIVIAMO ALL'ESTREMITÀ SUD. DUE PESCATORI AGGIUSTANO UNA BARCA

SOLCA SPIAGGIA CENTINAIA DI BARCHE POSTEGGIATE E LE CASE DEI GUARDIANI CHE LE CONTROLLANO.



SONO LE STESSE BARCHE CHE POI SI TROVANO ALLE CANARIE ... COME ROTTAMI.

A SERA, A DAKHLA, INCONTRIAMO UN OPERAIO RECLUTATORE DI FORZA LAVORO PER LE FABBRICHE DEL PESCE