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Beyond Militias and Tribes:
The Facilitation of Migration in Libya

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Abstract

Empirical research and data specific to the dynamics of the facilitation of migration and its actors in Libya are scant at best. Not only the country remains off-limits to most researchers given its security conditions: most research is based on the observations of a small number of people who have been allowed to carry out work in the country in the post-Ghaddafi era, and not on the interests and concerns of those who call Libya home. Most of this research has also failed to contextualise the facilitation of migration as part of the long standing, complex and community-based set of mobility strategies historically in place across North Africa, the Sahel and beyond.

This case study outlines the dynamics of the practice known to states as migrant smuggling in Libya in the aftermath of the Ghaddafi regime. It draws from interviews carried out with law enforcement, border officials, ordinary citizens, migrants and people involved in the facilitation of their journeys into Europe in Italy, Tunisia and the border this country shares with Libya. Contributing to a small if growing body of scholarship, the case study argues that across Africa, the labelling of mobility facilitation strategies as migrant smuggling and their criminalisation responds to EU-dictated migration enforcement and control measures. Said measures have played a role in the levels and kinds of risks people face on the migration pathway. These include not merely violent smugglers configured into tribes and militias, as the security discourse often suggests.

There is an urgent need to understand the facilitation of migration as an element of economic and social stability amid widespread marginalisation (one not only experienced by migrants, but also by those behind their journeys). Participation in the facilitation of migration has without exception proven to be an income generating strategy for vastly disenfranchised and impoverished communities and their members (including women and young people), while simultaneously providing the opportunities migrants need to continue or embark in their journeys.

Granted, often unequal and abusive interactions emerge among these actors, putting human lives at risk. However they are derived from migration enforcement and control practices. Violence and abuse are not inherent traits to migration facilitators nor to migrants, who often perform migration facilitation tasks to advance their own journeys. Violence and precarity emerge in a context of increased surveillance and control. As a growing number of scholars argue, to refer to people's mobility strategies along the lines of smuggling, trafficking or "modern day slavery" as it has occurred in the case of Libya is inaccurate and simplistic, for neither term reflects the complexities of people's experiences, and obscures the vast continuum of strategies migrants and those behind their journeys employ in their attempts to achieve multiple kinds of mobility.

I. Introduction

For years, Libya has been ground zero of the so-called EU migration 'crisis' narrative, portrayed as the Mediterranean's main hub for irregular migration into Europe, despite the fact that departures from its coasts had drastically decreased by the end of 2019, and most irregular journeys into Europe by sea have shifted to the Morocco-Spain corridor.

Libya's special place in the EU's agenda against irregular migration from Africa is however evidenced by the multiple agreements the country's governance bodies have signed with EU member states –most specifically Italy.[1] The dynamics and implications of such agreements have been well documented in a vast number of academic and policy reports. Among other themes, scholars have written extensively about the disturbing conditions faced by migrants in detention centres across Libya, the radicalisation of Libyan youth, and the security environment and challenges the country has dealt with post-Ghaddafi amid the multiple factions –including the EU—struggling for control, influence and resources. In most of these publications there are references to migrant smuggling, broadly defined as the criminalized facilitation of migrants' clandestine or irregular journeys, whose actors figure prominently as threats to the stability not only of Libya, but to that of the EU.[2]

Such perpetrators tend to be broadly described as militias and groups of tribal origin which scattered across the country attempt to strengthen their political stance through the facilitation of migrants' journeys. They are said to exploit migrants desperate to reach European coasts, creating suffering and havoc yet generating vast earnings. There is no shortage of publications providing graphic descriptions of the kinds of violence Libyan militias and tribes mobilise, of their widespread reliance of kidnapping, slavery and physical and sexual exploitation, and on the detention facilities they are also said to run. Many other publications speak about the involvement of these groups with other members of the criminal pantheon, ranging from terrorists to weapon dealers to drug traffickers. Italian officials have gone as far as suggesting that they also operate closely with NGOs as part of search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean.[3]

The violence faced by migrants in transit through Libya must not be denied. Data on the dramatic conditions they face in the context of their journeys and within Libya's detention centres have been systematically collected by NGOs and intergovernmental organisations.[4] Together with extensive reporting by media and security experts, European audiences have been given a window into the country's migration and security landscape.

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[1] The EU as part of the EU Trust Fund for Africa has destined € 87.2 million to Libya's integrated border management --€ 46.3 million of which have been provided by Italy. See the references to the EU Trust Fund for Africa and the role of the EU at fighting smuggling and trafficking, on European External Action Service [EEAS] (2019). *EU-Libya relations*. 25 September 2019. Brussels: EEAS. Available from https://eeas.europa.eu/ headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/19163/EU-Libya%20relations; European Commission (2019). *EU Support on Migration in Libya: EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa-North of Africa Window*. December 2019, available from https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/libya_en.

[2] See European Commission (2015) *EU Action Plan Against Migrant Smuggling*, available at: https://ec.europa. eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eu_action_plan_against_migrant_smuggling_en.pdf

[3] Molinari, M. & Albanese, F. (2017). "Abbiamo le prove dei contatti tra scafisti e alcuni soccorritori." *La Stampa*, 23 April 2017. Available from: https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2017/04/23/news/abbiamo-le-prove-dei-contatti-tra-scafisti-e-alcuni-soccorritori-1.34622607

[4] For two recent examples see Medicins sans Frontieres (2019). *Trading in suffering: exploitation and abuse in Libya*. 23 December 2019, available from https://www.msf.org/libya%E2%80%99s-cycle-detention-exploitation -and-abuse-against-migrants-and-refugees; Mixed Migration Centre [MMC] (2019). *What makes refugees and migrants vulnerable to detention in Libya? A micro-level study of the determinants of detention.* MMC Research Report, 2 December 2019. Available from: http://www.mixedmigration.org/resource/what-makes-refugees-and-migrants-vulnerable-to-detention-in-libya/

However, empirical research and data specific to the dynamics of the facilitation of migration and its actors in Libya are scant at best. Not only the country remains off-limits to most researchers given its security conditions: most research is based on the observations of a small number of people who have been allowed to carry out work in the country in the post-Ghaddafi era –in their majority, European researchers whose work is also funded by organisations embracing Euro-centric ideas and concerns. Most of this research has also failed to contextualise when not altogether dismissed the facilitation of mobility as a long standing and complex practice across North Africa, the Sahel and beyond.

Drawing from interviews in Italy, Tunisia and the border this country shares with Libya, carried out with law enforcement, border officials, ordinary citizens, migrants and people involved in the facilitation of their journeys into Europe, this case study outlines the dynamics of the practice known to states as migrant smuggling in Libya in the aftermath of the Ghaddafi regime. It argues that the often-ahistorical perspectives of mobility in Africa, grounded upon narratives of blood-thirsty and profit-driven smuggling militias and tribes palatable to a security-minded Europe, differ and in some instances even clash with the lived experiences of those who rely on, experience or even participate in the provision of mobility services in Libya. Contributing to a small if growing body of scholarship,[5] the case study argues that across Africa, the labelling of mobility facilitation strategies as migrant smuggling is a direct consequence of EU-dictated migration enforcement and control practices. Said practices, through the creation and imposition of further and more complex barriers to mobility have elevated the levels and kinds of risks faced by people on the migration pathway (migrants, those facilitating their journeys, and the many others they come in contact with in the course of their trajectories). They have also fostered the emergence of often unequal and abusive interactions among these actors that put human lives at risk. Yet to refer to these monolithically as smuggling is inaccurate and simplistic. They are part of a larger continuum of strategies crafted to advance people's need and desires for mobility.

Furthermore, rather than being facilitated by fearless and barbaric militias and tribes organised into transnational criminal networks, evidence shows that those behind migrants' journeys are quite often men, women and children from marginalised and impoverished communities (including migrants themselves) who do not partake of a particular ideology or membership. They have come to rely on their involvement in the facilitation of migrant journeys as a way to generate an income, achieve their own mobility and/or migratory goals, and in the process reduce the impact of the growing inequality and marginalisation that afflicts them. Granted, these conditions were already in place during the Ghaddafi regime but were furthered by externally-funded initiatives to control or impede mobility, which furthered in turn an already existing demand for guidance and support services.

In short, while labelled as migrant smuggling by the EU, the facilitation of migrant journeys out of Libya is part of a vast continuum of mobility strategies that throughout history have been practiced throughout North Africa, and that while at times problematic, have led to the creation of sustainable livelihoods for people in the region. In other words, the case study argues that the practices known and/or typified as smuggling in the context of Libya are not inherently criminal, violent or exploitative, nor new or unprecedented. They are foremost, mobility strategies deeply grounded in community life that when combined with stricter border controls, the increased criminalisation of mobility, and the lack of legal, safe and dignified paths for mobility, have led to the emergence of often unequal, abusive and violent exchanges among its actors, which include migrants but also historically disenfranchised groups.

Furthermore, while cognisant of the vulnerabilities they encounter, the case study also shows migrants do not perform a peripheral or passive role in their journeys, as the media and security narratives most often suggest. In the case of Libya, migrants are essential actors of mobility, their

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[5] See De Haas, H. (2008). The myth of invasion: the inconvenient realities of African migration to Europe. *Third world quarterly*, *29*(7), 1305-1322; Lucht, H. (2011). *Darkness before daybreak: African migrants living on the margins in Southern Italy today*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Brachet, J. (2018). "Manufacturing smugglers: From irregular to clandestine mobility in the Sahara." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *676*(1), 16-35

experiences while in transit also impacting local economic and social dynamics. Women and children are also key agents in this process (despite their absence in the scholarship), demonstrating how the lack of gender and intersectional approaches to study mobility in the region has led to an oversimplification of their experiences and to their systematic and monolithic portrayal as victims of trafficking if nothing else. In sum, the case study argues that the actors present in the facilitation of mobility (including migrants and those facilitating their journeys) are quite diverse; that they are often part of groups who have historically experienced forms of structural violence, and that their practices (including those considered particularly heinous by European audiences) are not inherently violent, but rather reflect the tensions emerging from migration controls. The mobility practices existing in Libya are deeply intertwined with EU migration control policy, which has shaped the interactions of decision-making processes of both migrants and those who are involved in the facilitation of their journeys, often with devastating consequences.

II. Researching Migrant Smuggling

While documenting migrant smuggling (the crime involving the irregular or unofficial facilitation of the entry of a person into a country different from his or her own), researchers, scholars and journalists around the world have often focused on describing in excruciating detail the harrowing experiences encountered by migrants in their transits. Stories concerning the devastating journeys of migrants crossing deserts, being attacked by gangs and robbers, forced into prostitution and slavery-like conditions, deprived of organs or their very lives have been extensively documented in academic, policy, law enforcement and journalistic circles, generating widespread condemnation and concern worldwide.[6]

While the violence migrants encounter cannot be denied, it is also important to highlight that the hyper-focus on the most harrowing and graphic of journeys shifts the analysis into specific aspects of the migratory experience.[7] It often construct migrants' experiences as individual and personal projects, attributing tragic outcomes to their own actions, while exempting the state from its role at creating the conditions that lead migrants to pursue more remote, dangerous routes, trajectories and interactions. Furthermore, the often well-intentioned efforts aimed to showcase migrants' experiences by relying precisely on simplistic characterisations and narratives pose the risk of further obscuring the levels of inequality and marginalisation behind their decisions to migrate.

None of these statements intend to suggest that the clandestine or unofficial facilitation of migration does not involve problematic or violent practices, or that the experiences of those how have endured victimisation in these contexts do not matter. Instead, they seek to emphasise how migration, and in particular the facilitation of irregular migration, has become increasingly mediatised and hyper-represented and in the process overly simplified. This demands on the one hand the design of research approaches that recognise the discursive field in which migration takes place,[8] and a critical eye on the part of researchers on how migration-related knowledge is produced.[9]

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[6] For examples of these headlines, see https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerians-return-from-slavery-in-libya-to-thriving-sex-trafficking-industry-back-home/2018/01/19/b4bcffa0-e4d4-11e7-927a-e72eac1e73b6_story.html; https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/enslaved-immigrants-sold-their-kidneys-liver-libyas-burgeoning-organ-trafficking-market-1650024;https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/un-libya-militias-tripoli-profiting-human-trafficking-190408130942655.html

[7] Fonow, M. & Cook, J. (2005). "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the academic and public policy." *Signs*, 30(4): 2211-2236

[8] Wilson, A. (2004). *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: tomboys, tycoons and Avon ladies in the global city*. North Carolina: Duke University Press.

[9] Baird, T., & van Liempt, I. (2016). "Scrutinising the double disadvantage: knowledge production in the messy field of migrant smuggling." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *42*(3), 400-417.

Migrant smuggling is a critical component of the contemporary migration discourse. Yet as a concept, it is of relatively recent creation. It was articulated in its current iteration only in the year 2000 with the passage of the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.[10] From its onset, migrant smuggling was not articulated as a direct response to the violation to the rights of migrants, or as an attempt to reduce the risks they faced while embarking on irregular migration. Both the Protocol and the practices it targeted were introduced by governments from countries in the global north increasingly concerned over what they considered an increase in the levels of irregular migration that afflicted them, and in an attempt to develop legal mechanisms to contain them.[11] These efforts also relied on the mobilisation of the notion of transnational organised crime, which privileges claims of cross-border illicit or criminalised activities as under the sole control of hierarchical networks operating in direct opposition to the state and posing risk to its stability. Devoid of an empirical basis (research on smuggling was virtually inexistent), and fuelled by mediatized notions of evolving ethnic mafias of transnational reach, the concept of migrant smuggling emerged from an attempt to contain the mobility of undesirable or unwanted populations and facilitate the criminalisation of irregular migration, rather than bringing down its facilitators, whose actions were –and continue to be –far from known or understood.

Over the years, many scholars have challenged the claims and the narratives emerging from the Protocol concerning the facilitation of migration – the kind that articulated it as smuggling alone, and as an inherently criminal, highly organised activity carried out by networks of heinous and violent *men* from the global south at their helm.[12] Around the world critical, empirical, field-work based research has shed light on the dynamics of migration facilitation, demonstrating the complexity of its nature and the diversity of its actors.[13] This research has fostered the "develop[ment of] more nuanced, human-centred understandings of the social processes involved in clandestine transit migration" while simultaneously examining and questioning how "material, discursive and ideological circulations"[14] are generated by researchers, also paying close attention to the political projects that lead to the articulation of irregular migration as a security threat. It has also rejected the predator-victim binary that is often used to designate the interactions between migrants and those behind their journeys,[15] showing how men and women rely on and are facilitators whose intentions can vary from altruistic to profit-oriented, which are often shaped from their own condition and experiences as migrants themselves.[16]

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[10] Prior to its articulation as migrant smuggling, the irregular facilitation of entry into a country appeared in the literature under terms like human trafficking or even human contraband. See Gallagher, A. (2002). "Trafficking, smuggling and human rights: tricks and treaties." *Forced Migration Review*, *12*(25), 8-36.

[11] Brachet, 2018; Gallagher 2002; Koser, K. (2011). "The smuggling of refugees." In Koslowsli, R. & Kyle, D. editors. *Global human smuggling: Comparative perspectives 2*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Schloenhardt, A., & Dale, J. E. (2012). "Twelve years on: revisiting the UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air." *Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht*, *67*(1), 129-156.

[12] Sanchez, G. & Achilli, L. (eds.) (2019). *Critical Insights on Irregular Migration Facilitation: Global Perspectives*. Migration Policy Centre. Florence: European University Institute. Ayalew, T. (2018). Refugee protections from below: smuggling in the Eritrea-Ethiopia context. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *676*(1), 57-76.

[13] For examples, see Maher, S. (2018). Out of West Africa: human smuggling as a social enterprise. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *676*(1), 36-56.; Ayalew, T. *Struggle for Mobility: Risk, Hope and community of knowledge in Eritrean and Ethiopian Migration pathways towards Sweden*, Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm: Stockholm University).

[14] Vogt, W. A. (2018). *Lives in Transit: Violence and Intimacy on the Migrant Journey*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pg.6

[15] Zhang, S. X., Sanchez, G. E., & Achilli, L. (2018). Crimes of solidarity in mobility: alternative views on migrant smuggling. *The Annals of the American academy of political and social science*, *676*(1), 6-15.

[16] Kook, K. (2018). "I Want to Be Trafficked so I Can Migrate!": Cross-Border Movement of North Koreans into China through Brokerage and Smuggling Networks. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *676*(1), 114-134. Ayalew, T., Adugna, F., & Deshingkar, P. (2018). "Social Embeddedness of Human Smuggling in East Africa:

In the sections that follow, and in line with this critical body of scholarship, this case study privileges the ways in which the facilitation of migration in and out of Libya is experienced and procured by those who rely on it, either as a mobility mechanism or as in income generating strategy. It recognises the concept of smuggling as state-centric and security driven, but also as a component within the much larger and complex continuum of strategies people on the migration pathway rely for their mobility. While discursively, some migration scholars have opted (often uncritically) to group all strategies advancing migrants' journeys under the smuggling label, the case of Libya is yet another example of how said strategies do not constitute smuggling alone. They are localised manifestations of mobility carried out within community based, collective contexts for a wide range of motives – what throughout this case study is referred to as facilitation of migration. Relying on qualitative data and analyses, the case study contextualises how both risk and power contestation emerge as responses to migration enforcement and control practices. Rather than detaining or containing mobility, migration controls push migrants into more dangerous trajectories and travel options, and those behind their journeys to devise more precarious and violent mechanisms to profit from people's mobility needs. Yet both sides share a common goal: countering the levels of inequality and disenfranchisement they face in the context of their everyday lives.

III. Manufacturing Smuggling in Libya

Estimates from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) put at over one million the number of people who arrived into Europe in the context of the so-called European migration crisis of 2015, with slightly over 100.000 of them arriving in Italy.[17] While irregular migration into Europe is by no means a new occurrence, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people to the continent reinvigorated a long-standing if somewhat stagnant conversation on the clandestine or illicit facilitation of migration, as these arrivals were attributed to the work of smuggling networks operating along multiple hubs in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

The monolithic articulation of facilitators of migration as smugglers in European academic and policy literature reflects the predominance of criminological perspectives and stances related to these actors' practices. Documents from the European Commission describe them as set up in "ruthless criminal networks [which] organise the journeys of large numbers of migrants desperate to reach the EU"[18] and as "unscrupulous smugglers who seek to benefit from the desperation of the vulnerable."[19] FRONTEX on its part has expressed concerns over how smugglers "have further excelled in successfully operating out of the reach of Member States' law enforcement" [20] while Europol calls their groups

Brokering Ethiopian Migration to Sudan." *African Human Mobility Review*, 4(3), 1333-1358; Lucht, H. (2015). "The station hustle: Ghanaian migration brokerage in a disjointed world." In *What Is Existential Anthropology?* (p. 104-124). London: Berghahn Books. Alpes, M. J. (2017). "Why aspiring migrants trust migration brokers: the moral economy of departure in Anglophone Cameroon." *Africa*, 87(2), 304-321. Hamood, S. (2006). *African transit migration through Libya to Europe: the human cost*. Cairo: American University in Cairo, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies.

[17] IOM (2015). *Irregular Migrant, Refugee Arrivals in Europe Top One Million in 2015*. 22 December 2015. Available from: https://www.iom.int/news/irregular-migrant-refugee-arrivals-europe-top-one-million-2015-iom.

[18] European Commission (2015). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling 2015-2020*. 27 May 2015. Brussels: DG Home. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/asylum/general/docs/eu_action_plan_against_migrant_smuggling_en.pdf.

[19] European Commission (2016). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council and the European Investment Bank on establishing a new partnership framework with third countries under the European agenda on migration*. 7 June 2016. Strasbourg: European Commission. Available from: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/763f0d11-2d86-11e6-b497-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

[20] Frontex, 2019, p.24.

"callous and inhuman business,"[21] organised as "closed [and] only accessible through trusted partners and associates."[22]

While the statements made through these publications may sound authoritative, the facilitation of migration into Europe from the Southern Mediterranean has hardly been the subject of empirical research over the years. What is available is in fact recognised by the authors themselves as limited and scattered in nature, and as including scant field-based work but also minimal examinations of case law.[23] Moreover, since most studies on the topic have been initiated in Europe, they are admittedly reflective of European security concerns.[24]

The literature on migrant journeys from Libya can be broadly split between the work conducted prior to the end of the Ghaddafi regime, and the one that has emerged in the aftermath of its collapse. From the first, Monzini and Pastore, often drawing on caselaw analyses, along with Hamood's fieldbased interviews, and the early work of Lucht with Ghanaian migrants, provide a solid platform to examine the facilitation of migrants' journeys in and out of Libya.

In her extensive work on smuggling in the Mediterranean, Monzini emphasised Libya's character as "a transit and stopping-off point, not a place of origin of migration."[25] She was also among the first researchers to conclude that on the basis of the data available at the time (her work drawing primarily from case law) the facilitation of migrants' journeys out of Libya was primarily the result of groups of "traffickers" set up into "extremely flexible organisational structures." Having found scant evidence of ties to organised crime, Monzini emphasised the high levels of adaptation among smuggling groups, recognising the changing conditions they faced:

> "All the organisations operate on a short time-scale, responding to changing problems with flexible solutions. The traffickers are themselves aware of moving on unstable territory and in a situation of continuous change."[26]

Pastore et al.'s work also indicated that in the case of Libya, "the available evidence does not point to highly structured transnational entities but rather on a complex network of small- and medium-sized organisations, which (…) only sell migrants the service of the crossing as far as the shores of Sicily."[27]

The work of Hamood –which involved interviews with migrants who had left Libya with the assistance of facilitators – showcased the diversity of those behind migrants' mobility, which often included migrants themselves, countering the claim that the facilitation of migration was under the domain of organised crime alone. She wrote:

> "Respondents describe a system in which individuals or small groups of individuals cooperate [in the facilitation of migration] for mutual financial interest. Operating at a local level, each provides a service in assisting people at the different legs of the journey to arrive at the next

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[21] EMSC 2018, p. 27.

[22] Frontex, 2019, p. 29.

[23] Hamood 2006; UNODC 2010; Monzini, P. (2007). "Sea-border crossings: the organisation of irregular migration to Italy." *Mediterranean Politics*, 12(2) 163-184. Campana, P. (2018). "Out of Africa: The organisation of migrant smuggling across the Mediterranean." *European Journal of Criminology*, *15*(4), 481-502.

[24] Monzini, P., Pastore, F., and Sciortino, G. (2004). *Human Smuggling to/through Italy*. Centri Studi di Politica Internazionale. April 2004, Roma. Pg. 59. Available from: http://www.cespi.it/en/ricerche/human-smuggling-totrough-italy.

[25] Monzini et al, 2004.

[26] Monzini et al, 2004:59.

[27] Pastore, F., Monzini, P., & Sciortino, G. (2006). "Schengen's soft underbelly? Irregular migration and human smuggling across land and sea borders to Italy." *International Migration*, *44*(4), 95-119.

destination, be it, as we have seen above, across the Libyan border, initial transportation within Libya or across the waters to Italy."[28]

It is also important to note that Hamood's respondents identified those behind their journeys not as Libyan nationals only. They often shared the ethnic identities of those seeking to travel. Recruiters or "go-betweens" as she called them, were largely from the same countries as migrants, who were less inclined to trust Libyans, perceived as prone to engage in abuses and scams:

> "Two main actors are: the Libyan 'smuggler', who makes the necessary arrangements for the boat journey itself; and the non-Libyan 'go between', who facilitates the contact between the non-Libyan 'clients' and the Libyan 'smuggler'. (…) At all stages of the journey, migrants refer to members of their own national, ethnic or tribal community, wherever possible, to facilitate the contact with Libyan smugglers in the border town. It is rare for direct contact to be made with Libyan smugglers, who for the most part appear to be looked upon with mistrust by the non-Libyan refugees and migrants."[29]

Lucht also narrated the role Ghanaian migrants played in the facilitation of their own journeys, drawing from their expertise in seafaring:

> "…[those] with seafaring experience thus occupy the role of intermediaries, neither smugglers nor passengers. For this effort they are paid in the form of a ride for themselves as well as seats they can sell to friends or relatives at a reduced price. The appeal of this deal, however, is not financial. Most are themselves migrants en route and view the captaincy primarily as a means to reach Europe."[30]

While scant on details specific to the facilitation of migrant journeys per se, a series of reports from humanitarian entities detailed the concerns over the treatment of migrants in Libya. These publications condemned the widespread practice of detention and deportation carried out by Libyan authorities, and tied it to the financial support provided by the EU and its members as part of larger attempts to control migration from the region, but not to smuggling groups or networks.[31] Reports in 2009 by Human Rights Watch and UNHCR also expressed further concerns over the forced returns of boats carrying people attempting to leave Libya for European territory and the subsequent detention or even return of migrants to their countries of origin without being screened for protection or relief, but made no reference to migrant smuggling.[32] Hamood however, did identify the role of state agents at creating and/or fostering the conditions of abuse endured by migrants, but also as facilitators of mobility:

> "The officials (…) offer[ed] to organise to take [respondent] and a group of 127 Ethiopians, who were released at the same time, to Benghazi for a fee of USD $200 per person. When the detainees said that they did not have the money to pay such a fee, they were transferred some 5 km into the desert to a detention camp and threatened with being abandoned there if they did not pay the money (…) The detainees agreed and were taken to a farm, apparently owned by a police officer, while they waited for the money to arrive. Those who had money were released immediately and once

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[28] Hamood 2006: 60.

[29] Hamood 2006: 60

[30] Lucht, H. (2012). *Darkness before daybreak: African migrants living on the margins in Southern Italy today*. Berkeley: University of California Press; pg. 131.

[31] Human Rights Watch (2006). *Stemming the Flow: abuses against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees*. 12 September 2006. New York: Human Rights Watch. Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/09/12/stemming-flow/abuses-against-migrants-asylum-seekers-and-refugees; Baldwin-Edwards, M. (2006). "Between a rock and a hard place: North Africa as a region of emigration, immigration and transit migration." *Review of African Political Economy* 108: 331-324.

[32] Human Rights Watch (2006). *Pushed back, pushed around: Italy's forced return of boat migrants and asylum seekers, Libya's mistreatment of migrants and asylum seekers*. 21 September 2009. New York: Human Rights Watch. Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/09/21/pushed-back-pushed-around/italys-forced-return-boat-migrants-and-asylum-seekers; UNCHR (2009). *UNCHR interviews asylum seekers pushed back to Libya*. 14 July 2009. Available from https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2009/7/4a5c638b6/unhcr-interviews-asylum-seekers-pushed-libya.html.

each group of 20 or so had paid their fee, they were sent with a smuggler in a pick-up truck to Benghazi."[33]

Testimonies like the one above indicate their position of power in addition to their ability to directly access detention centres and similar facilities, guaranteed local government actors access to migrants who had little option other than accepting abusive and often violent business propositions and arrangements, that yet provided the possibility of moving forward. [34] In other words, the record shows proof of the long-standing role of government officials at limiting –and advancing –migrants' journeys across Libya.

The killing of Muammar Ghaddafi in 2011 marked the end of a regime that had begun in 1969 and the beginning of a series of attempts of military nature aimed to gain control over the country. These have had devastating impacts on the people who call Libya home. From the end of the regime, the country has experienced civil war, continued political division and widespread insecurity, all contributing to societal tensions, economic challenges, significant loss of life and population displacement, further straining public services and social cohesion.[35] Yet none of these has either stopped migration into Libya or the efforts on the part of facilitators to continue offering mobility services.[36] The struggle over Libya (shaped by European interests) did however lead to the introduction of a specific rhetoric and literature that began to shape the practices related to migration facilitation as security threats, and militias and tribes as its main actors.

Militias and tribes –terms aimed to comprise a plethora of both tribal leaders and members, and local councils and armed groups developed primarily in the aftermath of the fall of the regime to protect their families and interests [37] – appear in the European literature on migration as having taken over migrant smuggling and trafficking[38] markets in Libya and beyond. The tasks many of them provided historically – namely transportation services alongside trade -- began to be framed as criminal in nature in the migration policy discourse.[39] Furthermore, and again despite their historical nature, said services were articulated as fuelling the levels of instability in Libya, yet ultimately posing a threat to EU security for they ultimately facilitated the arrival of irregular migrants to Europe's coasts. [40] Much of this work has

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[33] Hamood 2006: 61.

[34] Achilli's work on the interactions of Syrians traveling with smugglers also shows how migrants often accept otherwise exploitative or abusive arrangements as they perceive them as ultimately conducive to mobility. See Achilli, L. (2017). Smuggling and trafficking in human beings at the time of the Syrian conflict. In Belachew, G., Kostenzer, J., and Müller, A., eds. *Human Trafficking and Exploitation* (pp. 129-146). London: Routledge.

[35] Fitzgerald, M. (2018). "Socio-political situation in Libya from the urban perspective." *CIDOB: Notas Internacionals 190*. February 2018. Barcelona: Centre for International Affairs. Available from: https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/notes_internacionals/n1_190/socio_political_situation_in_libya _from_the_urban_perspective; Human Rights Watch (2019). *Libya Events of 2018. World Report 2019*. New York: Human Rights Watch. Available from https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/libya.

[36] Migration into Libya remained consistent despite the conflict. UNHCR (2019a) *From Hand to hand: the migratory experience of East African refugees and migrants in Libya*. April 2019. Geneva: UNHCR. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/hand-hand-migratory-experience-east-african-refugees-and-migrants-libya.

[37] Belgium's Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Country of Origin Information Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (OCILA) of the Ministry of Security and Justice in the Netherlands, Landinfo, Lifos (2014). *Libya: Militias, Tribes and Islamists*. 19 December 2014. Available from: https://www.government.nl/ documents/reports/2014/12/20/libya-militias-tribes-and-islamists.

[38] Contrary to smuggling –articulated as involving a consensual transaction between the person seeking to move and the one who facilitates that movement—trafficking implies the existence of coercion. While there are specific definitions for each practice, scholars have long argued that the line that separates both is hard to draw in the lived experiences of migrants.

[39] Brachet, 2018.

[40] Bocchi, A. (2018). "Libya's rogue militias keep the country from tackling human trafficking." *Terrorism Monitor*, 16(4), 26 February 2018. Available from https://jamestown.org/program/libyas-rogue-militias-keep-country-tackling-human-trafficking/. Reitano, T. & Tinti, P. (2015). *Survive and Advance: the economics of smuggling refugees and migrants into*

relied on the mediatized characterizations of militias and tribes as violent and primitive groups that engage in a plethora of abuses against migrants.

The literature is also clear at suggesting smuggling only "mushroomed" in the country after the end of the regime, giving place to migrant holding centres where "domestic servitude and sexual exploitation are rife."[41] Following the official EU narrative, the literature also alleges the market follows a specific "business model"[42] and has systematically provided estimates concerning the amounts militias and tribes allegedly generate from their inhumane treatment of migrants,[43] but also from their agreements with Italian security services. (It has been widely documented that militias and tribes assist in the return to Libya of migrants intercepted in the Mediterranean,[44] who are then sent to detention centres where they are held for ransom, trafficked for labour or for sexual servitude).[45]

While these publications have shaped Europe's collective understanding of the conditions in Libya, their content present several challenges. Most are not based on empirical research, but draw from media reporting and secondary sources. Militias and tribes have certainly played a role at creating strategies that compromise the safety of migrants, and it can clearly be argued that these have changed in the aftermath of the regime's collapse. Yet to simply argue that across Libya the facilitation of migration is under the control of groups of this kind gone rogue is a simplistic proposition. Analyses are also largely ahistorical, for Africa's long-standing and extremely diverse practices of mobility facilitation, as well as their social embeddedness and importance are dismissed in most publications if at all mentioned. By articulating the facilitation of migration as "higher-profit criminal activities,"[46] and therefore as if pertaining to the domain of mafia or network-like organised crime, these literature favours the narratives of enforcement present in the UNODC Smuggling Protocol, which as mentioned has from its onset showed no interest in examining the contexts in which mobility strategies arise. Not only these claims exempt EU bodies from their role in the emergence of abusive forms of mobility facilitation and their

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Europe. November. Geneva: Institute for Security Studies and The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime. Available from: https://globalinitiative.net/survive-and-advance-the-economics-of-smuggling-refugees-and-migrants-into-europe/.

[41] Reitano & Tinti, 2017, p. 13.

[42] Micallef, M. & Reitano, T. (2017). *The anti-human smuggling business and Libya's political endgame.* December 2017. Geneva: Institute for Security Studies and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime. Available from: https://globalinitiative.net/the-anti-human-smuggling-business-and-libyas-political-end-game/; Bish, A. (2019). *Niger: Has securitisation stopped traffickers?* 9 September 2019. Milan: Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale. Available from https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/niger-has-securitisation-stopped-traffickers-23838

[43] Eaton argues that in 2016, revenues for migrant smuggling in Libya reached USD 978 million derived from overland and sea crossings combined. Eaton, T. (2018). *Libya's War Economies: Predation, Profiteering and State Weakness*. Middle East and North African Programme. London: Chatham House. Available from: https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/libyas-war-economy-predation-profiteering-and-state-weakness.

[44] Militias and tribes once involved in smuggling have now turned to "accepting incentives to serve as law enforcement partners of international donors." In Micallef & Reitano, 2017; Villa, M. (2018). "Outsourcing European Border Control: Recent Trends in Departures, Deaths and Search and Rescue Missions in the Central Mediterranean." Border Criminologies, 11 September 2018. Available from: https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2018/09/outsourcing

[45] Hayden, S. (2019). "The UN is leaving migrants to die in Libya." *Foreign Affairs* 10 October 2019 available from https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/10/libya-migrants-un-iom-refugees-die-detention-center-civil-war/; Kingsley, P. (2015). "Libya's people smugglers: inside the trade that sells refugees hopes for a better life." *The Guardian* 24 April 2015. Available from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/24/libyas-people-smugglers-how-will-they-catch-us-theyll-soon-move-on; United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. (2019). *Libya*. Online text based on *Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/201/280) issued on 29 March 2019.* Geneva: United Nations. Available from: https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/libya/.

[46] Shaw, M. & Mangan, F. (2014). *Illicit Trafficking and Libya's transition: Profits and Losses*. United States Institute for Peace (USIP). 24 February 2014. Washington DC: USIP. Available from https://www.usip.org/publications/2014/02/illicit-trafficking-and-libyas-transition-profits-and-losses.

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implications.[47] They cement European and Euro-centric concerns of security around the notion that the migration of African migrants to Europe constitutes a threat. Along the same lines, the literature on smuggling from Libya promotes through its focus on crime well known imperialistic tropes [48]that frame tribal communities as backward, uncivilised and inherently prone to violence, and migrants (particularly those from Africa) as gullible, naïve and ignorant (yet sexualized) victims.[49] This in turn facilitates the articulation of migrants as in need of protection, justifying their deportation, removal and returns, and of militias and tribes as evil enforcers of a business practice that ought to be destroyed. In the process, the everyday dynamics that shape the experiences of both migrants and those behind their journeys remained unexamined.

Methodologically, it is also fundamental to remember that the country remains off-limits to most researchers, under the claim that the security conditions and the inherently violent nature of conflict put researchers at risk. However this also means that the perspectives present in scholarship and policy on Libya are being shaped by a selected few –most often, European researchers and consultants, which interests and concerns are likely to echo those of the EU bodies and agencies who fund and employ them, and not those of the people on the ground, including Libyans and the Libyan academic community itself.[50] The also limited mobility afforded to researchers in the country results in their carrying out of work in similar areas or regions, and to rely on similar if not identical informants and sources, leading to academic and ideological echo chambers.

Narrow analytical approaches also prevent the likelihood of Libya's overall mobility dynamics to be better understood. There is limited work on the everyday lives of migrants, let alone Libyans, and the way both interact.[51] The hyper-focus on documenting the conditions on detention centres in the country (where a very small number of migrants is housed) has greatly limited the range of analysis and solutions that can and should be articulated not only for those in detention, but for the much larger community of migrants in the country.[52] Migrants in detention are also more likely to have recently and continuously experienced specific forms of violence and will describe them in different ways from those who have not been in detention contexts, or whose experiences with violence are less recent. The repeated questioning of traumatised, victimised populations (often done in an attempt to document human rights abuses, and not to address their individual conditions) also raises ethical concerns involving methodological approaches. Lastly, the perspectives of those who are behind the facilitation of mobility

[47] Boserup, R. A. & Collombier, V. (2018). *Militarisation and militia-tification: dynamics of armed group proliferation in Egypt and Libya*. Menara Working Papers no. 17. Barcelona: CIDOB. Available from: https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_wp_17.pdf.

[48] Kalifa, D. (2019). Vice, crime, and poverty: How the Western imagination invented the underworld. New York: Columbia University Press.

[49] Sharpley-Whiting, T. D. (1999). Black Venus: Sexualized savages, primal fears, and primitive narratives in French. North Carolina: Duke University Press.

[50] Al-Arabi, A. (2018). *Local specificities of migration in Libya: challenges and solutions*. Policy Brief 2018/04, Middle East Directions Programme, Robert Schuman Centre for Advance Studies. Florence: European University Institute. Available at: https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/52585

[51] Aghliw, M. (2017). What is it like living in Libya these days? *Al-Jazeera*, 29 March 2017. Available from: https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/misrata-living-war-periphery-170319082658256.html

[52] This does not seek to dismiss the conditions faced by the people in unofficial detention centres and safe houses where they are held for ransom or forced labour until their fees are paid, they are released or manage to escape. However, it invites to closely examine the much larger and complex picture of migrants' experiences in Libya. IOM has been able to survey and enumerate 16 official detention centres of the estimated 25 that exist across the country. As of 6 December 2019, the total number of people in detention was 2.218. The number of migrants in the country registered by IOM in its August-September 2019 report was 636.426. Combined, this suggests that the number of people in detention – whose experiences tend to be the focus of the migration literature – amounts to approximately to a third of one percent of the total migrant population in the country. See, respectively, *IOM's DTM Libya Detention Centre Profile, Generator (November 2019)* at https://dtm.iom.int/reports/libya-%E2%80%94-detention-centre-profile-generator-november-2019; and *Libya Migrant Report 27 Key Findings* (Aug-Sep 2019) at https://dtm.iom.int/reports/libya-migrant-report-27-key-findings-aug-sep-2019.

–construed, not unlike other regions in the world, as inaccessible members of organised crime –remain limited,[53] their presence in the literature often reduced to quotes that focus on their engagement in "unscrupulous practices, abuse, extortion and violence, to seek profits."[54] In sum, the discourse concerning mobility in and out of Libya is simplistic, showing a reduced or limited analytic focus which most often reflects European concerns over the arrival of African migrants to the continent, and which research approaches show –or perhaps, have purposely privileged—limited engagements with grounded, historical and local perspectives and actors.

This case study, drawing from the experiences of migrants on the ground, and field observations in migration facilitation hubs, seeks to capture the very diversity of mobility dynamics, in an effort to provide empirical backing for the construction of evidence-based recommendations that can ameliorate the impact of policy actions aimed to countering migration.

IV. Methodology

This project documents the facilitation of migration using a bottom-up approach, understanding the interests of people on the migration pathway as multiple and often divergent,[55] privileging the critical understanding of clandestine migration as a response to official restrictions to mobility, and allowing respondents themselves to identify what they consider are their own roles at securing or providing services conducive of mobility. Combined, these elements recognise the experience of migration "as a complex, collective practice of mobilisation" and in so seek to unpack the "landscape of control, facilitation and regulatory infrastructures"[56] where it takes place.

The case study also drew methodologically from the critical work on the facilitation of migrant journeys, which while understanding the social interactions between migrants and those who facilitate their journeys as embedded within the larger contexts of migration enforcement and border controls as forms of structural violence, is also concerned about the power relations and inequalities that exist at the local level and in the social, personal, and intimate interactions that are forged by those on the migration pathway.[57] By doing so, this case reads Libya's migration facilitation landscape in a parallel way to the kind that has relied on security or criminological lenses alone.

Data for this case study were collected in two waves. The first one took place in Rome, Italy, from October to December of 2017 and involved visits to migrant reception centres (*centri de accoglienza*) in the city and its vicinities to interview migrants who arrived and lived in Libya in the years that followed the collapse of the Ghaddafi regime. A second data collection wave took place from January to March of 2019 in locations identified in the literature as migrant smuggling-hubs along the Tunisia-Libya border.[58]

The Italy-based component of the fieldwork involved 25 semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews, and three focus groups with an additional 14 migrants. In total, interviews involved 10 men

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[53] Baird & van Liempt, 2016. Sanchez, G. (2017). "Critical perspectives on clandestine migration facilitation: An overview of migrant smuggling research." *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(1), 9-27.

[54] Reitano & Tinti, 2015. P.9

[55] See Kook, 2018.

[56] See Vogt, 2018, 5; Kook, 2018.

[57] Sanchez and Achilli, 2019; Maher, 2018; Mainwaring, Ċ., & Brigden, N. (2016). "Beyond the border: Clandestine migration journeys." *Geopolitics* 21(2): 243-262.

[58] In this process, the work of Tunis-based researcher Foued Ghorbeli and the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights at documenting the deportation of Tunisian migrants was essential. See Ghorbeli, F. 2019. *Illegal immigrants and the deportation from Italy.* Tunis: FTDES. Available from: http://ftdes.net/rapports/etude.rapatrie.en.pdf; also FTDES, 2017. *Rapport Annuel 2017: Emigration non réglementaire depuis la Tunisie.* Tunis: FTDES.

from West Africa (4 from Ghana, 4 from Nigeria and 2 from Senegal) and 29 from Bangladesh, for a total of 39 participants. All interviewees had spent time in Libya, ranging from a few months to three years. All were men, ranging from ages 18 to 45, who had relied on the services of a facilitator (often referred to as a *broker* or *dalal*) to arrive in, transit through or leave Libya behind. Notably, while respondents had experienced a vast range of abuses in both the context of their journeys and while in Libya (ranging from kidnapping, extortion and wage theft to forced labour), none reported spending time in a detention centre, although all had spent time in safe houses[59] in preparation for their journeys.

Access to respondents of Bangladeshi origin during the first wave was secured through a registered cultural mediator who provided support to migrants seeking assistance in the preparation of their asylum hearings. He facilitated the identification and referral of migrants. He was a migrant himself, although his trajectory did not involve a transit through Libya; he had lived in Italy for about 10 years and had legal status. Face-to-face interviews were carried out at cafes and parks near the reception centres where migrants lived.[60] Focus groups took place at the centres and involved in all three occasions migrants who having travelled together from Libya had developed close friendships and had remained together following their arrival to Italy. Interviews were conducted in the language of choice of the participants – often in English, at times Italian, and when needed, in Bengali, with the assistance of the mediator.

Non-Bangladeshi migrants were contacted in the course of their day-to-day activities in the city of Rome, where they worked as informal vendors. Participants were approached individually and invited to be interviewed. Interviews then took place in open, public areas, including cafes near their work places. These interviews were conducted in English.

All participants granted oral consent to be interviewed. In the context of their interviews they were often invited coffee or lunch, but no additional and/or monetary compensation was provided for their time. In the case of the focus groups with Bangladeshi respondents, participants themselves supplied snacks or meals, shared prior to or during interviews.

To supplement the data collected during the first wave, and in the context of the EULISTCO project,[61] a second wave of data collection took place on communities along the Tunisia-Libya border and cities in their vicinity, described in the literature as active hubs for the facilitation of migrant journeys (Medenine, Ben Gardane, Zarzis, and the checkpoint of Ra's Ajdir). The goal was to document the dynamics of irregular migration between Tunisia and Libya as experienced by residents and migrants *in situ*, and to witness the conditions along the border both countries shared, where a full range of smuggling practices – including those involving weapons, drugs and fuel – are commonplace.[62] A total of 21 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with border and checkpoint guards, members of local civil

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[59] A safe house is the generic term given to a location where typically migrants gather prior to completing a specific segment of their journeys.

[60] Several of the men, however, arrived at the interview in the company of friends --usually someone with whom he had travelled with from Libya-- and gave their consent for them to listen to their interviews. At times, companions supplemented the interviewees' responses or reminded them of details.

[61] The EU-LISTCO which in part funded this research, aims to "investigate the challenges posed to European foreign policy by identifying risks connected to areas of limited statehood and contested orders. Through the analysis of the EU Global Strategy and Europe's foreign policy instruments, the project assesses how the preparedness of the EU and its member states can be strengthened to better anticipate, prevent and respond to threats of governance breakdown and to foster resilience in Europe's neighbourhoods." See https://www.eu-listco.net/the-project.

[62] Capasso, M., Czerep, J., Dessi, A., and Sanchez, G. (2019). *Libya: Country Report*. EU-LISTCO Project, December 2019. Available from https://www.eu-listco.net/publications/libya-country-report; Pollock, K. & Wehrey, F. (2018). *The Tunisian-Libyan border: Security aspirations and socio-economic realities*. 21 August 2018. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available from https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/08/21/tunisian-libyan-border-security-aspirations-and-socioeconomic-realities-pub-77087; Meddeb, H. (2017). *Precarious Resilience: Libya's Tunisian Predicament*. MENARA, no. 5, April 2017. Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali. Available from https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/precarious-resilience-tunisias-libyan-predicament.

society, school social workers, hostel and restaurant keepers, local residents (including migrants), and members of intergovernmental organisations were made.

While initial inquiries to carry out fieldwork in Libya were made, travel authorization was denied given security conditions on the ground, and the Tunisia side of the border was proposed as an alternative. This country was not exempt of socio-political tensions –surveillance levels on the Tunisia-Libya border were high, and checkpoints and inspections were commonplace. Tensions between local and migrants were also routine (at the time of fieldwork, the shelters set up by IOM and UNHCR were in the process of being shut down given several security incidents, and a UN consultant and researcher not connected with this project was apprehended as fieldwork for this case study was taking place). In an effort to reduce the likelihood of questioning or conflict, field interactions with locals, law enforcement, migrants, local residents on and in the proximity of the border involved no specific questions concerning the operations of smuggling networks. As the following sections show, this had no impact on the collection of data. Given the region's long story of out-bound migration and the lack of stigma pertaining to the facilitation of mobility, information concerning mobility strategies was shared as part of the ordinary conversation of respondents, especially on the border.[63] When asked questions about the conditions faced by the community, interlocutors were eager to discuss the impact of migration, providing details concerning personal experiences, awareness and/or knowledge of migration facilitation practices, demonstrating the latter's embedded nature.[64]

Data were also cross-referenced with literature on migration governance and facilitation specific to the Libyan case. Official sources from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, smuggling data and reporting compiled by FRONTEX, and grey literature on smuggling in Libya and the Mediterranean were also used for background and comparison.

V. Conceptualising Facilitation: fieldwork findings

A. The actors of mobility

There is a vast diversity of actors involved in the facilitation of migration, which challenges the monolithic claim that it falls in the domain of militias and tribes alone. The same way authors like Hamood, Lucht, Pastore and Monzini had noted years ago, interlocutors for this case study repeatedly identified facilitators as ordinary people, living cross border regions, along migration pathways and coastal towns, and who generated an income by performing specific tasks or roles conducive of migrants' journeys. Facilitators neither identify themselves as participants or members of a particular militia or group nor were known to belong to them, but often shared language, place of residence or origin with those they worked with. Migrants most often hired facilitators with whom they shared similar identities, or those who had a reputation as reliable. Women and children were also recognised as being among those facilitating journeys, and migrants themselves repeatedly admitted having performed tasks conducive of their mobility.

For the purpose of the case study, a facilitator is defined as a person who performs specific tasks conducive of a migrant's journey and/or mobility. These tasks vary in nature and responsibility, but ultimately aim to generate a specific kind of return. When performed by locals, this was often financial

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[63] See REACH & Mercy Corps (2018). *Tunisia, country of destination and transit for Sub-Saharan African Migrants*. October 2018. Available from http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_tns_subsaharan_migration_in_tunisia_report_october_2018.pdf; Achilli, L. (2018). The "good" smuggler: The ethics and morals of human smuggling among Syrians. *The ANNALS of the American academy of political and social science*, *676*(1), 77-96.

[64] For an example of the degrees of community embeddedness of smuggling in East Africa see Ayalew et al, 2018; Adugma et al 2019; Maher 2018.

profit; for migrants, it was typically part of an attempt to cover or offset the costs of their own journeys. In this case study, facilitators are divided by virtue of their place of origin: those who were from Libya, and those who were migrants or non-Libyan.

i. Libyan facilitators

Facilitators were most often ordinary Libyan people living in both cities and border towns across the country. They were described primarily as adult men. Some had local reputations cemented on their ability to successfully organise journeys across the Mediterranean. But most were ordinary people who by virtue of residing in areas of migrant transit (as it was in the context of border communities) or in ports from where boats departed, provided transportation, room and board in exchange of a fee. Some of them also provided on occasion jobs for both migrants in transit and those who lived permanently in Libya but needed an income.

The communities where facilitators and migrants interacted were far from prosperous or wealthy. Hubs for migration facilitation activity located along the border with Tunisia had high poverty levels. Facilitators in Tripolitania were said to operate in neighbourhoods in the periphery with limited access to services, but with high concentration of migrants and where crimes targeting them were common. Participation in the facilitation of migrants' journeys –a practice devoid of social stigma, and unlikely to face prosecution or legal action (often through the payment of a bribe)—was seen as an income generating mechanism that allowed its participants (in their majority, men) to navigate the precarity of their communities, where jobs, education and services were often limited or altogether inexistent.

Members of civil society interviewed for this case study considered marginalisation a critical element leading to the participation of people from border communities in the facilitation of migration and in other forms of cross-border contraband. They expressed specific concerns on how this affected women and young people.

There were, granted, minimal references to women as facilitators of migration in the interviews. One reason may be what has been recognised as the gendered nature of the smuggling market –that is that the tasks performed are assigned primarily along the lines of gender, and more specifically and often, to men.[65] Another one is the fact that by virtue of providing gendered tasks (cooking, cleaning, caring for ill, injured migrants) the activities women performed tend to be seen as peripheral or unimportant, despite the fact that they are essential to the preservation of life.[66] Their roles might also be seen as problematic or stigmatised and therefore not openly discussed. Yet the feminisation of responsibility as women become increasingly responsible for the survival of their households given the reduction in the options available to men[67] were cited as the main cause behind the alleged increase in the numbers of women involved in all forms of cross-border trade, including the facilitation of migrant journeys.[68] The coordinator of a social services program on the Libyan-Tunisian border described the case of a woman who transported migrants from Libya to a village on the Tunisian side of the border, from where they hoped to travel to Italy:

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[65] Zhang, S. X., Chin, K. L., & Miller, J. (2007). Women's participation in Chinese transnational human smuggling: a gendered market perspective. *Criminology*, *45*(3), 699-733.

[66] Sanchez, G. (2016). Women's participation in the facilitation of human smuggling: The case of the US southwest. *Geopolitics*, *21*(2), 387-406.

[67] Along coastal border towns, fish had become scarce and forced fishermen to fish farther off the coast, or to switch to other jobs. On the border community of Ben Gardane, stories of fishermen having to respond to shipwrecks involving boats departed from Libya instead of being able to fish were common.

[68] There are no official numbers concerning smuggling-related apprehensions or convictions on the Tunisia-Libya border region.

> "We had a woman just last week, a Libyan woman, coming through the border checkpoint. She was bringing migrants across; that is worrisome, because we had not seen women before, but we fear that as things get worse around here, more of them are going to start smuggling people."

Participation in the facilitation of migration in the case of young Libyan men, as an opportunity toward social and geographical mobility. They were known to participate in the process to either accomplish their personal migration aspirations, or as an income generating strategy.

While some families were able to finance their journeys, Libyan youth often joined facilitation crews in an attempt to offset the costs.[69] Known on the border as "jokers,"[70] they recruited other young migrants with the hope of launching self-organised journeys, or secured travellers for a facilitator in exchange for a spot on a boat. A border resident referred to this as a common occurrence:

> "I at times employ these kids when tourists come; but then one day they are gone. It is like they disappear overnight. They are recruited by their friends, they buy a boat or the parts; or they work for the smugglers. One of them, he came to work one day and at night he came to tell me he was leaving the following morning for Europe. I didn't believe him. I later found out he had left, that they had put together a group and left. It is very common here on the border. There is nothing left for them."

Young people also participation in the facilitation of migration to generate income. This allowed them to reduce the impact of the lack of jobs and educational opportunities, especially in remote villages along the border. Deprived of the stigma and risk present in other smuggling or contraband activities like the kind involving drugs or weapons, the transportation of migrants across long distances or from remote locations for a fee was the most often cited form of young people's involvement in migration facilitation. While earnings were spent and recirculated locally addressing personal and family needs (communities are often many hours away from mid-size cities, and spending options are limited), civil society expressed concerns on how young people often engaged in behaviours that put themselves and others at risk, all in an attempt to gain social visibility and status. A social worker explained:

> "We do have that problem [smuggling] here. You can see how working on these businesses gives [young Libyan men] money; but they don't know what to do with it. [Young men] get paid, at times good money, but what do they do? They get alcohol; they get a car, because they think that makes them look good. They cross the border, they come to Ben Gardane, speed down our highway, cause accidents; but for what?"

Participation in the smuggling of migrants was also perceived as involving lesser risks than drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, or involvement with groups labelled as terrorist. A border-based member of civil society stated:

> "In the villages in the southern part of the border, everything gets smuggled – people, weapons, drugs. But if for any reason you get arrested, or god forbids, killed… we have had cases of families whose sons got killed or died while trafficking drugs. They don't even claim the bodies. It is too shameful, too embarrassing for a family to admit their son was involved in that. That is not the case with people, or with fuel [smuggling]."

When asked about the role of terrorist activity or radicalisation on the experiences of young people involved in cross-border trade, the same social worker stated:

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[69] For additional sources on the way migrant children individually pursue their mobility and eventual trans-Mediterranean migrations, see IOM Egypt (2015). *Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A case on irregular migration*. Cairo: International Organisation for Migration; Save the Children (2017) *Young, Invisible, Enslaved: Children Victims of Trafficking and Labour Exploitation in Italy*. Rome: Save the Children; Healy, C. (2019). *Expert voice: need to use migrant smuggling services as a position of vulnerability: trafficking on migration routes to Europe*. 30 July 2019. Vienna: ICMPD. Available from: https://www.icmpd.org/news-centre/news-detail/expert-voice-needing-to-use-migrant-smuggling-services-as-a-position-of-vulnerability-trafficking/

[70] REACH & Mercy Corps, 2018.

"I am not saying there are not radicalised young people; but what I really see behind their involvement is the lack of opportunities, the lack of choices. We are so far away from any large city, from schools, from sports, from arts. We cannot give them much. So they may go and join because this gives them some income for a while, but they come back. Again, I am not saying that [terrorist] groups do not exist, we have programmes and funding from the EU aimed to reduce their influence. But if you ask me, what we need on the border are jobs. And those who don't migrate [to Europe] have few options staying here."

ii. Non-Libyan facilitators

Migrants who had lived in Tripolitania stated the people behind their journeys, or those who had initially recruited them or offered their services to reach Europe from Libya were often not Libyan themselves, but migrants with whom they shared a common nationality or other form of identity.[71] Some of them spoke their language, even if from a different nationality, and were often well versed in their country's cultural or geographical aspects. These facilitators "connected" migrants to those in charge of the logistical aspects of the journey (the pre-journey period and the actual trip across the Mediterranean).

Quite often the "connector" role –as in the case of the joker—was performed in exchange for a reduction of a migrant's own travel fees. Migrants seeking to travel to Europe but who lacked financial resources to do so would often reach out to connectors and often negotiate an arrangement. Some facilitators recruited migrants, while others performed other tasks, like acting as lookouts or guards at safe houses, bringing food or water to migrants as they waited for their departures, or performing household chores at the facilitators' homes.

Abuses and scams were common. Often taking advantage of having accessed or learned migrants' personal information, facilitators could follow, threaten or intimidate those seeking to travel unless they opted for their services. Others pretended to be facilitators to then rob or assault migrants. During a focus group with Bangladeshi migrants, they narrated how they were often targeted by people from their own country, who at times engaged in violent acts ("They know you; they can spot you; they know how we look like," they said). A participant described how a Bangladeshi man along with some local Libyans, began to follow him as he was approaching the room he shared with other migrants. Fearing for his safety and that of his roommates, he tried to escape but could not outrun the group, who were riding in a car. He was abducted for several days.

While the sample did not involve interviews with people under the age of 18, participants did refer to the participation of non-Libyan young people and children in facilitation, or to having witnessed them perform roles in the context of smuggling journeys. According to interviewees' testimonies, young, teenage boys most often worked to offset their personal fees. They also identified potential clients, transported or delivered supplies, communicated messages and acted as lookouts. During a focus group, interviewees also reported having witnessed teenage boys performing enforcement and security roles, and at times carrying weapons in the proximity of safe houses in Libya.

In sum, facilitators tended to be ordinary people (including women and children), performing individual efforts to profit financially through the development of specific tasks. Data suggest they also faced high levels of precarity themselves, as a result of the lack of income generating opportunities, by virtue of living in marginalised, remote communities, or as a result of being migrants themselves with no social and/or financial capital. The tasks they performed appear to be assigned along the lines of origin and nationality. In short, race, class and gender along with age often shaped the kinds of opportunities and risks migrants encountered. There were no references of facilitators professing or

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[71] These findings echo those made separately by Lutterbeck and Monzini, who identified smuggling-related recruitment and referrals in Libya were carried out by people from the same country of those seeking to travel. Lutterbeck, D. (2013). "Across the desert, across the sea: migrant smuggling into and from Libya." In *Migration, Security and Citizenship in the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 136-166; Monzini, P. 2007.

advancing any specific kind of ideology or being part of larger organisations or groups: facilitators sought to either profit financially or to fulfil their own migratory goals.

B. Life in Libya

Life experiences in Libya varied widely. Sub-Saharan Africans described experiences similar to those documented extensively in the literature of migration into Libya: they had entered the country by land through its Southern border, having in the course of their trajectories endured high levels of exposure to the desert environments, and often witnessing the pain and suffering of those who travelled with them. Racism and discrimination were rampant, translated in abundant and systematic cases of abuses and violence.

Bangladeshi migrants reported having first entered Libya by air, often using a method called "body contact" –using the passport of someone with an appearance similar to theirs –and having taken a flight from either Doha or Dubai into Tripoli. The facilitators of their journeys (referred to as "brokers" or "delal") were almost invariably contacted from within Bangladesh, where arrangements for their journeys had been originally made.

Experiences among nationalities following arrival also varied. In the case of African migrants, they often reached out to contacts already in-country for initial support. They also established in neighbourhoods and/or areas with people known to them through friends and family members, often through people they had met along the way, or by recommendation of those facilitating their journeys.

Bangladeshi migrants on the other hand reported that the package of services they had purchased from Bangladesh often included some sort of initial residential arrangement or employment placement. While in some instances these allowed migrants to settle with relative ease (jobs reported work as a mechanic at a shop or waiter at a restaurant), they could also involve or lead to exploitative job conditions. An 18-year-old Bangladeshi migrant described his experience. He believed his age –he had arrived in Libya as a minor – furthered his condition of vulnerability:

> "The broker placed me with this Bangladeshi man who had a car shop, because I had studied to be a mechanic in Bangladesh. The broker had told my family I was going to be among good people. But when I arrived, he left me with a man who locked me in a room like a basement, and who would only let me out during the day so that I could work with him. He wouldn't pay me. I would ask for pay but he wouldn't pay me. He said I was just an apprentice. Finally, one day he told me that he had paid the broker a fee for me, so I had to work for him until I had paid that off. So one day that he sent me for some car parts I just didn't go back, I escaped."

Migrants described the overall conditions in Libya as precarious. But they also considered they were either better from those they had in their countries of origin, or changed and improved over time. While the possibility of legalising their stay in the country was null, jobs were readily available in the informal market. Wages were low, however they often provided enough to cover basic needs. Furthermore, the Libyan dinar was strong compared to the currencies in migrants' countries of origin, so most managed to send some of their earnings to their families back home.[72] Some employers also offered room and board, what allowed migrants to save on transportation costs and to avoid being followed, chased or robbed to and from work, when these kinds of incidents usually took place. Some migrants also accepted these agreements instead of financial compensation, for they provided a level of safety and stability.

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[72] For additional details on the day-to-day conditions migrants experience in Libya, refer to Altai Consulting, Impact and UNHCR. (2016). *Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges*; Available from: https://www.unhcr.org/595a02b44.pdf; UNHCR (2019b). *Mixed Migration Routes and Dynamics in Libya in 2018*; June 2019. Geneva: UNCHR. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/libya-mixed-migration-routes-and-dynamics-libya-2018-june-2019; UNHCR, 2019a.

Contrary to the monolithic narrative of Libya as rife with conflict and violence throughout, migrants often described having been able to find pockets of safety in some neighbourhoods, as well as supportive and caring employers. They also built strong friendships and ties that allowed them to navigate everyday challenges like personal safety, unemployment, sickness or housing. Many also developed close relationships with local Libyans –often their employers –who provided support and advice. Some of these were also involved in the facilitation of migration. A Bangladeshi man described how he had approached a man known to bring migrants to Europe when his job as an electrician came to an end:

> "…he was well known; people said he used to get people across. And I had lost my job – I have several children back in Bangladesh that I had to support, so I could not afford to stop working. I went and asked him for a job, doing anything, I told him. And he said yes. I stayed with him for a while, doing small jobs around his house and for his friends. I never got to see any indication of the work he did, but I never asked any questions either."

C. The decision to leave Libya behind

Most migrants interviewed had no aspirations to reach Europe.[73] Most had arrived to Libya with the intention of staying there, attracted by claims by their brokers and other migrants that jobs were available and that life relatively stable despite the conflict. When asked about Europe in particular, most participants said the continent was not in their plans, and that their intention was to remain in Libya for as long as they could, often so that they could pay off the debt acquired from their journeys.

While many migrants indicated having found a level of relative stability, conditions were not optimal for all. Robberies and assaults –often racially motivated – impacted their wellbeing and were seen as part of everyday life. Some also had lost their places of employment as a result of the conflict, and found themselves without a place to go. A man described his experience:

> "It took me time, but I managed to find a job at a restaurant as a waiter, and I was really happy. My boss was really kind to all of us, and we were all really happy working there. But one day the place got bombed, and it was destroyed. And my boss said staying was not worth it, that he was going to leave for Italy. He asked me if I wanted to go with him but I said no. I did not want to leave Libya."

For some migrants, continued victimisation became a factor leading to their departure. One participant explained how after having been abducted four times, he decided he could no longer remain in Libya. His decision was not tied to the insecurity he had faced, but to the financial toll this had imposed on his family:

> "I didn't want to leave, but I just kept being abducted. And every time they take you, they ask for ransom. And if you have money saved, you can ask your friends to get it for you. But in my case, I ran out of money. Eventually I had to ask my family to cover the ransom. They had to borrow money, and we still owed money to the broker for my trip to Libya, so this only raised the debt. [The abductors] released me, but my family started to become very worried because by then they owed a lot of money. So I had to leave in part so that the [abductors] wouldn't get to me again, but also because I could no longer afford being taken."

Participants indicated their families often encouraged them to depart from Libya as a result of the security conditions. These decisions were again not made slightly, especially because they could generate significant amounts of additional debt. Several participants described how they discussed departing as an option with their families, only deciding to leave once consensus had been reached or parents or older siblings had given their approval.

Family pressures were also cited as an important reason to cross the Mediterranean. Several participants indicated that given the conflict, many had lost their livelihoods, and had stopped sending

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[73] Of all 29 Bangladeshi migrants, only two said they had heard of the possibility of heading to Europe, and one of them had specifically planned to reach the continent from the onset. For the rest, making the journey across the Mediterranean was not part of their plans until conditions on the ground made it the only available option.

remittances. Many had elderly or sick parents, siblings or children who needed medical care, and who relied on their support to cover their treatment. Some families had mortgaged at high interest rates land plots, homes or businesses in order to finance the journeys of their sons, and the lack of payment could lead to the loss of their properties. Several migrants repeatedly expressed the high levels of stress they experienced as a result of their families' financial demands, and claimed they played a role in their decision to eventually leave the country:

> "There were times I did not even want to call the house anymore because they would only ask me if I had managed to send money; or tell me that my mother needed her medication; or that the creditors were asking for payment. I was going insane."

> "Every time you call they say, 'when are you sending money, when are you sending money?' and how can I make them understand that I can't send any because I don't have a job?"

In sum, the decision to depart was not always easy, voluntary or individual. Several described having made efforts to remain in Libya. The existence of extended support networks was often critical in their decision to prolong their stays. Many referred to the support they had received from co-nationals at the time of their arrival and during difficult times (for example, in the event of a kidnapping or extortion). Interviewees also described they were often able to count with the support of migrants from other countries or from Libyans themselves, when in need. And while many in fact avoided to keep them informed so not to worry them, families in the country of origin also constituted important sources of advice and support. Migrants often consulted with them, and as shown previously many in fact relied on them when in need of financial resources following, for example, a robbery or a kidnapping.

In sum, many migrants indicated they would have rather stayed in Libya, where conditions, even if precarious, had given them a sense of stability. But most often, the security conditions, continued and targeted victimisation, and pressures from family members led them to embark on another journey, this time to Europe. Other than joining repatriation programs set up by IOM that will invariably return them to their countries of origin or to other locations across Africa deemed safe, migration facilitation by boat constitutes the only option available migrants seeking to continue their journeys out of Libya across the Mediterranean.[74] The ways participants reached and identified facilitators for this purpose are described next.

D. Migrant-Facilitator Interactions

The amount of time migrants spent in Libya allowed them to develop ties with members of their local communities. Participants reported relying on these connections to access the services of migration facilitators. As described earlier, facilitators were ordinary people, often migrants themselves known to those seeking to travel. They were both local residents and migrants seeking to offset their personal fees.

Facilitators were easily located through migrant social networks, their names, numbers or addresses easily obtained by asking other migrants and employers for a reliable connection. They were also known to frequent cafes, restaurants or other places where migrants congregated and to conduct their recruiting activities from there. While other researchers (see for example, Lucht 2012) were able to connect specific roles to specific nationalities, participants in this sample did not always make that kind of distinction, only recognising that both Libyans and foreigners worked as facilitators.

Contrary to media narratives of rife abuse and exploitation, most participants claimed their interactions with those behind their journeys were often uneventful, often despite past negative

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[74] Another option to travel across the Mediterranean is to travel to nearby countries, like Tunisia and Egypt, from where alternate arrangements can be made. On a separate case study on the facilitation of migration from Tunisia, participants described how migrants from Libya often cross the border into Tunisia, only to realise conditions are even more precarious than those they left behind. Some opt to return to Libya, while others seek facilitation services in border towns like Ben Gardane, Zarzis and Medenine. Reports of boats that have departed from Libya (primarily carrying non-Libyan migrants) and gone adrift or shipwrecked in Tunisian waters are also commonplace.

experiences. Finding facilitators was not difficult, fees and payment terms were clear. Several participants did report having been given false information at the time of the negotiation (for example, facilitators lied regarding the length of time the journey would take or had promised a larger boat and not a dinghy), and invariably indicated that crossing the Mediterranean was not something they would attempt again. However the negotiation phase was not described as problematic as the period of time that preceded the departure.

The tension between migrants and their facilitators often escalated in the days and hours prior to the journey. To start with, facilitators never provided a specific departure date, for these could not be established with much anticipation, given the multiple factors that had to be in place. Migrants reported often feeling frustrated or lied to but having little recourse other than waiting, for they risked losing their investment otherwise (most reported having paid between USD$150 and USD$200 for their journeys in 2016 and 2017).

Facilitators provided migrants several reasons for the delays. One was the level of surveillance they faced, not only at the hands of authorities, but also of other groups who could be spying on them to "steal" their clients and that way charge separate and/or additional fees.[75] Migrants described guards and lookouts (at times carrying weapons) were often at safe houses in an attempt to reduce the likelihood of detection and to warn of any suspicious activity.[76] Other explanations were related to logistics, weather being the most cited. Migrants did report having to wait, often for several days, for meteorological conditions to improve. It was also common for facilitators to join forces and bring together groups of migrants and resources to maximise their potential profits. Coordinating groups however was at times difficult given factors like police surveillance, lack of vehicles, etc. Misunderstandings were common, as well as extended waits and delays, what often generated conflict among facilitators.

Overcrowding, limited availability of food or water, absence of restrooms or showers, and restrictions concerning communication with loved ones were also cause for verbal arguments. Interacting with anxious, tired, scared people often led facilitators to rely on threats or physical attacks not only against migrants but also among themselves. The often-cited claim of migrants being forced into boats was in fact explained by interviewees as the result of the tension that emerges as people get ready to depart. As fear and panic took over many migrants, facilitators (facing potential detection themselves) had few options other than imposing controls by force in order to avoid delays or for the entire operation to collapse.[77] In short, waits that were initially expected to take hours could easily go into days and sometimes weeks. Many migrants also opted to escape, or to abandon the safe houses once conditions worsened or once it became evident that a journey would not occur.

Departures unquestionably took place. It appears they depended on a series of variables: a confirmed number of paying passengers who had covered or at least provided payment guarantees; the ability to transport them from a gathering point to one of departure without detection; the existence of a working vessel (boat or dinghy). On the Tunisia-Libya border, informants also indicated arrangements with local authorities had also to be made in the form of payments or bribes prior to the departure of any boat. (A staff member from an intergovernmental organisation claimed that coastal guards were known to allow their co-nationals to go through, feeling sympathetic over the conditions they faced in-country, yet were more likely to intercept and return boats carrying non-North African or non-Arab migrants).

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[75] This practice –performed by actors known as "bajadores" or unloaders, as they steal or unload cargo from facilitators–has also been documented on the US Mexico border. See Slack, J., Martínez, D. E., Lee, A. E., & Whiteford, S. (2016). The geography of border militarization: Violence, death and health in Mexico and the United States. *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 7-32.

[76] Some authors have claimed facilitators monitor coast guard activities before deciding on a departure; participants did not provide information on this regard.

[77] Sanchez work with facilitators on the US Mexico border documents the tensions and aggressions between them and migrants, which seek to expedite segments of the journeys, to avoid detection by law enforcement or rival groups, or generate additional financial returns. Sanchez, G. (2016) *Border Crossings and Human Smuggling.* London: Routledge.

The literature refers to the reliance of facilitators on migrants as pilots or captains who guide the boats.[78] Interviewed migrants were reluctant to identify who had performed those roles in the course of their journeys. Along the Tunisia-Libya border, however, most of those identified as pilots tended to be non-Libyan, non-Arab migrants, again suggesting they were more likely to volunteer to play that role in exchange for a reduction or cancellation of their fees. Not versed on seafaring, those piloting the boats would often get lost, or end up adrift on Tunisian waters. Shipwrecks involving the deaths of dozens of migrants who had lost their way once having left Libya, were common, according to coastal authorities and fishermen on the border.

i. Does participating in the facilitation of migration constitute human trafficking?

Multiple reports and media coverage have argued many of the interactions that exist between migrants and those who facilitate their journeys constitute a form of human trafficking. A CNN report from 2017 of young black men allegedly being sold in a slave market caused global uproar and condemnation on the conditions faced by migrants in Libya.[79]

It would be amiss to suggest that all interactions between migrants and those who employ them are fair and/or egalitarian. As described above, some facilitators can easily take advantage of their more privileged position and engage in abusive or even violent behaviour. Acts of racism and discrimination were extensively reported by participants. This case study identified at least one case of trafficking in which a teenage boy was forced to work to pay off fees that had been acquired unbeknownst to him – see page 18. While no other cases of this kind were recorded, the example stands as evidence of these kinds of labour interactions taking place, facilitated by the inability of migrants to report crimes committed against them given the conflict on the one hand and their own irregular status on the other.

As described in prior sections, migrants did report having negotiated labour in exchange of a reduction or elimination of their migration fees. Interviewees attested that joining or entering a facilitation team or group, while posing quite low barriers,[80] also suggested the precarity of those who had no other alternative to afford their journeys. Both a case worker and an attorney working on the border indicated that those working in the crews in exchange for a spot are most often young men who are also financially vulnerable.

The kind of labour exchange or interaction migrants most commonly cited involved working for ordinary people (including smuggling facilitators) in order to generate an income. These agreements were also beneficial to those who employed them, given the restrictions concerning cash flow and their inability to pay actual salaries. Migrants often cited having provided labour in exchange for room and board, especially during their initial days in Libya. As also described earlier, these arrangements saved migrants considerable time and expense, and reduced their likelihood of becoming targets of crime. In short, employment arrangements were often devised to reduce the impact of the conditions present in Libya's conflict economy, and were not monolithically exploitative or abusive, and cannot be labelled as trafficking alone.

E. Economic dimensions of migrants' journeys

It is common to come across references to the earnings generated by the facilitation of irregular migration. Publications from intergovernmental bodies, think tanks and scholars often claim profits in

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[78] See Hamood, 2006 and Lucht, 2012.

[79] Elbagir, N., Raja R, Platt, A., Jones, B. (2017). "People for Sale: Where lives are Auctioned for £400." *CNN Exclusive Report*, 14 November 2017. Available from https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html. BBC News (2017). "Libya Migrant Slave Market footage sparks outrage." 18 November 2017. Available from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42038451.

[80] See Campana (2018) for similar findings on smuggling from Libya into Europe.

Libya are so substantial that the desire to increase them even further alone drives the levels of violence faced by migrants upward.[81] Others claim that single networks or even individual facilitators are known to generate earnings in the millions of dollars.[82]

These calculations are reflective of the factors western scholars and policy makers consider relevant in determining the size of the market and the ways in which they understand facilitation processes,[83] which privilege commercial and business-like notions.[84] But research indicates such factors are often in opposition to the ways in which facilitators and migrants themselves conceptualise fees and profits. Fees are often dependent of negotiations, community obligations, moral duty and other forms of reciprocity that go beyond financial values or returns, and are hardly ever the same, even for migrants traveling together or following the same trajectory.[85] Operational costs as reported by facilitators are also known to vary widely, and to constitute a lot more than the product of fees and the number of migrants transported. [86]

In this sample, it was difficult for respondents to conceptualise the notion of fee, and questions concerning prices and costs only generated estimates, not only for they had been paid in varying currencies, sometimes over long spans of time. Calculations included additional expenses like room and board fees paid to ordinary people or hostel keepers for a place to stay, bribes and tolls paid along the way, and access to travel documents, to cite a few. There were also fares (plane or bus tickets, for example) that often were not part of the facilitator's fee. Amounts also varied on the basis on the migrant's country of origin, destination, age, route, level of enforcement or surveillance and method of travel. Many participants had in fact paid multiple smuggling fees. Facilitators, guides, brokers, and ordinary people providing assistance often charged separately and/or repeatedly for separate stages of the journey. Respondents also made reference to fees lost to scams and fraud.

Bangladeshi migrants reported two different sets of transactions: the one that had led them to Libya, and the one from Libya to Europe. They also considered important the interest generated by the loans many of them had taken to cover their costs. While the majority reported having money borrowed from relatives, established banking institutions and loan sharks were also sources of financial assistance. [87]

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[81] Reitano, T., McCormack, S., Micallef, M., Shaw, M. (2018). Responding to the Human Trafficking-Smuggling Nexus. With a focus on the situation in Libya. The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. July 2018. GITOC: Geneva. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Reitano-McCormack-Trafficking-Smuggling-Nexus-in-Libya-July-2018.pdf

[82] Eaton, 2018. Jordans, F. (2016). EU : Lybia's cities making $346M a year from people smuggling. Associated Press News, 1 December 2016. https://apnews.com/86899ee286a14946b47b46b7414494a9/eu-libyas-cities-are-making-millions-people-smuggling; AP News (2019). Libya militias rake in millions in European migration funds. AlJazeera Middle East, 31 December 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/libya-militias-rake-millions-european-migration-funds-ap-191231134806918.html.

[83] Merry, S. E. (2016). The seductions of quantification: Measuring human rights, gender violence, and sex trafficking. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Andreas, P., & Greenhill, K. M. (Eds.). (2011). Sex, drugs, and body counts: The politics of numbers in global crime and conflict. New York: Cornell University Press.

[84] Achillim 2018.

[85] Adugna et al, 2019; Achilli 2018; Maher 2018; Koser, K. (2008). "Why migrant smuggling pays." *International Migration*, *46*(2), 3-26.

[86] Koser 2008; Sanchez 2016.

[87] Many authors also divide migrants' journeys in two broad categories: all-inclusive packages (which imply the payment of a single fee that covers all the expenses generated by the trip) or pay-as-you-go strategies, which involve the breaking of journeys into multiple stages, with migrants traveling as far as their resources (financial and in kind) allow them to reach. In this sample, migrants relied on both strategies – in fact, even those who had initially agreed to a single-fee deal, often had to pay additional unexpected costs. For more on the dual typology of smuggling typologies, see UNODC (2010) *Smuggling of Migrants: The Harsh Search for a Better Life*. Vienna, UNODC Available from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/toc/factsheets/TOC12_fs_ migrantsmuggling_EN_HIRES.pdf; OECD (2015) *Can we Put an End to Human Smuggling? Policy Debates*, 9 December 2015. Available from https://www.oecd.org/migration/Can%20we%20put%20an%20end%20to%

Those who had been the targets of kidnapping or extortion also believed that an accurate reflection of their expenses had to include the ransom – or ransoms – paid for their release, which as mentioned previously often increased their debt.

The earnings on the side of facilitators were even harder to estimate. The literature does make occasional references to well known or successful businessmen who are able to invest their earnings and sporadically even venture into other businesses.[88] However, in this sample earnings appeared to vary widely, and to constitute significantly smaller amounts that those present in the literature. Interviews with stakeholders along the Tunisia-Libya border indicated that roles in the facilitation of migration involved specific tasks which earnings were destined to cover facilitators' personal needs and those of their families, and were almost immediately recirculated into the communities where they lived.[89] While on occasion a facilitator could benefit from a significant payout –as in the case of younger facilitators whose profits allowed them to make impulse purchases like used vehicles – interviews indicated earnings stayed in facilitators' communities of origin, benefiting local economies.

Any returns were either generated for personal profit, and were the corresponding share of the activities of a varying number of individual operators performed (the provision of room and board; acting as security guards or lookouts; serving as guides, drivers, or performing other transportation-related roles, etc). Amounts also depended on the number of migrants who had paid their costs with labour. In other words, there is no indication that the income was reliable or consistent, and interviews suggest that hardly any participant thrived financially as a result of his or her participation. Migrants and stakeholders' testimonies suggested repeatedly that the reliance on these tasks was indicative not of increasing wealth but of the growing precarity people living in remote communities faced.

Interviews carried out with stakeholders on the Tunisia-Libya border did indicate that a significant portion of the fees, rather than being destined to empower or strengthen smuggling networks or their actors, are used to pay bribes for authorities and other official gatekeepers. Interviews with staff from intergovernmental organisations also indicated that corruption among the law enforcement bodies in charge of monitoring migration and borders is known to be rampant, given the low salaries their agents perceive and the remote locations where policing and patrolling take place.[90]

Lastly, it is also important to mention the people that while perhaps not directly involved in the facilitation of migrant journeys also benefit from them. Taxi drivers transport migrants to meeting or departure points; shopkeepers sell them food and water while they wait for their boats to depart or cell phone credit used to navigate through remote regions; food vendors at markets and street stands also generate an income from feeding them. In short, in addition to facilitators many other people who also work on informal or small-scale economic sectors benefit from the journeys, further showcasing the extended precarity of actors on the migration pathway.[91] As in other geographic contexts, the data in

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20human%20smuggling.pdf. Europol-INTERPOL (2016). *Migrant Smuggling Networks: Joint Europol-INTERPOL Report,Executive Summary*. Budapest: Europol. Available from: https://www.europol.europa.eu/files/ep_ip_report_executive_summary.

[88] Al-Arabi, 2018.

[89] This echoes the findings of Maher (2018), Brachet (2018) and Zhang, Sanchez & Achilli (2018) concerning smuggling related profits. Al-Arabi (2018) also claims that successful smugglers often reinvested their earnings in their communities, creating in the process sources of employment.

[90] Micallef and Reitano's work in Libya also suggest that rather than benefiting smuggling groups themselves, fees are destined to cover the tax-like fees militias and tribes impose upon them for the use of specific territories and/or routes –a practice similar to *pizzo* in the Italian and Mexican contexts. (2017: 32). Scholars have identified an identical practice by smugglers in the Mexican migrant smuggling market. See Izcara-Palacios, S. P. (2012). "Violencia contra inmigrantes en Tamaulipas." *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies/Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 3-24 and Sanchez, G. E., & Zhang, S. X. (2018). "Rumors, Encounters, Collaborations, and Survival: The Migrant Smuggling–Drug Trafficking Nexus in the US Southwest." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *676*(1), 135-151.

[91] See Lucht 2012, Brachet 2018.

this case study show the facilitation of migration is a practice of the poor, that most often benefits the poor. While one could say that the facilitation of migration's journeys does in fact involve the circulation of significant amounts of money, these are comprised by the accumulation of small transactions that allow for the survival of the marginalised. These forms of income support local economies in communities and sectors where financial options are slim, rather than filling the coffers of what is traditionally articulated as transnational organised crime.

F. But what happened to the Militias and Tribes?

Most literature on smuggling in Libya describes the practice as under the control of militias and armed tribes. Authors have argued that these groups rely on smuggling's vast profits to fund weapon purchases and military operations.[92] Claims of smuggling groups potentially being involved in the smuggling of jihadists or of terrorist organisations benefiting financially from migrant smuggling have also been circulated.[93] The political empowerment of desert tribes --described as violent and isolated-- in the southern part of Libya, has also been attributed to the returns they generate from migrant smuggling activity. [94]

While acknowledging the diversity of mobility strategies throughout the country,[95] and the very fact that they can certainly involve the participation of people ascribed to political and/or politicised groups and/or who belong to specific ethnicities, the testimonies of migrants interviewed for this case study suggest facilitators are significantly less politicised, ideologically-driven actors. Those involved in the facilitation of migrants' journeys were repeatedly described as personal acquaintances, or people in their social networks or with whom cultural or ethnic ties were shared –that is, other migrants, often from the same countries as those who were being recruited.

Facilitators were not perceived as outsiders or as feared characters. Instead, by sharing similar traits from those seeking to migrate, their attitudes were often conducive of trust (although with varying outcomes). Granted, this sample only reflects the unique contexts of a small group of migrants. Yet they also remarked that most people in charge of supporting and/or facilitating their journeys, while providing a clandestine activity, did not operate in hiding. Facilitators were easily accessible wherever migrants gathered, and also through other migrants and/or employers who made recommendations on the basis of past experiences. This challenges the description of smugglers as running closed operations and services: while to succeed facilitation activities did require a level of discretion, their actors also had to be accessible to those requiring services. Proselytism or engagement on the part of facilitators that could be perceived as political or military activity could in fact deter migrants from seeking services, as they could be seen as potentially increasing migrants' visibility and therefore reduce their ability to avoid detection.

In sum, migrants' interactions with facilitators consistently involved ordinary, if at times unsavoury people. However, no specific references of these belonging solely to militias or armed groups were made. Groups set up for the facilitation of migration were not organised in line or in response to political

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[92] Porsia, N. (2015). *Smuggling Networks in Libya*. March 2015. In Forensic Oceanography, ed. *Death by Rescue*. Available from https://deathbyrescue.org/assets/annexes/Porsia_Libya_smugglers.pdf; Micallef, M. (2017). *The Human conveyor Belt: trends in human trafficking and smuggling in post-revolution Libya*. Geneva: The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime. Available from: https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/GI-Human-Conveyor-Belt-Human-Smuggling-Libya-2017-.pdf.

[93] Livesay, C. & Pavone, A. (2018). Libyan coast remains fertile for ISIS and migrant traffickers. *PBS Newshour*, 6 October 2018. Available from: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/libyan-coast-remains-fertile-for-isis-to-regroup-and-traffic-migrants; Estelle, E. & Hill, T. (2018). "Libya's migrant crisis isn't just an European Problem." *AEIDeas* 9 November 2018. Available from http://www.aei.org/publication/libyas-migrant-crisis-isnt-just-a-european-problem/

[94] Micallef, M. 2017.

[95] Al-Arabi (2018) urges to distinguish the specific, regional characteristics of smuggling groups across the country.

demands or identity-based ties. Actors—often members of poor and marginalised groups -- came together to profit independently and personally from the journeys they were able to organise.

VI. Analysis and Conclusions

Data indicate that the facilitation of migration in Libya is an established income-generating strategy for largely disenfranchised communities and people facing historical and structural marginalisation (including migrants themselves, women and young people from tribal and border communities). In other words, the facilitation of migration, part of the continuum of historically employed strategies of mobility in Libya and elsewhere in Africa, has become a way devised for the poor and from the poor to benefit (albeit temporarily, and in a not always easy or unproblematic manners) from addressing mobility needs.

The official discourse concerning the facilitation of migration in Libya blames militias and tribes for the violence and victimisation migrants face in their journeys. However people interviewed in the context of this case study did not identify those behind migrant journeys as organised in that specific manner. There were in fact no references made to facilitators presenting any kind of particular structure or configuration other than them being –as Maher also identified in the Senegalese case– "small-scale operations oriented around personal and communal connections."[96] In fact, while most interviewees had experiences with violence or abuse, these were not solely attributable to migration facilitators. Violence appeared instead to be a reflection of long-standing forms of structural and institutional violence (including racism and discrimination). Agreements to travel within and out of Libya were made with people accessible to migrants and with whom they could communicate without many restrictions –in other words, migrants from their same countries and/or communities, and ordinary residents, not people involved in political struggles for power.

The proximity between migrants and those behind their journeys was indeed notorious. Migrants repeatedly indicated locating facilitators was not difficult. These were often recommended by friends and family members, or could be found through co-workers and especially through other migrants at locations where migrants usually gathered. Furthermore, many migrants themselves were engaged in the facilitation of migration services in a fashion similar to that of a mediator, creating ways for migrants to trust those behind their journeys (often Libyan nationals).

The data suggest that there is no rationale for the facilitation of migration to fall under the control of militias and tribes alone. True is that these groups could be systematically relying on hiring migrants and locals for the execution of recruitment tasks and then collecting the profits (a practice documented by other authors).[97] Yet this in fact would further confirm the fact that the facilitation of migration is dependent on open and relatively unrestricted groups –that is, organizations that rather than presenting closed and secret ties pose low barriers to membership.[98] This trait would and does in fact directly challenge the narrative and structure mobilised in some EU policy, enforcement and academic circles which characterize the facilitation of migration as smuggling alone, and/or as being the domain of closed transnational organised networks and gangs.[99]

A more plausible explanation is that migration facilitators do maintain ties with other groups and individuals who control specific routes and territories on the migration pathway, who benefit from a significantly larger portion of the fees or tolls facilitators charge. This would also explain the role of authorities, which by virtue of being deployed or assigned to remote regions in the country under limited scrutiny and supervision can easily impose controls. It is significantly easier in a conflict environment

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[96] Maher, 2018: 37.

[97] This practice was identified by Lutterbeck (2013) and Mabrouk, M. (2010). *Voiles et sel: Culture, foyers et organisation de la migration clandestine en Tunisie*. Carthage: Les Editions Sahar.

[98] See Campana, 2018 for similar findings.

[99] See FRONTEX, 2019.

like Libya's to impose a system of quotas or taxation than having to become involved in the day-to-day, logistical challenges of controlling groups of people while pursuing political or power aspirations. While similar conclusions have been articulated by authors,[100] they have failed to gather enough traction, perhaps silenced by more palatable claims of widespread warfare and conflict, which also justify the employment of vast resources and displays of military might.

The data indicate the facilitation of migration in Libya is constituted by independent operators with ties to local communities by virtue of residence or nationality, who perform specific tasks that are eventually conducive of migrants' mobility. Individuals come together and constitute small groups who by virtue of bringing resources and skills together. There is no need for them to be constituted in groups pursuing ideological or political positions, for mobility strategies are intended primarily to generate income, as well as social capital and status on the case of facilitators established in Libya, and to achieve personal mobility goals for migrants in transit.

Interactions between migrants and those facilitating their journeys were primarily transactional. At times they were also defined by tense and even violent moments. As described above, participants experienced beatings, forced labour, intimidation, verbal and other forms of physical abuse. But the violence was not limited to their interactions with facilitators. Violence and intimidation were constant elements of the larger context of insecurity faced by most people in Libya. Personal experiences reflected in part the collapse of the regime, but in the specific case of migrants they also attested to the lack of legal paths to regularise their stay in the country. Racism and discrimination on the part of the general population were rampant. Multiple testimonies attested to the way race (especially in the case of Sub-Saharan African migrants), was often used as a way to justify specific acts of abuse and violence. However, abuses and scams were also common within groups sharing similar identities. Bangladeshi migrants often reported how co-nationals and other people once considered deserving of trust were also often engaged in the forms of fraud and violence they experienced, showing as other scholars have identified, how even the mobility strategies organised within personal and intimate networks are ridden with uncertainty.[101] In sum, the challenges migrants faced in the course of their experiences in mobility into and out of Libya were not only attributable to those behind their journeys, but could in fact be traced to long-standing structures and practices rooted in inequality.

Throughout this case study, the facilitation of migration has been described as a deeply embedded social activity across communities in Libya, and as an important element of everyday life. It was clear that the roles performed by groups involved in the facilitation of migration were not strictly limited to the transportation or victimisation of migrants, and that migrants were not merely cargo transported from one point to the next. Fieldwork in all sites instead pointed to the importance of the facilitation of migration as an element of economic and social stability amid widespread marginalisation (one not only experienced by migrants, but also by those behind their journeys). Participation in the facilitation of migration has without exception proven to be an income generating strategy for vastly disenfranchised and impoverished communities and their members (including women and young people), while simultaneously providing the opportunities migrants need to continue or embark in their journeys.[102] While once again the size of the market cannot be necessarily quantified, testimonies repeatedly explained how the facilitation of mobility strategies had revitalised the economic lives of some communities, injecting much needed financial and human resources, while supporting the mobility goals of migrants across Libya and into Europe.

While international media has paid much attention to incidents involving the "sale" of migrants, data also reveal that rather than slavery, the performance of physical, manual labour was most often part of arranged and consensual exchanges between migrants and those who hired them in a cash-strapped,

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[100] See Campana, 2018 and Micallef & Reitano 2017.

[101] See Vogt, 2018: 149.

[102] Maher 2018; Lucht 2012.

conflict economy like Libya's.[103] The semantics, rhetoric and imagery of "modern day slavery" in this sense (favoured by western media) greatly oversimplify and misunderstand the kinds of interactions common to migrants' lived experiences. Deeply engrained if tacit racisms present in academic analysis also prevent researchers from conceiving cashless-labour interactions (primarily those involving people from Africa or other former colonial entities) in terms other than slavery.[104] Agreements between migrants and those who hired their services often had a double purpose: for migrants, to get access to employment, housing and personal safety, and for local Libyans struggling with cash flow, access to an affordable workforce.

These statements do not seek to suggest that labour interactions were equal or fair in all cases. Indeed, migrants were often at a disadvantage, for the amount of labour they had to perform was at the discretion of those who employed them, who often engaged in racist, classist and other forms of discriminatory behaviour. However, they do aim to bring much needed complexity to the claims that perpetuate notions of African or Asian migrants as naïve, ignorant or backward. As the data also show, migrants often left or altogether escaped from locations or situations that were less than optimal for their wellbeing, but also perceived and tolerated poor working conditions as stepping-stones into improved opportunities and jobs.[105]

This case study does not intend to capture or summarise all interactions between migrants and those who facilitate their migration in the Libyan context. It does not aim to be representative in nature. Neither does it suggest the findings and observations made by other researchers on the topic are inaccurate or wrong. Its goal is to bring a critical perspective informed by a different lecture of the conditions on the ground. Its limitations are recognisably plenty. The inability to carry out fieldwork directly in Libya outside of restricted parameters and official regulations is one. So is the lack of testimonies from people systematically and not only opportunistically involved in the facilitation of migration. The lack of female respondents who could provide insights into the gender dynamics of the facilitation of mobility is another significant and unfortunate gap, that must continue to be reduced through future work on and in Libya (to continue to ignore the role of women and non-binary people play in the practices connected with the facilitation of mobility around the world constitutes a form of sexism at best). An extended examination that further documents the role of young people and children as facilitators of mobility that is based on their experiences and perceptions is also a must.

It is also certain that in other locations across Libya facilitators can depend upon other mobility strategies, propagate a political discourse or be linked or connected with groups that privilege or endorse specific ideologies. Concepts like terrorism and radicalisation abound in reports on the security conditions in the country. Yet participants did not mention these factors as relevant to their experiences or to those of the people with whom they interacted. Instead they repeatedly highlighted the very lack of viable and sustainable employment and educational opportunities for young people and men as more pressing barriers to social stability, seeing temporary or even seasonal interactions with subversive, criminal or other problematic groups as ways to secure an income, rather than reflective of the embracing of particular ideologies.[106]

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[103] UNHCR & REACH (2018). *Access to Cash and the Impact of the Liquidity Crisis on Refugees and Migrants in Libya, June 2018. Brief Series*, UNHCR and REACH. Tripoli. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/reach_lby_brief_refugees_and_migrants_access_to_cash_june2018.pdf.

[104] See Brace, L. & O'Connell Davidson, J. (2018). *Revisiting Slavery and Antislavery: towards a critical analysis*. London: Palgrave McMillan.

[105] Achilli, 2018.

[106] "the way many young men engage in militant movements or violent organisations is tactile and tentative, as they prove and test out such structures for their potential; that is, for their capacity to positively affect their lives in terms of livelihoods, recognition and futures." Jensen, S., & Vigh, H. (Eds.). (2018). *Sporadically Radical: Ethnographies of Organised Violence and Militant Mobilisation*. Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press.

This case study constitutes an attempt and a call to rethink the facilitation of migration in Libya. Reading mobility practices through a lens critical of their growing construction as inherently criminal by regimes worldwide, shifts the focus from their articulation as a threat to the state, shedding light on the way legal, safe and dignified paths to migration are decreasing, in the process re/producing and reinforcing forms of inequality. In other words, when we turn the focus from the state to the people experiencing its actions, the violence inherent to enforcement –often operating through the mobilisation of interlocking systems of oppression[107] –becomes visible. But so do the "spaces of solidarity and hope," the "fraught points of contestation (…) impacted by local economies of violence," where those along the migration pathway "grapple with everyday insecurity (…) "challeng[e] othering and exclusion." [108] Growing inequalities on the migration pathway are also conducive of specific forms of violence. This is evidenced in the way practices like migrant kidnapping and extortion common in Libya are almost identical to those experienced by migrants traveling along the Mexico-U.S. corridor, suggesting (unlike the favoured narrative of security and smuggling) not that groups engaged in the commission of crimes against migrants have learned from one another. But instead, that the conditions leading to the emergence of the practices that they resort to for their own survival are deeply connected to the expansion of migration enforcement regimes worldwide.

To conclude, the case study is a call to dismantle the mainstream narrative concerning the facilitation of migration journeys –that is, the kind that around the world has labelled it as inherently organised, criminal and violent in nature. Said narrative has led to the articulation of enforcement responses that do little to contextualise both migration and the income generating practices tied to its facilitation, yet fosters the precarity of its actors and pushes mobility strategies further underground, where the likelihood of experiencing violence and abuse abounds. Specific, grounded, long-term understandings guided by the perspectives and concerns of local actors and communities are fundamental at identifying the forms of inequality and violence present in the facilitation of migration and at finding potential alternatives and solutions. Yet simultaneously, as researchers, it is imperative that we engage in reflexive examinations of how our work in the field has emerged and been reproduced.[109] There are in fact multiple publications that –perhaps unintentionally – allow for the reproduction of sexist, classist, and colonial perceptions of migrants and the people behind their journeys that eventually find their way through their weaponised versions into policy and enforcement responses and practices. These state-centric approaches –in Libya, the returning of boats, the narrow focus on detention centres as determinants of the needs of all migrants, or the fighting of the ill-defined "smuggling business model" (which supports the further marginalisation of migrants, tribes, women, children by mobilising criminal justice responses)—simply reaffirm structural violence, and further the inequality faced by those on the migration pathway.

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[107] Crenshaw, K. (1990). "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color." *Stanford Law Review*, *43*, 1241.

[108] Vogt 2018: 10.

[109] Baird & van Liempt 2016; Fonow & Cook 2005.

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