SOLROUTES

Questioning solidarity on border disappearances

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فالمنام جيتو الحبيب العين تغمضت لما

العوام و للقارب جرى ما حنين بصوت رويتلو و

العنوان تعرف رسالة الليل شهاب مع بعثت

(...)

الفنان وينو يادرى

البحوور قااااطع

بعيدا سار

البلاد هجر

البحور قطع

حداد في قلبه

When I closed my eyes, love, you came in dreams

And I narrated in a nostalgic voice what happened to the boat and the oars

I sent with a night star a message who knows the address

(...)

Oh where is the artist

He has crossed the seas

He has gone far away

He has left the country

He has crossed the seas

His heart is mourning[1]

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[1] Kataa lebhour, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFAOOXxSELE, Babylone.

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Text notes

The names of the people mentioned in the text have been replaced with fictional names. An exception is made for the names of missing persons, which have been kept real - we consider this a way of preserving their memory.
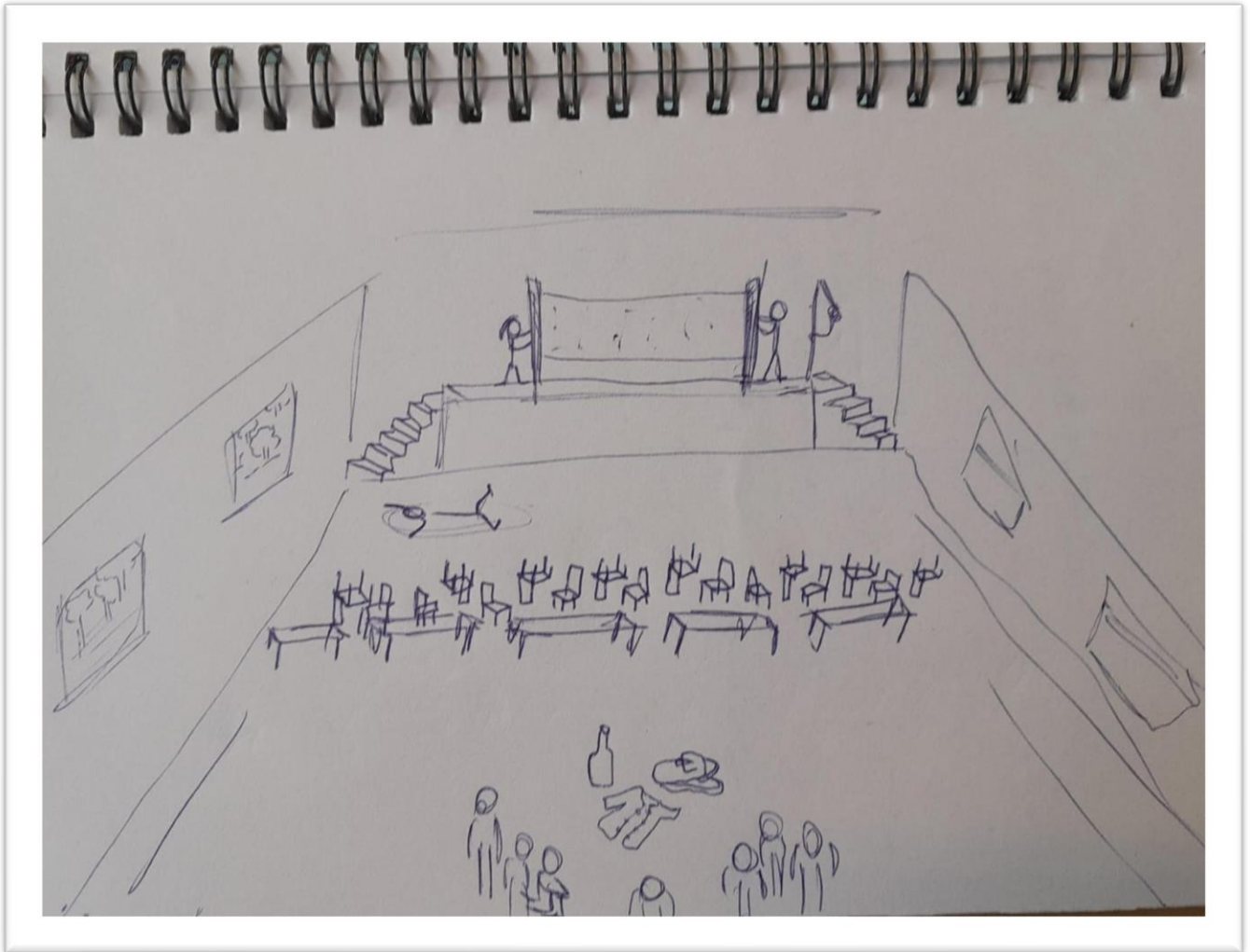
Figure 1 Daniel's memorial in the background of Ceuta's representation. First node GNW. Michela's fieldnotes, March 2024.

1. Introduction: from necropolitics to grief-activism

His name was Daniel Oury. He crossed Mali, Algeria to arrive in Morocco. His *adventure* was headed for Europe. He lived in Taqadoum, a suburb of Rabat, facing daily internal borders in a country where being black and undocumented leads to a reduction in exploitation, violence, and rejection. A life on the margins, amidst numerous attempts to cross borders into Europe. In September 2021, he finally managed to cross the Ceuta valley. After the barrier, his life would still be full of borders: in the European land, exploitation, irregularity, racism, and violence will not end. He knows this, probably, but he still dreams of that afterwards.

He skips the first part of the barrier as well as the second one. Together with his friend H. he arrives on Spanish soil: *boza*! To escape an oncoming Guardia Civil car, however, the two friends split up. It is here that the traces of Daniel are lost. For months, he has given no news. Then, months turned into years.

At the Staging Borders workshop of Theatre of the Oppressed, held in Rabat in February 2024[2], Daniel's friends wanted to dedicate a memorial to him. They wanted to build a tribute in his name, with three objects: a backpack, a water bottle, a jacket. "These are the objects you take off before climbing over the barrier, to prevent them from hindering your movements" explains Tely, one of the participants.

These are the objects left on the ground when someone tries to cross, and they remain there, both in case of success or not. I imagine a mountain of objects, one layer on top of the other. Those objects are now the only thing we can imagine of Daniel. His body has never been found, neither in Ceuta nor in Morocco.

Daniel's disappearance raises many issues. His family, and his friends in Taqadoum, like him People on the Move (PoM), would like to know what happened to Daniel. "It would be better to know if he is dead than to be left with this unknown, we would be relieved", says Toto, his companion and friend. It would be important to understand, if he died, how it happened, who is responsible and who should pay for it. For his family and loved ones, it would be important to have a body to mourn, to pray over, to bury.

During the fieldwork conducted by the SOLROUTES team in Morocco, numerous situations similar to Daniel's were encountered. Abdelkarim, Mohamed, Rachid, Ahmed, Jalal, and many others: these stories raise questions about solidarity, the focus of our research project.

In this panorama, how can we interrogate the concept of solidarity?

We consider border deaths and disappearances as a direct effect of the current migration regime (Cuttitta et al., 2019; Kobelinsky, 2020). Indeed, they are seen as a product of the securitarian paradigm, which characterizes the externalization of the European Union's borders and the resulting militarised and coercive practices. The academic literature (see Stierl, 2016) interprets this phenomenon through the theoretical lens of necropolitics, as conceptualized by Achille Mbembe (2003), looking at borders and their management as an instrument through which the sovereign state determines who must live and who must die.

Over the years, necropolitics has produced an incredible number of victims. Although it is difficult to quantify deaths and disappearances along migration routes, there are attempts to give a rough idea of the phenomenon. The IOM's Missing Migrants project[3] has recorded the deaths of 67,702 people since 2014. Between them, the remains of 28,055 people who lost their lives during migration have not been recovered. Compared to the data recorded along the West and Central Africa route for the year 2023, 4,372 deaths and disappearances were reported out of 274,431 arrivals. However, these numbers are probably underestimated. Many migrants disappear without leaving a trace, both at sea and along land borders. Difficulties in recovering bodies and identifying victims, combined with the lack of reports in several areas and the lack of accurate monitoring, suggest that the actual death toll may be significantly higher. Daniel may probably not be included in this database.

On the one hand, we have the evolution of ever-securitarian migration policies, on the other, the increase in deaths and disappearances: a reflection focused on human rights would question the legitimacy of such a migration regime (Albahari, 2016). Border securitization normalizes the production of victims, in a process of trivialising risk and death. Practices of resistance to this phenomenon are the efforts to identify bodies, to protect the rights of the families of the disappeared, and to demand justice for them. Such efforts have been

referred to by the scholars as "grief-activism"(Stierl, 2016). Practices that aim to counter the border violence and all it produces.

The experience of mourning, from a personal path, becomes a catalyst for political subjectivities (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018) and then for collective actions of contestation and solidarity (Rygiel, 2016; Stierl, 2016; De Vincenzo and Zamperini, 2023). These are individual and collective practices to prevent people's "total disappearance" (Kobelinsky, 2020) and mitigate the invisibility of border victims. These efforts take place at various levels in a national or international context where there are no specific procedures or protocols to follow when unknown bodies are found. This process involves the families of the victims, their fellow travellers, solidarity activists and ordinary people who are directly or indirectly involved in this collective mourning.

The second node of the SOLROUTES Morocco Antenna aimed to observe solidarity around border disappearances in Morocco. By looking at the stories of Daniel, Abdelkarim, Mohamed and Rachid – four young people who disappeared while trying to cross the border – we want to reflect on how these disappearances were generative of solidarity ties and practices.

2. Border disappearances viewed from Morocco

Introduction to the research question

In an attempt to portray the extent of the violence of migration policies in Morocco, we draw on data from the NGO Caminando Fronteras, a Spanish organization working for the right to movement of unauthorized PoM and denouncing border violence. According to the monitoring, in the first five months of 2024, 5,054 people died or disappeared on the Western Euro-African border, with an average of 33 victims per day[4]. In addition, 47 boats were reported missing, and there was an unclear number of passengers on board. We are talking about more than 1,000 border victims per month. The NGO monitoring reports data from the alerts they receive; this suggests that numerous other deaths and disappearances occur without leaving a trace that could be part of the monitoring.

Addressing the issue of missing persons along migration routes in Morocco requires a tactful approach, given the sensitive nature of migration as a socio-political topic in the country. Public discourse on migration in Morocco remains limited and heavily regulated, primarily focusing on the presence of sub-Saharan African migrants and anti-racism initiatives. Unlike Italy and Tunisia, where active networks and public awareness campaigns address border disappearances, Morocco has hesitated to provide public space for this issue.

Nevertheless, the data shared indicates that Morocco is significantly impacted by border violence, as a consequence of the borderization process implemented following agreements with Schengen countries and the European Union. The necropolitical character of the migration policies implemented in Morocco and towards the European borders affects both Moroccan and non-Moroccan citizens. According to the data, most border victims come from sub-Saharan African countries, Morocco and other north African countries.

In contrast to this phenomenon, a room is slowly opening up for grief-activism in Morocco. Recent years have seen a growing awareness of this issue, involving international and local actors, organizations, networks, and

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[4] Online resource, last accessed on August 2024. Cfr. https://caminandofronteras.org/monitoreo/monitoreo-del-derecho-a-la-vida-primeros-5-meses-2024/.

independent activists. Several associations are now addressing various aspects of the disappearance issue, including body identification, support for families and PoM, and denunciation of border violence.

The second node of the Morocco Antenna aims to investigate the dynamics of solidarity in support of those missing at the border. In our study, we consider disappearances in the context of unauthorized movements of Moroccan (*harga*) and sub-Saharan persons. This research examines the efforts undertaken to search for traces of the disappeared, reconstruct the truth, preserve their memory, and demand justice. To this end, we will explore the journeys and mobilizations of family members and fellow travellers of missing migrants. By examining four selected stories, we aim to observe how various actors interact with each other, including PoM, family members, and solidarity actors. Looking at these interactions, we want to explore how disappearances can catalyse solidarity dynamics.

3. Methodology

The second SOLROUTES Morocco Antenna node was conducted from March to June 2024. It combined ethnography and semi-structured interviews to observe the dynamics of solidarity around the issue of border disappearances. The node began in Rabat and gradually expanded to other locations and cities in Morocco, conducting field research missions following the method of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1999).

Field observation was conducted following a triangular approach, which allowed data to be collected from different perspectives and contexts. This triangular approach included:

- **Meetings with sub-Saharan PoMs** in Taqadoum (Rabat);
- **Interviews with family members of the disappeared harragas**;
- **Entry into the space of the migration industry** dealing with disappearances.

One of the important places for the second node was the Taqadoum neighborhood, in Rabat. The neighborhood was encountered during the first node, where we came into contact with a group of undocumented sub-Saharan youth living there. They spontaneously shared with us the stories of their comrades and neighbourhood friends who, transiting in Morocco and aspirating to enter Fortress Europe, got lost in the attempt to cross. In the cases of Daniel and Abdelkarim, two young adventurers who lived in Taqadoum disappeared in Ceuta and Sfax, respectively.

Concerning the stories of the missing *harragas*, they were shared through encounters with their families. Fatima, Salima, Amina, and Khawla are sisters and mothers of young Moroccans whose traces have been lost along their migration route. These encounters took place in different cities in Morocco and were facilitated in different modalities: some contacts were established through social media, while others were mediated by solidarity actors. In addition, thanks to the network of relationships that family members of the disappeared have with each other, it was possible to extend contacts.

To complete the perspective on solidarity related to disappearances in migration, we conducted interviews with actors involved in the field of migration management, in particular those working in situations of disappearance or death at the border. These include independent activists, members of local associations, NGOs or international foundations, and part of transnational networks, lawyers, journalists, researchers, religious members, social advocates and political activists. These individuals, whether Moroccan, sub-Saharan or Western, from different backgrounds and with various political orientations, have contributed to outlining a picture of 'grief-activism' in Morocco. A field with varied personalities: it presents humanitarian experiences, part of the migration industry (Gazzotti, 2021), or subversive solidarity (Bachelet and Hagan, 2023).

Field observations and interviews were conducted in several languages to accommodate the multicultural and multilingual context of the participants. In particular, interactions took place in Darija (Moroccan Arabic dialect), Levantine Arabic dialect, and weak French, English, and Italian. The conduction of **fieldwork missions** around Morocco was crucial to following the trajectories of the stories of missing migrants and their families, allowing for a deeper understanding of the paths. The first mission, which marked the transition from the first to the second node of the project, was conducted at the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. This mission was inspired by the theatre workshop of the first GNW (Generative Narrative Workshop), during which Ceuta was described as the place of Daniel's disappearance.

Further missions were conducted in several key cities in Morocco: Casablanca and Beni Mellal, which had already been explored during the first node, and Oujda, a city on the border with Algeria known as an entry and exit point for unauthorized migratory movements. In each of these cities, contacts were initiated and cultivated with family members of disappeared persons, PoM, and solidarity and migration industry actors.

In addition to field research, a systematic **netnographic observation** was conducted in Facebook groups gathering people interested in searching for missing migrants.

In these groups, 30 specific posts were selected and analysed, divided into three main categories:

1. Search notices **for a missing** migrant (14 posts) - Posts reporting details about the missing person and requesting information or assistance in the search.
2. Search announcements **for the family** of a deceased migrant (11 posts) - Posts attempting to trace family members of deceased migrants, often to return bodies or information to relatives.
3. Posts of **remembrance** of a dead migrant (5 posts) - dedicated to the memory of missing or deceased migrants, serving both as a tribute and as a call for justice.

3.1 Ethical notes

The methodological approach adopted in this research required deep relational sensitivity. The politically sensitive environment and contact with people in mourning required careful interaction management.

Morocco is generally characterised by a high level of political and social control, especially on sensitive issues such as migration. Also, the field of research on the topic, particularly on the issue of the disappeared, is strongly influenced by a political environment that is often wary of the presence of international actors. Consequently, the fieldwork encountered several obstacles that required caution, a deep understanding of the context, and patience.

3.1.1 Difficulties in the field-access and mistrust

In the various attempts to gain access to the field, often the impression was of being in contact with intangible boundaries that excluded full access to situations: forms of social control, confrontation with the authorities, and various structural slowdowns. Interactions were sometimes filtered, preventing the full depth of certain reflections and direct and spontaneous encounters. These boundaries were also erected by the interviewees themselves, who indirectly expressed their distrust towards European researchers dealing with the topic of migration. For example, during some interviews in an indirect way even people working in the solidarity field expressed their mistrust of Europeans working on the topic, or of researchers. Statements such as "there are many researchers who come here just for their research but they don't do anything for the disappeared", "once a PhD student asked me to talk to the family of a disappeared person, but I think it's never the case, the pain of the families is too heavy and not everyone knows how to deal with it", but also "of course with all the problems you have in Italy, with Meloni, it would be better if you dealt with this".

These were not recommendations or reflections directly addressed to me, but in fact, they conveyed a message: that it was not appropriate for me to enter.

On the one hand, I perceived a mistrust of me in some situations. This distrust was often based on the fear that the purpose of my work was not the stated one, but that there might be other hidden motivations, especially when interacting with Moroccan people. I always made it clear who I was and what my intentions were, openly asking if people felt free to choose to talk to me or not – but the process of negotiation was complicated. I was often required to explain and to justify my role and intent, even giving information that went beyond my role as a researcher or opinions about general things. For this reason, the dynamics of the dialogue often required a kind of "dance" in which the microphone went from one side to the other: it was not only others who had to talk about themselves, but I also had to expose myself. I learned, then, that the interview dynamic does not always put me in the role of the one asking the questions, but also the one receiving them.

3.1.2 Managing the emotional burden of dealing with vulnerable people

On the other hand, the fieldwork required constant emotional and relational engagement with people who, directly or indirectly, have been affected by the disappearance or death of a loved one. Asking someone to share their experience concerning the disappearance of a migrant family member or friend means coming into contact with an open wound. It is to inhabit, even if temporarily, the sense of someone's absence, the incredulity and absurdity of not knowing where that life that body is, to confront the desperate search for answers and the anger of not being able to obtain justice. Added to this is the sweetness and tenderness of the memories that emerge during these sharing moments.

For instance, in the specific case of Taqadoum's friends, the subterranean terror of ending up like their missing comrades also emerged. This dimension of uncertainty and vulnerability was reflected in the conversations, underlining how essential it was to approach these stories with caution, empathy and understanding.

The emotional weight of what was shared by participants was one of the most complex aspects to manage. This weight manifested itself in different ways: sometimes as an obvious fatigue in sharing, at other times as violent anger during narration, and in still other cases as a search for almost absurd justifications to explain traumatic experiences, such as the self-conviction that a loved one was alive but in the hands of American mafias. One of the most critical methodological lessons learned during this node was understanding when to stop asking questions or asking people to tell their stories. Participants' pain was often palpable, though not always explicitly communicated, and there were situations where there was a risk that this pain would become too overwhelming. In general, the approach was not to ask too many questions and to allow the dialogue to flow naturally, letting people tell only what they felt they shared.

4.   Daniel, Abdelkarim, Mohamed and Rachid

This section explores the practices of solidarity that emerge in response to border disappearances. Drawing on our fieldwork, we present an analysis of four cases that recount some manifestations of solidarity in migration-related disappearances: two sub-Saharan *adventurers* and two Moroccan *harragas*, all of whom disappeared along their migration routes. These narratives, shared by their loved ones who actively search for them and preserve their memory, serve as a starting point for our reflections on how communities respond to the challenges posed by border disappearances, and the role of solidarity in navigating these circumstances.

We have already mentioned the story of **Daniel**, from Guinea. In September 2021, he manages to cross the border separating Ceuta from Morocco, but shortly afterwards disappears. This case initiates a search process spanning multiple countries and involving various people.

The friends in Taqadoum, concerned by the lack of communication, alert Daniel's brother residing in France and his family in Guinea, and start launching appeals on social media. They also contact other people living in different parts of Morocco to ask if Daniel has arrived there after a refoulement, but they receive no information. H., who had crossed with Daniel to Ceuta and managed to reach the *Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes* (CETI), once released from quarantine, conducted a thorough search of the city. There, he meets a local Spanish lawyer, who supports him in the search, but they do not locate Daniel in the Spanish soil. Concurrently, Daniel's brother embarks on a journey from France, to search for the brother from Tangier to the forested areas preceding the enclave. Daniel has been missing for three years now.

Abdelkarim is a young sub-Saharan who has lived in Morocco for a couple of years. After multiple unsuccessful attempts to cross Moroccan borders, Abdelkarim decided to pursue an alternative route via Tunisia. Abdelkarim embarks from Sfax, motivated by the recent successful journey of a friend who had reached Lampedusa, Italy. Before leaving, he sends a message confirming his departure, expecting to reunite with his friend, who, however, never finds him among the new arrivals.

The search for Abdelkarim has been launched in different places. Fellow travelers he had met in Sfax conducts a local search, but do not find him. The Taqadoum community launches appeals on Facebook and is in daily contact with family members in Guinea. Finally, they manage to figure out where Abdelkarim is. "We saw in the newspaper that on the same day he left, there had been a shipwreck from Sfax, and some bodies had been recovered." Shares with me Falou, his friend, "I had to call the family to tell them that Abdelkarim was on that boat." Abdelkarim's body is not recovered; his friends deduce that he was lost in that shipwreck. As a memorial for the friend, the community in Taqadoum organized a funeral rite without a body. At the funeral, hundreds of sub-Saharans prayed for Abdelkarim and all those who died at sea, and for all those attempting the *boza*.

Mohamed is a Moroccan in his early thirties, born in Salé and employed in Rabat. In September 2021, Mohamed coordinated with a group of young Moroccans to attempt the *harqa* to Spain. The group embarked on their journey via zodiac boat towards Cadiz, Spain, during the night of Eid al-Adha. The following day, when relatives realize that Mohamed and his companions are not there anymore and no news of their arrival or return is received, it becomes apparent that the group has gone missing. Amina, Mohamed's elder sister, and the other family members start to organise the search for their loved ones together. They hold sit-ins and meetings to demand the Moroccan government to act in the search for news of their loved ones, possibly their bodies. The families engaged in various efforts to gather information and seek assistance; they got in contact with a lawyer in Spain for support and established communication with the Red Cross and other international organizations. At the time of this study, the fate of Mohamed and his companions is still unknown.

In December 2023, **Rachid** abruptly left his home without leaving any message for his family. He is twenty-four years old and comes from a village near Agadir. The circumstances surrounding his departure came to light when a friend informed the family that Rachid had been contemplating the *hijra sirrye* (secret migration). Rachid's mobile phone is unreachable. Khawla, his sister, takes action to search for him but has no concrete information on Rachid's destination or chosen route. She follows two potential scenarios: he could be embarked from the Agadir region, suggesting a maritime route to Canary Island; he could have travelled to Turkey, potentially followed by an attempt to walk on the Balkan route. She does not know which route he took; she tries to make assumptions and reconstruct possible trajectories. She gets active on social

media, sending appeals, contacting people and organisations, and searching for traces. She publishes photos, information about him, and possible routes taken, and she puts her phone number. In doing so, she gets in touch with various people. Convinced that her brother might be in Turkey or the Canary Islands, she writes to many solidarity organizations, such as Refugee Rights Turkey and Caminando Fronteras, which support her in different ways, sharing information with her regarding the monitoring of shipwrecks that have occurred or the presence of PoM in detention or reception centers. She receives no information to help her understand where Rachid is. To this day, Khawla cannot say where her brother is.

4.1 Analysis and interpretation using data collected

4.1.1 The research process in contexts of control and constrained mobility

The analysis focuses on the experiences of Daniel, Abdelkarim, Mohamed, and Rachid and the subsequent as well as actions of their loved ones following their disappearance. The subjects of this study have diverse backgrounds: Daniel and Abdelkarim are young sub-Saharan PoM in a prolonged transit situation in Morocco without regular documents, while Mohamed and Rachid are citizens of Moroccan origin. All four disappeared while trying to reach Europe, leaving behind a network of people who then mobilised in their search.

The analysis highlights two distinct groups engaged in search and reporting activities: on the one hand, the Guinean Taqadoum community, and on the other, Moroccan people. The context in which these groups operate presents different challenges. The former are young blacks, face a lack of regular documents, live in the informal interstices of Moroccan society, are exposed to exploitation and control, and suffer severe restrictions on mobility. The latter are Moroccan citizens, who, therefore, move within their space of origin. The context in which they move is heavily guarded and controlled, especially when it extends to public space.

Both groups experience forms of control, but the intensity of surveillance varies significantly depending on factors such as skin colour and legal status in the country. These four stories highlight how the socio-political context and individual status profoundly influence the experiences and possibilities of action of those involved. Each of them is, therefore, confronted with an environment that does not facilitate the process of finding the missing person and must take steps to move strategically.

When Daniel and Abdelkarim disappear, their companions take action to search for them in a severely reduced space for the search. They cannot go to Ceuta to look for them, nor to Sfax, of course. They cannot go to the authorities or expose themselves publicly or report their disappearance. Even less can they protest their disappearance or call anyone to account. They are black and undocumented, at great risk of deportation and detention. Even in the media space, they must be cautious. They post videos and photos from profiles that do not show their names and faces.

In Morocco, public space is constantly negotiated, as we saw during the first node of our Antenna. When it was decided to organize the memorial rite for Abdelkarim, his friends decided to place it in an old building in Taqadoum already rented to sub-Saharans. In order to organize the event there, they had to 'inform' the local authorities through the renter, a Moroccan man, who offered to rent tables and chairs for the occasion. A rent that included chairs and permission to do so. Every movement must be negotiated.

Amina and Khawla experience the relationship with the socio-political context of the research process differently. They are two Moroccan women, the former aged 42, the latter 20. Amina lives in Rabat and studied at university; Khawla comes from a rural village south of Agadir and has just finished secondary school, living with her family while waiting to get married. When their brothers disappear, they move differently. Amina networks with the other 33 families involved in the collective disappearance, who start to

meet and move collectively in asking for information. The sit-ins they organise carry pictures of the 34 missing young people, in central public places, such as the Parliament in Rabat or in front of European embassies. They expose themselves. During their protests, police forces are present, identifying the participants and restricting their movement. The families' slogans demand that Morocco take action for the truth about the fate of the '*waladna al-mafqudiin*' (our disappeared children) and the interruption of violent European policies, and they denounce European policies being responsible for these disappearances. In a relationship with the control apparatus that is conflictual, they find themselves having to moderate their tones and, above all, their accusations: they use humanitarian language and claim the family link they had with the disappeared. When they decide to form an association, they encounter a series of sudden and protracted bureaucratic problems that make one thing clear to them: they will never get permission to do so. The local authorities tell them that they will not receive it unless they change the name they proposed: 'the families of the disappeared Moroccan migrants'. "We are the parents of people who disappeared because of migration; we did not want to change the name", explains Amina, "and we never received authorization".

Khawla, on the other hand, moves alone. Her brother has organized to leave on his own, she has no other family members to discuss the event with. She is uneducated and lives in an isolated environment; her mobility possibilities are structurally limited, and she moves with the tools she has: the internet. The Facebook pages of *harqa* organization and the search for the disappeared along the migratory routes become the space in which she moves to look for Rachid.

4.1.2 Shades of solidarity: networking, solidarity actors and the media space

Looking at the experiences of Khawla, Amina and the friends of Taqadoum, how do we question the concept of solidarity? What are the ways and spaces in which it is expressed?

Observing the stories reported, we propose three elements of observation concerning solidarity: the emergence of support networks, the meeting and contact with solidarity organizations and activists, and the exchange of support in the media space. From different ways of perceiving the Moroccan context and different starting statuses, they experience different types of solidarity.

All the actors we consider rely on **support networks** arising spontaneously around the disappearance. One of the ways that Daniel and Abdelkarim's friends have of reducing the difficulty of activating for missing friends, given their constrained mobility, is to get in touch with people living in different places who relate to the border. In Daniel's case, a network from Taqadoum connects with H. in Ceuta and Daniel's brother in France leaving for Tangier. For Abdelkarim, the network connects his friend in Lampedusa, fellow travellers in Sfax and other friends in Taqadoum. A transnational network covering both sides of the border: departure and arrival, where the loved one may have arrived or may have been rejected. This network also takes care of maintaining contact with the families in Guinea, to whom the information gathered is given. The network, in this case, has multiple functions: transmitting information, sharing suppositions, and checking possibilities. It also has an emotional support function for the people involved, who are not alone in dealing with the disappearance.

Amina immediately connects with the other families involved in the possible shipwreck, as described above. There, the network also has the function of amplifying requests for help and public denunciation: the claim is collective, and it is as mothers and as Moroccans that the women involved ask for support and justice.

The network Khawla comes into contact with is different. It is people she meets online who interact with her through Facebook posts or private chats. She relates with PoM who share information about routes, other family members of the disappeared who give her advice, guidance, and moral support, and, as I mentioned,

people from international organizations or independent activists. Communication is mediated through the phone.

These networks then meet in various ways with **solidarity activists**. International organizations, local associations or independent activists working to support the rights of missing persons and their families. In the case of the stories considered, we have the Spanish advocate of Ceuta for Daniel, the one for Mohamed, international organizations such as the Red Cross, and the organizations in contact with Khawla. Actors who, in contexts of transit or destination routes, take action to verify the arrival of PoM or their bodies and try to reconstruct the routes of the disappeared. The support received in the stories considered is varied: legal support, information sharing, and searching for the disappeared in detention or reception centres. Solidarity actors, in this case, intervene where Khawla, Amina and the PoMs of Taqadoum cannot reach. In spaces they cannot access, they enter; they get in touch with different authorities to try to get information, they put family members and companions into a network of contacts that can support them in their search. It is a Spanish lawyer in Ceuta who has taken steps to formally ask if Daniel was ever registered on Spanish territory; it is the Caminando Fronteras activists who are demanding access to the names of those who arrived in the Canary Islands during the days following Rachid's disappearance.

Finally, another space that is being traversed in the search for the disappeared is **social media**. Digital space is used, in fact, to disseminate images, information, and requests for help and contact in an attempt to search for and give information about someone. In the context of restricted movement experienced by the people searching in the reported stories, social media emerges as a valuable resource for several reasons. Social platforms such as Facebook are accessible even in precarious conditions, all that is needed is a mobile phone, a profile and a wi-fi network. Users can post requests for support while maintaining a certain degree of anonymity: this is crucial for those who experience the risks of exposing themselves or making public complaints. Groups and pages dedicated to finding missing migrants are formed, creating transnational solidarity networks. Many family members and friends publish posts on social media with details of when the person was last seen, adding specific hashtags to increase the visibility of the search. Such posts are shared in different groups, e.g. in addition to missing person reports, also in groups dedicated to migrants of specific nationalities or migration routes. These pages are places where information about a missing person can be asked, but also there are search appeal posts from relatives of people on the move who have died along the migration route. Here again, photographs of the person, indications regarding the finding of the body and the death are shared, with a plea for family members to be informed and contacted for the return of the body.

These digital spaces allow people from different parts of the world to get in touch, dialogue and exchange information, and are also places where emotional support is encountered. "*May Allah bring you good news*" is a comment I often found in the posts I examined during the digital ethnography. Different individuals express empathy and support for those in need. It is, therefore, a space in which relationships of solidarity and support develop, bringing together people who are distant from each other but who share similar experiences. Amina tells me about this: she is in contact with some Tunisian and Algerian mothers whose children disappeared during the *harga*, or with many Moroccan women who have gone through similar experiences met online. Khawla, for example, is also in contact with a young Syrian man who crossed the Balkan route and who feels empathy for her, aware of the violence her brother may have suffered along that route.

4.1.3 Dealing with disappearances: from individual emotion to a collective path

The emotional management of absence is something I had to deal with a lot during my fieldwork. The disappearances of Daniel, Abdelkarim, Mohamed and Rachid leave behind an emptiness that is hard to explain and face.

In the mechanism of Transitional Justice (the set of mechanisms aimed at addressing the effects of gross human rights violations and the issue of disappearances following a humanitarian crime), the term "Dealing with the past" refers to the practices of dealing with the wounds brought about by the grave human rights violations suffered. Humanitarian law offers support to family members of the disappeared.

Trying to read it in the context of migratory disappearances, how do you deal with the past here? Is a border disappearance part of the past or still part of today?

For the friends of Daniel and Abdelkarim, this discourse is particularly sensitive. They live in the same condition as Daniel and Abdelkarim, and may suffer the same fate. They, too, aim to cross the borders that divide them from Europe and are clear that they may not succeed. Daniel and Abdelkarim's absurd end tells them that this could be their fate too, lost somewhere, their families could also experience that pain, that of not even having a body to mourn. The disappearance of Abdelkarim and Daniel, and all the others they hear about, makes the violence of the border even more material.

The thin line between Daniel and Abdelkarim's experience and their own makes absence much more present in their lives. Falou, Daniel's roommate, tells of not being able to go with him to the border for lack of money: "We talked about going to Ceuta together that time, but I didn't know how to pay for the train".

This absence is a violent reminder that it could happen to them, too, to disappear at any moment; Daniel and Abdelkarim's story reflects theirs. This is symbolized in Daniel's memorial: the PoMs involved in the workshop use their own clothes to build it. Tely takes off his jacket and Djallu's backpack; they place them on the ground to represent Daniel's memorial, then put them back on. For them, those disappearances are not past. As long as they are on this side of the border, in transit, that disappearance is present and is future. What they can do is hope that it will be different for them, also in the name of Daniel and Abdelkarim. The management of disappearance is collective and looks at the border as something that is crossed together.

At Abdelkarim's funeral, the rite opens with the phrase "for Abdelkarim, all those who died at sea and for the success of our boza." Daniel and Abdelkarim's disappearance becomes a way of claiming their *boza*, their chance to pass. It is here that solidarity is activated, in the determination to pass that is not just individual but collective.

This sense of identification is experienced differently by Khawla and Amina. They do not experience their current or future situation as precarious. They suffer the absence of a loved one and the fear of what has happened to them. The great pain they feel is mirrored by that of people with a similar experience - we have already mentioned this in the previous section. The event of the disappearance generates empathetic and supportive relationships between people with similar experiences albeit in different contexts: Moroccan mothers meet Tunisian mothers and Algerian mothers, and they meet in the pain they experience. They support each other and keep each other close; it is the pain that unites them, and empathy is the catalyst for such solidarity.

For the friends in Taqadoum, for Khawla, for Amina and the many people who live in their conditions and who choose to stay close to them, the struggle is about keeping alive the memory of lost loved ones and

building a collective memory of lost migrations. This is the collective solidarity practice that unites the different experiences and, in a powerful way, tries to prevent the total disappearance (Kobelinsky, 2020) of the people who have fallen on the border.

Conclusion

The second node of the Morocco Antenna dedicated the months of fieldwork from March to June to observing solidarity with the missing persons along the migration routes and their loved ones. We observed the stories of Daniel, Abdelkarim, Mohamed and Rachid, four young Moroccan and sub-Saharan PoM, and the research practices conducted by their families and communities. Looking at these stories allowed us to interrogate the concept of solidarity with respect to border disappearances.

The concept of "grief-activism" (Stierl, 2016) provides a framework for understanding how personal mourning can transform into collective action, challenging the dehumanizing effects of border policies. These forms of solidarity challenge the legitimacy of current migration regimes and call for a reimagining of border policies that prioritize human rights protection.

The stories of Daniel, Abdelkarim, Mohamed, and Rachid demonstrate how the absence of loved ones can mobilize communities and generate ties of solidarity. We observed mobilization strategies in controlled contexts and constrained mobility and how, in such environments, support networks and encounters with supportive actors are generated.

Their families and communities experience the Moroccan context and control apparatus differently: its impact is influenced by elements such as race and social status. Based on how they move within the Moroccan context they follow different trajectories in their research and encounter different types of solidarity. On the one hand, they experience 'internal' solidarity: generated by encountering similar experiences and catalysed by empathy, it spreads through individual bonds and support networks with people having lived similarly lost. On the other hand, the encounter with solidarity actors working in support of missing migrants and their families - independent activists or associations: the encounter with 'external' solidarity. In these solidarity dynamics, the observation of social media, a space where solidarity and support interactions and exchanges take place, becomes relevant.

Solidarity manifests in collective mobilizations for research and collective mourning practices, in supportive relationships that are spontaneously created, in the preservation of memory and in political actions that emerge in response to border deaths and disappearances.

Moving forward, it is important to continue to interrogate the concept of solidarity in relation to border disappearances. Future research should explore how these forms of grassroots solidarity can influence policy changes at national and international levels.

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