

CAMP Seminar: Libyan Infrastructures of Migration: A View from Within

Friday the 14th April 2023 at 1 pm in Ethnographic Exploratorium, CSS. 4.1.12



Libya. Photo by: Nancy Porsia

Program:

13.00-13.10: Welcome by Anja Simonsen, Culture, Mobility and Power (CAMP) research group member

13.10-13.35: Natural selection in migration control. The evolution of migration control in Libya by researcher and fieldwork network coordinator Younes Nanis

For three decades, the Mediterranean Sea has been one of the main routes for migrants towards Europe, although the power to control this strait and use migration as a political and economic tool has frequently shifted from one political group to another, especially on its Southern shores. Since the 2011 revolution, the enduring struggle for power among rival factions in Libya prompted the territorial fragmentation of migration management.

In the presentation “Natural selection in migration control”, I address how the political factions that were directly or indirectly involved in migration control, which would have seemed to dissolve or fade away, survived and maintain a political presence today with a focus on what Darwinism would describe as the most important trait in survival: ‘the ability to adapt’.

13.35-14.00: Social perception of human smuggling in a border community in Libya: from political defiance to crime by journalist and research consultant Nancy Porsia

The town of Zwara on the Western side of the Libyan coast has been one of the main hubs for human smuggling through the central Mediterranean for decades. Zwara is located next to the Tunisian border, and due to its proximity to the border, the town has a long history of smuggling. For a better understanding of the human smuggling’s dynamics in the Libyan Western town, I will focus on the specific political context of the town itself. A cultural and linguistic minority, Amazigh or berber local community perceived human smuggling as an act of defiance to the Gaddafi pan-arabist regime. For years, smugglers have been considered mere "service providers" in a market regulated by supply and demand. However, the drastic increase

in deaths at sea in 2014, the presence of Syrians and the fear of Ebola infection led to a gradual change in the perception of local smugglers in Zuwara. Civil society took a clear stand against the illicit business calling the local authorities to stem the phenomenon. For over two years, Zuwara boasted zero departure from its shore.

The disruption within central institutions and the flourishing of armed militias throughout the Libyan territory decreed the failure of peaceful transition's process towards democracy. Several players active in the human smuggling before the Revolution, returned to the illicit business, including in Zuwara. Ultimately, the neglect by the international community and the full-fledged civil war in the country led to a disruption of the block on the human smuggling set up by Zuwara local civil society, institutions and security forces.

14.00-14.25: Effects of European Interventions in the Niger-Libya Migration Corridor by Senior Researcher Hans Lucht

Following EU interventions and the general disarray of the post-Gadhafi Libyan state, migration into Libya from sub-Saharan Africa has become more dangerous and difficult in recent years. Cross-border economies in the Sahel are changing and adapting to new political realities – often to the detriment of migrant safety. Based on ongoing research in Agadez, Niger, and southern Libya, this talk explores some of the main issues facing brokers, smugglers, and West African migrants on the trans-Saharan routes, and how local Libyan authorities negotiate the European demands for harsher migration measures in the Fezzan, the vast Libyan southwest.

Q & A: 14.25–14.50

BREAK: 20 minutes with refreshments

15.10-16.45

Screening the documentary: Telling the story of my son's land (1 hour and 25 minutes)

Telling the story of my son's land, a film directed by Ilaria Jovine and Roberto Mariotti, is a glimpse inside Libya, its war, and human trafficking through the eyes of an independent woman reporter. Nancy Porsia first moves to Libya in 2011 to report about the Revolution and the end of the regime. While in Libya, she realizes that Libyans are missing from the mainstream narrative of and about Libya. Early in 2013, Nancy moved to Tripoli to document the promise of a new Libya and its long and tortuous process of transition towards democracy through the eyes of Libyans. While documenting this, she meets migrants in the streets and in the detention centers across the country, and she starts to document their stories as well. This includes covering the massive shipwrecks on October 3 and 11, 2013, which puts her in contact with what she believes is a human trafficker as she seeks to discuss questions of responsibility in cases of migrant deaths. However, what she encounters is a person who does not force migrants to leave, let alone buy or sell people. Instead, he understands himself as a service provider that the European migration policy and its denial of safe passage for migrants have created. However, as civil war breaks out and security deteriorates within the country, significant changes within smuggling networks occur replacing migrant smugglers with traffickers.

Nancy gets a unique access and inside view into the human smuggling network in Libya while at the same time, the North African country gradually drifts into civil war. In late 2016, she starts to document the network of human traffickers, militias and public officers showcasing the first Libyan cartel behind human trafficking within and from Libya. Since the publication

of her investigation by the end of 2016, she is not allowed to enter the country, and receives life treats. Off in exile from her adoptive country, Nancy becomes mother of a half Libyan boy, who she hopes to take to Libya soon.

16.45-17.00 Q & A with the participants (15 minutes)

BIOs

Younes Nanis is a researcher and field network coordinator at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (GI – TOC). He also has been working as a private consultant for several think tanks and NGOs in the past decade, designing and conducting field research focused on migration and cross border trafficking between North Africa and Europe.

He is currently specialising in OSINT and working on OSINT innovative potential solutions that would reduce the risk of the fieldwork in sensitive areas of interest.

He has also worked as a fixer for international journalists in Libya covering everything from migration to the armed conflict.

Nancy Porsia is an independent journalist and research consultant specialized in the Middle East and North Africa. Based in Libya for over five years in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, Nancy Porsia reported on the country's civil war and migration. Her investigation on Libyan officers' involvement in human trafficking, published in late 2016, has been widely published by international broadcasters.

As a research consultant and lecturer, Nancy contributes to several think tanks and universities. Since 2017 Nancy has been working on migration flow and its socio-political contexts in the Horn of Africa. She is one of the authors of the book *Decolonizing the Mediterranean* published in 2017 by Cambridge Scholar Publishing and *Balas para todas* published in 2021 by Larrad Ediciones. Her memoir "Mal du Libye" is due to be published in April 2023.

Hans Lucht's research focuses on undocumented migration from Africa to Europe via North Africa. Lucht's core interests include migrant sending communities in West Africa; West African connection men and the organization of clandestine routes to Europe; high-risk migration on the Mediterranean Sea and in the Sahara Desert; migrant lives in post-Gaddafi Libya; migration related deaths and the ramifications in Europe and in Africa; undocumented migrant lives in Southern Europe; European migration policies; global, social and existential anthropology. Hans Lucht's work is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Ghana, Niger, Libya, Italy, and Greece.