

## TUAREG TRAVELLING TO EUROPE: PARTICULARITIES AND CONTINUITIES

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*Considering the Nigerien Tuareg migrations to Europe two main features can be noticed: first, a pattern of return migration and, second, the inclusion of European friends in the networks used in travelling to Europe. The first feature agrees with certain nomadic ideas of travel like gaining new knowledge to adapt at home. Therefore, all the other traits of Tuareg experiences in travelling to Europe are compared to the nomadic concept of travelling (esuf and the idea of cultural baggage). The second feature presents a continuity of mobility in which networks of relatives and friends are used. To see how European friends get included, we need to take a look at the opportunities for their encounters. Migrations to Libya are considered to show how Libya is replacing the role of Europe. The author argues that by looking for continuities in mobilities, as proposed in African migration studies, one can also better understand the migration patterns to Europe.*

**Key words:** *Tuareg, migrations to Europe, nomadism, travel, networks*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

While doing research in northern Niger on the Tuareg<sup>1</sup> perceptions of Europe<sup>2</sup> and their encounters with Europeans, I started to follow also their travelling strategies and migration patterns to Europe. I began to notice these were marked by two characteristics: 1. a pattern of return migration,

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<sup>1</sup> Although the emic term Imajeghen would be more appropriate, as H el ene Claudot-Hawad argues (2001:6), it can be confused with the term *imajeghen* which designates the noble class only. In addition, the term has regional variations in different dialects of the Tamashek language. In order to avoid confusion, I opted for the not so ideal etic term Tuareg that Imajeghen also use when communicating with Europeans. As Kohl reminds us, Tuareg is already plural (m.sing. is Targi, f.sing. is Targia) (Kohl 2012). Since I decided to use the term Tuareg, which they use themselves in Niger when communicating with Europeans, I shall keep the term Tuareg also for all singular forms and adjectives.

<sup>2</sup> I shall elaborate on the Nigerien Tuareg perceptions of Europe related to their travels to Europe in another paper.

including the fact that they did not exceed or bypass bureaucratic legality, and 2. the use of networks of European friends in order to get there, insure the necessary papers and move around. Many different migrations include the idea of return and use networks, but in the case of the migrations of the Tuareg from northern Niger the peculiarity was that returning home and sometimes performing a circular pattern of migration seemed to be the rule, appearing more often than their staying in Europe indefinitely. Due to the scarcity of relatives and other Tuareg in Europe, European friends were included in networks that enabled individuals to travel. In order to better understand these patterns, I propose to take a closer look at how these practices are connected with traditional and other already established practices of mobility and what the new opportunities that enable this kind of migration are.

Even before globalisation and transnational studies, migration was considered normal in many African societies (see volumes on African migration e.g. De Bruijn, Rijk van Dijk and Foeken 2001; Bilger and Kraler 2005; Hahn and Klute 2007; Grätz 2010). This certainly applies to nomadic societies. As Boesen (2007) proposes, we need to check if a previously existing culture of mobility is influencing new forms of mobilities in such societies as the WoDaaBe Fulani and the Tuareg in West Africa.

In the case of the Tuareg migrations to Europe, we shall analyse how the return pattern of migrations conforms to the nomadic concept of travel. Different aspects of the nomadic principles of travel have been concisely elaborated by H el ene Claudot-Hawad (Claudot-Hawad 2002). From the following ethnographic reports, we shall see how migrations to Europe are inspired by the prospect of acquiring new knowledge to use at home, as the case is with the nomadic concept of travel. Then, we shall take a look at other experiences and ideas connected with the nomadic concept of travel: learning how to deal with *esuf* (loneliness), the importance of the idea of cultural baggage for keeping one's identity and having something to exchange, and see how these issues are related to experiences and ideas about travelling to Europe. In order to understand the second trait of the Nigerien Tuareg migrations to Europe, i.e. the inclusion of European friends in travel networks, we need to consider how the networks were and are used in previous and contemporary Tuareg mobilities. In order to

understand how European friends get included in these networks we need to take a closer look at the possibilities, places and features of encounters between certain groups of Tuareg and Europeans. The question if these networks are replacing the diaspora will be considered briefly.<sup>3</sup>

Since Nigerien Tuareg migrations were, till recently, preferably directed to Libya rather than to Europe, it makes sense to compare the migrations to both destinations. I would agree that Libya was playing the role of Europe in terms of economic migration (Brumen 2004; Kohl 2010a). Since migrations to Libya have certain specific traits, I would argue that migrations to Europe in the case of the Tuareg can not be considered simply a prolongation of the migration path to Libya.

I intend to argue that the analysis of continuities in nomadic principles of travel and continuities in the past and present forms of mobilities, as proposed by African migration studies, is enabling us also to better understand the particularities of the Tuareg migrations to Europe.

As established by transnational studies (Al-Ali and Koser 2002) as well as the already mentioned African migration studies, research for this article was based on narratives about the everyday experiences of individuals. Actually, most of the ethnographic data were collected during my research in Niger (Agadez, Azawad, among the Illbakan, the Timia oasis), Libya (Ghat) and Slovenia between 2003 and 2012<sup>4</sup> in the form of interviews, informal discussions and participant observation, involving 20 to 60 years old Tuareg men and women. I have taken their narratives as a base to discuss the proposed points.

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<sup>3</sup> I deliberately decided to leave aside (or add just as additional remarks) the concepts of transnationality of migration, diaspora, circular migration, return migration and other established scientific concepts used in migration studies in order to focus on the continuities of already established patterns of migration.

<sup>4</sup> I did research for my PhD thesis on Tuareg perceptions of Europe and experiences with Europeans in Northern Niger between May 2003 and August 2004, funded by the Agency for Research of the Republic of Slovenia. In May and June 2006, I continued research at home during the visit of Souleymane Mohammed, in March 2009 in Ghat, Libya and in December and January 2011-2012 in Northern Niger again. According to the wishes of the interlocutors certain personal names have been kept and others have been changed.

## 2. THE NOMADIC CONCEPT OF TRAVEL

### 2.1. ACQUIRING NEW KNOWLEDGE TO TAKE BACK HOME

Even those Tuareg, men and women alike, who never travelled to Europe were curious to know what it looked like and how people lived there. Those that went to school learned about it and others heard about differences in vegetation and climate and about technological achievements and were curious to see them. When I asked primary school pupils in Agadez to draw something about Europe, the Eiffel Tower, skyscrapers, fancy cars and planes were the most numerous images. After seeing big ports and taking a ride on the TGV, Aghali, who had visited Europe several times, was eager to experience winter in order to ‘resist the cold’, as he put it. Hasan, who studied to become a mining engineer in France, preferred to attend a catholic ritual in church than to repeat already known prayers in Muslim districts with other North and West Africans. Even Osman, a teacher with experience in development, who was very critical of inequalities in development practices, would have appreciated to travel, as he stated: *“I would like to visit Europe, as well as Asia, America. To discover, to learn. I don’t want to stay closed within myself. Travelling is the greatest school, it is a university!”* On the other hand Hamu, who was running a camel milk dairy, did not see any reason to go to Europe, since he could not see how this could benefit his endeavours at home: *“I would only go if there was a conference on camel milk”*, he concluded. When Souleymane visited Slovenia for his photographic exhibition, he documented what he found either interesting or useful to transmit home: how gardens are made, how tomatoes are planted, sheep bred, wood prepared, roofs constructed.

Acquiring new experiences and new knowledge seems to be the principal motivation not only for Tuareg students living in Europe at the time of their studies, but for most Tuareg visitors. What these and other individuals’ travels have in common, and what motivates students to travel, is obviously related to the idea of enlarging one’s horizons and acquiring new experiences, learning something new to bring back knowledge that can sometimes be adapted to be used at home. This is also crucial in the nomadic concept of travel.

Although travelling and nomadism might seem to be a tautology at first sight, their logic and structural meanings are different, as H el ene

Claudot-Hawad elaborated (Claudot-Hawad 2002). As I was able to experience with the Ilbakan from Azawad, in a nomadic movement (*taglé, tzrek*) the whole encampment, tents and animals move. Therefore, the whole “home” (*aghiwen*) is moving. These movements, dictated by the availability of pasturable land, are seasonal. Relatively stable itineraries and places are followed. Even when entering unknown territory in years of scarcity, the “home” is moved along, providing shelter from the unknown (cf. Claudot-Hawad 2002:13). When travelling, one leaves the “home” and goes into the unknown without necessarily knowing in advance the stages that will occur. Nomadic cyclic movement and travel are both constitutive of the reproduction and affirmation of society. The role of travel is to embed the “home” into larger contexts and connect it with the outside world by bringing back new relations and knowledge (Claudot-Hawad 2002:12). Therefore, return is already included in the nomadic concept of travel itself. In this sense, the return pattern of migrations to Europe is in accordance with the nomadic concept of travel, as proposed by Claudot-Hawad, since it means acquiring knowledge in order to enlarge one’s horizons and use new knowledge at home.

## 2.2. DEALING WITH *ESUF*

*Esuf* is another trait related to the nomadic concept of travel and it is part of the symbolic organisation of known and unknown (Claudot-Hawad 2002:13–14). Conquering and domesticating the unknown derives from an underlying symbolic system where the tent is conceived as the centre of social universe whilst pasture land outside the encampment and unknown territories outside known pasture lands are conceived as *esuf* (Claudot-Hawad 1996, 2002; Casajus 1987; Ramsussen 1998). *Esuf* has several related meanings and can mean undomesticated, unknown territory, where spirits might live, but it can also mean the state of being alone, cut off from a known social environment. I was asked, particularly at the beginning, during my fieldwork: “Mani esuf?” (How is *esuf*?), even when surrounded with people. It meant how I dealt with being away from my primary social environment. According to a kind of cosmology presented by the authors mentioned, women belong to the interior of the “home” and therefore are in danger of being taken over by the wilderness, while men are conceived as

belonging to the wilderness and they need to be domesticated in transitional rituals (getting *taglmust* (the veil), getting married)<sup>5</sup>. They are those whose role is travelling outside known territory, either in caravans over bare desert, to markets in towns or looking for religious education and, more recently, visiting towns and other countries to find new economic and other possibilities (Claudot-Hawad 2002:13–17). This does not mean that the everyday life of nomadic women is not mobile. As I could observe, and as Susan Rasmussen (1998) elaborates as well, (semi)nomadic women go to the well, they bring young camels back to the encampment for the night or look after goats. But this is not considered travel, since it is part of the everyday pastoral activities within one's "home". Women can also pay visits, but mostly in domesticated space, within the network of their kin, to celebrate name days, marriages and *takute* (sacrificing an animal for wellbeing) or to get health treatment.

It is part of the education of a nomadic child (mostly boys, but also girls) to learn how to deal with *esuf*. For example, they have to go to herd small ruminants in pasture lands unknown to them. In the past, education of the children of the elite included facing them with learning in an unknown environment. They were sent to stay with people of another ethnic group, far away from home (Claudot-Hawad 2002:24). Two complementary ideas are repeated: "le danger de l'inconnu et le devoir de l'affronter pour negocier avec lui un exchange" ('the danger of the unknown and the duty to face it and negotiate with it an exchange') (ibid. 26). In the idea that *esuf* "is tough, but unavoidable, and something with which to cope" Lecocq sees a cultural advantage for participating in cosmopolitanism (Lecocq 2010:58).

Despite having learned how to deal with the unknown, encounters with *esuf* in Europe are not always easy. This was most clearly expressed in Nasim's experience. When he was in Europe for the first time, he was alone most of the day because his hosts had to work. He lost interest in doing anything and had no energy. A visiting doctor stated the diagnosis was homesickness. Having defined the problem of *esuf*, Nasim engaged in an effort to learn German, started finding his way around by himself and

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<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Popenoe (2004) describes a similar cosmology and related gender symbolism among Azawad Arabs living a semi-sedentarised way of life in the same region where part of the Nigerien Tuareg live.

meeting people, so he could overcome *esuf*. Only if *esuf* is recognised and dealt with, one can overcome being separated from one's kin and find ways to cope with it.

Although more men than women travel to Europe, some, manly schooled<sup>6</sup>, women also find possibilities to go. A girl can leave to study abroad or marry a European, but this is very rare. Women sometimes take part in music groups as female singers and join the groups touring Europe or the United States. Often, but not necessarily, they have male relatives in the same music group. I spoke with two schooled women that attended seminars in Europe where they were invited through European friends but without directly knowing any participant in the seminars. Some women visited their European women friends they got to know while working together in Niger. Those were usually married women with children, able to arrange to have other women relatives to look after their kids in Niger while they were away. Those schooled, rather exceptional and not very numerous women did not report on problems with *esuf*, but their stays were either not longer than two months or they were in a group with other Tuareg. Otherwise, their motivation to travel does not seem much different from the traditionally male motivation: to enlarge their horizons and nourish established relationships. On the other hand, Asja, who married a European, could not stay without her relatives for too long and after two years decided to return to Niger with her child. It seems that, for both men and women, despite their skill of dealing with *esuf*, it is very hard to stay in a foreign environment without a certain possibility to keep relations with close kin at home or without a real option to return.

### 2.3. CULTURAL EQUIPMENT AND IDENTITY

Another trait related to the nomadic concept of travel is the idea of needing a cultural baggage or equipment. To avoid the danger of losing oneself in *esuf* and in facing otherness in a social environment with different values, one needs to be well equipped with a cultural and basic material

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<sup>6</sup> I deliberately use the word "schooled" for those men and women that attended primary (and further) scholarisation processes instead of the word "educated" in order to differentiate education traditionally received at home and education received by official schooling.

baggage, as H el ene Claudot-Hawad elaborated (Claudot-Hawad 2002:17, 21, 22). This real or metaphoric baggage refers to cultural equipment which enables a travelling person not to lose his or her cultural identity in another environment, but rather gives him or her a potential for exchange.

When speaking of a cultural baggage of material nature in the context of travelling to Europe, the most frequent and almost only possibility of economic exchange is to carry jewellery to sell in Europe. In the Tuareg society, blacksmiths (*inadan*) are the only social category that produces jewellery. Also, Tuareg of the noble social category sometimes buy jewellery from *inadan* to resell it. Thus, these noble Tuareg and *inadan* bring back home from their travels also material benefits, most often money. Money is then invested in projects at home (marriages, building a house, buying a motorbike). Nassim, for example, first tried with sending jewellery produced by his *inadan* family to be sold through a European friend. When he got a rather significant amount of money back, he started with regular (once a year or in two years) visits to Europe, selling jewellery by himself.

Baye referred particularly to the importance of the baggage. Despite himself belonging to the traditional elite class he befriended many *inadan* among whom several had been to Europe and had told him about it. He saw the ability of *inadan* to produce jewellery as their advantage when travelling to Europe. In his opinion, they literally had a baggage (a bag of jewellery) that was their symbolic and financial ticket to Europe. At the same time he perceived jewellery as the equipment which permitted *inadan* to establish relationships with Europeans. Apart from ensuring financial means, he saw this relationship as crucial in enabling one to travel. Baye would have liked to travel himself but he did not engage in this kind of activity, which would have enabled him to do so. It was impossible for him to save money for the trip, despite having a regular job (with a not too splendid salary), because he was caught in the social obligations of redistribution among his kin. A job and/or a wish to travel is therefore not enough, one also needs relations and something to exchange.

Claudot-Hawad discusses the importance of material baggage specific for the traveller to be independent and of cultural knowledge as the baggage which one is able to share in previously unknown territories while at the same time gaining new knowledge (Claudot-Hawad 2002:17,



19, 21, 22). In recent travels to Europe, we can observe also the importance of materialised knowledge in the form of jewellery that is exchanged for money. Besides, we can notice the ‘trading’ of one’s knowledge of his or her culture to tie relations before setting out or during travel in the new environment.

While staying in Europe, an individual will take care not to lose permanently the equilibrium between his/her eagerness to acquire new experiences and the keeping of one’s own identity. Here, again, cultural equipment is of crucial importance. When Hassan came to study to Europe, almost thirty years ago, first he desperately missed his family and only wanted to return. Then he got interested in new things and entertainment and, as he said: “in this way you slowly get integrated, slowly you forget about home”. In Hassan’s case it seems that at the time of finishing his studies he would not have minded staying in the new environment he had adapted to. He did see an advantage in being Tuareg, though. On the one side, because he considered his integration was easier due to his openness for new experiences and on the other side, because his Tuareg identity enabled him to be more interesting to his new friends, particularly girls. In his case, the cultural equipment was enabling him to have something to offer as well as to be open for the unknown. But he was close to risk embracing the new and staying there without the need to return home and transform his knowledge to fit the needs of his society. Still, the wish to live in Europe was not strong enough for him to use all means to stay there. After his return home, he was able to capitalise his knowledge, skills and networks. Living well at home, life in Europe became attractive only in the form of visits aimed at changing his environment and habits for a while.

As Claudot-Hawad finds (Claudot-Hawad 2002:19), travel should be undertaken by a preferably mature person, which means culturally well equipped, in order not to be overtaken by “external” society. On the other hand, as the Ouarta case shows, even when culturally equipped, one can feel that in order to keep one’s identity one needs a domestic social environment to be able to express one’s identity in everyday life. Ouarta came to Europe after finishing his studies in Niger. At that time the first rebellion broke out in Niger and, as a Tuareg, he was not permitted to return. As a result, he stayed in France longer than previewed. With time, he got a decent lodging

and a job in his professional field. At that point he could have stayed in France, but he preferred to return: “For me, it is not too good to stay too long in France, I would lose too much of my culture. When I was there, I felt like a whale that was removed from the sea into the desert”, he explained. Similarly, as in the case of *esuf*, this can be dealt with but demands going back: cultural equipment is not always enough to stay forever, without even visiting home, and at the same time not to lose one’s identity.

In addition to acquiring new knowledge and knowing how to deal with *esuf*, the idea of cultural baggage is also embedded in travels to Europe, therefore representing continuity with the nomadic principles of travelling. What is new in the cultural baggage is using jewellery as symbolic equipment to extend networks to Europe and as material baggage for exchange. Besides, cultural equipment is used to tie relationships with Europeans and be open to new experiences.

### **3. THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS IN TRAVELLING AND THE INCLUSION OF EUROPEAN FRIENDS IN NETWORKS**

#### **3.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS IN TRAVELLING**

It is possible to see, for example in Ouarta’s case, how he used several types of networks in his travel and stay in Europe: networks of kin to get there, ethnic ones with Malian Tuareg to settle and networks of European friends to get a job. When Aghali goes to visit prof. Spittler in Europe, he also visits other friends in Germany and in France. He stays longer again at Michel’s of *Amis de Timia*. Aghali did not mention any Tuareg in his stops in Europe. *Amis de Timia* is an association formed by French visitors of the Timia oasis, where Aghali is from, which regularly collect money in order to invest in small development projects in Timia. They also arranged the visit of two blacksmiths to France to show and teach the basics of their skills in working with silver in school workshops. Also, a successful gardener from Timia, Sulej, who was able to pay his own ticket to France, was their guest.

As Taher said, surely no Tuareg will sleep in a hotel when visiting Europe. It means he knows enough people to stay with as guest. In comparison, European tourists in Niger usually have to sleep in hotels.

It shows Taher puts the Tuareg on equal ground with Europeans visiting Niger, with the difference that the Tuareg are somewhat better off in their travel because they do not need depersonalised treatment outside social networks, as offered by hotels. There is, however, one exception: Tuareg music bands playing in Europe usually do sleep in hotels. But their travel is usually arranged by a European mediator (a manager or another person) who provides them with lodgings.

Before returning to the extension of networks to Europeans, we need to discuss the established use of mobility networks in the Tuareg society in Niger. In nomadic travelling, networks are used and created. One is considered more powerful when being able to create and mobilise wider social networks (Claudot-Hawad 2006:229). Networks are, therefore, knitted by travelling but also crucial for travelling so that travels can be more socially than economically intensive (Lecocq 2010:57).

In cases of regular migrations, as part of nomadism, as well as in travelling, people usually use social networks of relatives or they include families of other ethnicities they have become related to through generations. An example of the latter is in caravan trading, where normally a Tuareg would buy from the same Hausa family at least part of the millet he needed. There would be a relation with a particular Kanuri family in the oasis of Fachi, as I could observe, where it was possible for members of a certain Tuareg family to leave the hay to feed their camels on the return trip.

Besides traditional forms of mobilities there are also movements to sedentarise in town. They were started by the advent of severe droughts at the beginning of the seventies and the relative reduction in pasture lands. People travelled in order to look for jobs in towns (particularly across the border with Libya). Another reason to settle in towns was the possibility of getting a job after finishing schooling. The houses of family members in town enable people living in the countryside or in other towns to move more often and more securely to urban centres or between them, staying with their family members. According to her research in Mali, Alessandra Giuffrida describes the function of these sedentarised relatives: “Nuclei of kin residing at one locality are points, knots or nodes in the web to which the movers can return if they so wish” (Giuffrida 2010:30). She argues that, therefore, stasis is as important for mobility as movement and that

networks are the characteristic trait of Tuareg society that remains its basic organisational principle (Giuffrida 2010). Similarly, I observed certain family members move to town because they found a job and were able to establish their home there and now their houses in town serve as a base for other family members who live in the countryside to be guests there when going to the market, visiting a hospital or staying longer when attending school.

Establishing new knots in their networks seems to be also one of the main reasons why certain Tuareg coming in contact with Europeans aim at establishing friendships with them. Such friendships are an extension of their personal and family networks and thus represent a possibility. This is not an immediately and economically concretised possibility, it is rather an open possibility that this extended network can potentially offer.

### 3.2. PLACES OF ENCOUNTER AND POSSIBILITIES TO TRAVEL

The option of establishing lasting relationships with Europeans is more common in situations of relatively longer and intimate encounters. Therefore, only persons who have access to this kind of situations and at the same time want to establish such relationships have a possibility to do so. The two most frequent opportunities for encounters are tourism and development projects.

The specific arrangements of Saharan travels are favourable to the development of friendships. Travelling is organised in small groups of tourists, with a guide, a driver and a cook, all of them Tuareg. Usually, they are in kinship, friendship or in patronage relationship with the tourist agency owner, in most cases a noble Tuareg. In the evenings, when talking around the fire, opportunity emerges for those tourists who are interested in the life of Tuareg to ask about it. Sometimes, closer relations are tied, depending on the affinities of tourists and Tuareg alike. (However, this is not always the case, because some Tuareg who work in tourism prefer to stay reserved and some tourists are only interested in the landscape and not in the people).

Often, the interest of tourists is excited by the Tuareg image so popular in Europe: *les hommes bleus*, Saharan warriors, noble, beautiful, like middle age knights, the carriers of values that are about to disappear....

A notion of eco-indigenism is attached to this image (Loftsdóttir 2008:47, 209) of people who can survive in the harsh conditions of the Saharan desert but are pushed to the margins of society<sup>7</sup>. As Kristín Loftsdóttir ascertained for the WoDaaBe (Loftsdóttir 2008:207), the Tuareg express their agency either by rejecting tourists or deciding to lean on their identity as a trademark for the artefacts tourists are looking for.

On the other hand, Europeans are perceived as wealthy. If they are interested, they can also hear about the contemporary problems of the Tuareg, as individuals and as a society. Some tourists feel challenged, made aware of their advantage in being well off and in many cases some of them want to do something: establish an NGO, start small development projects, and/or invite an individual Tuareg to Europe.

Loftsdóttir describes a similar constellation in the encounters of WoDaaBe and Europeans. Although WoDaaBe use their exoticised and indigenised image in order to attract benefits from relations with Europeans, the power relationship is not equal, since only Europeans come to see them in Niger. When the WoDaaBe emphasise their own powerlessness inside Niger, they (un)consciously support the image of a marginalised indigenous minority, as seen by Europeans. According to this image, helping an individual WoDaaBe is perceived as helping the WoDaaBe community as a whole (Loftsdóttir 2008:53, 209; 2011)

Something similar is going on in the relations between Tuareg and Europeans. But I would say that it is not possible to clearly define the boundary between roles in these structural positions of orientalism/occidentalism (Said 1978; Carrier 1995) on the one side and an increasing human solidarity and friendship on the other, where the latter overcomes communication barriers through this structural dichotomy (Lunaček 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, in recent years those glamorous images have been tarnished by the image of Islamist terrorists, and insecurity has become the reason for the disappearance of tourism. On the construction of terrorism in the Sahara and the related USA and Algerian interests involved, see Keenan (2009). The situation is getting even more complex with the continuing conflict in Mali after a temporary strategic military coalition between the Tuareg rebellion movement, MNLA, and the Islamic movement Ansar Dine and its subsequent breakdown. It is important not to confuse the diverse extreme Islamic groups acting in the Sahara and the Tuareg rebellion movement (Kohl 2012).

Orientalism and occidentalism can also take the role of starting points for encounters of individuals, motivating them to look for ways to transcend power dichotomy. One of the examples in Tuareg - European encounters is precisely the endeavour of European friends to enable Tuareg friends to visit Europe.

Sometimes it is easier to develop friendships when working together on a daily basis. This happens most often in (international) development projects, where some schooled Tuareg were, and are employed and work in cooperation with Europeans. This is the principal place where schooled Tuareg women meet their European women friends. They continue socialising in each other's homes. Hadiza's first trip to Europe was to visit the family of her very good European woman friend from work. She described this visit as somehow staying 'in the family'. The network of friends, as an extension of the networks of kin, serves to domesticate previously unknown territories.

Blacksmiths (*inadan*) are usually not included in the travel teams taking care of tourists on their trips since the owners of tourist agencies most often belong to the traditional elite and provide jobs for their kin and friends in the first place. *Inadan* opt for waiting for tourists at strategic points in travel itineraries, either in towns, oases or in the desert, to offer them jewellery. Here, not much manoeuvring space is left for establishing friendships. This can be done with backpackers and development workers in towns, when the *inadan* invite them to their home, organise a budget itinerary to visit their village or meet them on a regular basis. Abdala, a young blacksmith working for his patron in Niamey, met a Frenchman interested in Tuareg jewellery making and they exchanged addresses. When Abdala was desperate how to ever get money to build himself a house after marrying and provide for his family, he wrote to him. It was like a miracle for Abdala to be invited to Europe, ticket paid. He sold his own and his friends' jewellery at European fairs and at presentations, living with an affluent French family. This and subsequent visits enabled him to establish economic independence for his nuclear family and to help his parents. Young Jedu, another blacksmith, was strategically collecting friendships with young French men and women, so he could follow his project of regularly selling jewellery in Europe to build a house for him and for his parents at home. The results of the travels of blacksmiths and those noble

Tuareg that sell jewellery are concrete benefits in money, which enables them to improve material conditions at home for themselves and their kin, just like in circular migrations (Vertovec 2007). Sometimes it happens that Europeans replace the role of patrons that previously belonged to the noble Tuareg. Therefore, the different aspects of the *inadan*'s relation with traditional elites and their role of mediators needs to be reconsidered (Ramussen 2002).

It is not always clear when Tuareg men or women use a deliberate strategy for creating friendships with Europeans in order to travel to Europe or when the circumstances are favourable for a particular person to travel to Europe. As already stated, most often establishing friendship means enlarging social networks. With this, a potential, a possibility is established that might also permit travel.

Another reason to go to Europe is because of love and marriage (in the past, colonial officials married Tuareg women; now marriages between European women and Tuareg men are more numerous), but not all couples decide to live in Europe. A repeated argument is that a Tuareg husband would not be willing to adapt to live in Europe. As migration policies are getting harsher and harsher in France and the European Union in general, sometimes marriage can make temporary migration easier, as the case was for some couples during the last rebellion in Niger.

Not only encounters with Europeans provide a possibility to visit Europe. One option is to study in Europe, which was more accessible some decades ago, when France was systematically offering scholarships. Today, one would need rich parents or outstandingly good results. Some middle class students opt for Maghrebian countries as an alternative.

If not for study or marriage, the individual Tuareg's stay in Europe is not longer than allowed by the tourist visa. As Jedu explained, it is precisely because he would like to visit Europe several times that he doesn't want to exceed the visa. Also, for most other Tuareg visiting Europe, the plan they keep to is to visit and not to stay. European friends have to put themselves in the bureaucratic role of guarantors by providing *aubergement* - a lodging guarantee confirmed by a document compiled at the municipality (requiring confirmation of lodging and enough money on the bank account). This used to be valid in France and variations of the same European bureaucracy

strategy are present elsewhere. Lately, in France, even *aubergement* is not sufficient together with the possession of 1000 euro in cash: the visit needs to be presented in terms of an NGO member visiting NGO partners in Europe.

As friendships or love relations are established, people want to spend time together, to meet, to travel. Despite state borders and although border regimes impose asymmetrical demands and ensure asymmetrical possibilities, individuals endeavour to find ways to meet and socialise. Therefore, they, or better we, also find ways to overcome bureaucratic barriers. Taking into consideration that circular migrations are of transnational nature and that migrants participate in development at home by sending remittances, the idea is that everybody would gain from legalisation on circular migrations (Vertovec 2007). When legalisation means also regulation, human freedom of movement is limited again, only this time according to the needs of the labour market. As De Genova said, the state reforms its laws in order to control citizens, but the creativity of life always finds a way to overcome formally constructed 'legality' and 'illegality' (De Genova 2002). In this sense, love and friendship play a subversive role in border regimes and every successful border crossing presents a victory of human relations.

### 3.3. ARE NETWORKS OF EUROPEAN FRIENDS REPLACING THE ROLE OF DIASPORA?

In order to answer this question we must first see whether it is actually possible to speak about a Tuareg diaspora in Europe and its role. Despite the temporal limitation and circularity of most Tuareg travels to Europe some individual Tuareg from Niger do stay in Europe more permanently, visiting home more or less regularly. They enable their kin to visit them, they send them money and they participate in politics and development at home. We can say they engage in transnational practices as many other migrants do. But it is not really possible to claim that in France, or elsewhere in Europe, a Tuareg diaspora exists in terms of a community at one location.

If we take the definition of diaspora proposed by Maja Povrzanović Frykman (2004:84), Tuareg living or moving abroad have a sense of belonging and are involved in some cultural and political activities related



to their contested homeland. The use of the term diaspora even outside those countries near Mali and Niger where Nigerian and Malian Tuareg fled as refugees, like Algeria and Libya, becomes more realistic, if we define diaspora in relation to a political agenda that can be common to physically scattered individuals reunited in virtual space. One of the newer meeting points for the (young) dispersed diaspora's transnational connections is the internet. Once a year there is also a Tuareg diaspora meeting organised in France, joined, as it seems, also by many Europeans.

Susan Rasmussen (2005) uses the term temporary diaspora for performers in those Tuareg music groups regularly touring the United States and Europe, since they circulate between home and abroad with the aim of presenting their culture and at the same time bringing scattered Tuareg living abroad temporarily together at concerts. It might be useful to employ the term temporary diaspora when we want to give emphasis to their cultural belonging and political activities neglecting the usual physical dispersion of individuals and the temporal limitation of their meetings.

For a Tuareg that only came to visit a European friend we could hardly say he or she is part of the (temporary) diaspora. A more reasonable term for his or her practice seems to be circular migration or return migration. But I would claim that just as the diaspora provides social networks (like in labour migrations), networks of (European) friends can be used to lean on by a travelling individual.

#### **4. MIGRATIONS TO LIBYA**

In order to understand migrations to Europe in terms of continuity and new possibilities, we need to compare them - at least briefly - with another form of mobility: the Nigerien Tuareg migrations between Niger, Algeria and Libya. There are two questions to be discussed: is this form of migration a continuation of the previous patterns of mobility, and, can we consider migrations to Europe to be a continuation of the migrations to Libya or not?

Regular caravan trading paths through the Saharan territory controlled by different Tuareg confederations existed before state borders were implemented. At the time of colonisation and with the establishment of state

borders this trade diminished but never disappeared completely (Brumen 2004:240, 241; Gregoire 1999:157–161, 187–191). During the droughts in the early seventies of the last century, nomads from Niger and Mali tried to find refuge in the north, over the border with Algeria. They were never given refugee status (Brumen 2001:161). Mostly young Tuareg men from Mali and Niger started to look how to earn money in Algeria and, further, in Libya, firstly in order to support their impoverished relatives. The term they used for themselves, *ishumar*, comes from the French word *chomeur*, unemployed, because they were always looking for work - in oil fields, in tourism, as gardeners or herdsman, or they used their knowledge of the Saharan environment to earn by smuggling. It is not possible in this article to go into the detailed history and characteristics of such migrations and their dynamics (see Brumen 2004; Hawad 1991; Kohl 2007, 2009, 2010a, b). It needs to be mentioned that these migrations were not undertaken only in search of an economic solution, but they also developed into a political movement that was crucial for starting the rebellions in Niger and Mali (see Lecocq 2004).

Some of the first generation *ishumar* settled in the southern oasis towns in Libya and Algeria and could be called the Nigerien Tuareg diaspora with rather strong transnational relations with home. In continuing migrations between Niger, Algeria and Libya, networks of more or less settled kin and other *ishumar* were used more than networks of local Libyan and Algerian Tuareg. As Kohl states, migrations between northern Niger, southern Algeria and southern Libya are most appropriately classified as inter-regional migrations (Kohl 2010b) in a more and more contested space of freedom (harsher border controls, the fall of Gaddafi and his support for Tuareg, however ambiguous, and, recently, the events in Mali).

While some sub-Saharan Africans working in Libya perceived Libya only as a stopover on the way to Europe (Brachet 2005), for the Nigerien Tuareg Libya was considered the goal of temporary migration. Besides, Gaddafi's politics, although unpredictable, was less restrictive and in certain periods and aspects favourable for Tuareg migrants. And, probably most important, for the Nigerien Tuareg Saharan space in Algeria and Libya is not totally geographically, linguistically and ethnically alien as it is for sub-Saharan migrants (Brumen 2004). In the absence of other jobs, some Nigerien

Tuareg provide for their families by smuggling Tuareg and other African migrants from Niger to Libya as drivers and guides (Kohl 2010b, 2012).

It would not make sense to argue that migrations to Europe are a continuation of migrations to Libya. In times of crisis, people found it was possible to move across state borders instead of going to faraway places like Europe. Ines Kohl and Borut Brumen called Libya the Europe of the *ishumar* (Kohl 2010a), and the Switzerland of the Tuareg (Brumen 2004). Libya was, therefore, rather playing the role of Europe in earning money, with the important difference that it was included in a kind of home territory (Brumen 2004). Being an *ashamur* (sing. of *ishumar*), one would first need to ensure the extension of one's networks to Europe in order to travel there. After the fall of Gaddafi, it seems most Nigerien Tuareg returned to Niger, continued moving in the Saharan region and some stayed in Libya, while undocumented migration to Europe does not seem to have replaced migrations to Libya.<sup>8</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

The starting point of this article was the statement, based on ethnographic material, that most Nigerien Tuareg travels to Europe have a return pattern and that they use European friends in their networks of travel. Different analytical approaches could be used to explain this, but I opted for the approach recommended in studies on African migrations, which is to look for continuities in the forms and ideas of mobility comparable with those already existing in a particular society. Thus, the return pattern

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<sup>8</sup> The situation after the fall of Gaddafi is actually much more complicated but discussing it would open new topics and exceed the scope of this paper. Now that work opportunities in Libya are not easily available any more, it is extremely hard for the Tuareg to find jobs back in Niger, despite the new uranium mines. The increase of paramilitary and military forces is making even smuggling more difficult. With a lot of weapons from Gaddafi's disbanded army circulating in the region, everyday life is getting more and more insecure (Kohl 2012). Ecological crises and unsolved land property issues do not permit traditional herding and gardening subsistence to support people. In these conditions, young people have to look for temporary economic solutions elsewhere (not only Europe, also the Gulf States and the USA, as well as neighbouring Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Benin) and a further destabilisation of the region can result in even more dramatic consequences.

of migration is explained in comparison with the nomadic principles of travel, including the idea of travel as a necessary part of enlarging the community identity by going to acquire new knowledge in order to adapt it back home. Travel is not the same as the nomadic movement of the whole encampment, but it is still necessary for the nomadic society. Also, travels to Europe add to the strengthening of society at home. The skills necessary in nomadic travel, like dealing with *esuf* and the use of cultural baggage, are also related with the idea of return and even more as means not to lose one's identity permanently when travelling into the unknown, but rather to offer something in exchange and at the same time to be able to be open for the new. Taking this into account, we can agree that travelling to Europe has not a disintegrating effect on Tuareg society but rather strengthens it. The same is true for the use of European friends in networks. We have shown how networks of European friends function as an extension of the travelling networks in nomadic society. Networks of kin are used as the organisational principle also in more recent mobilities between rural and urban spaces. Networks of European friends, again, enlarge the possibilities to travel. I believe that encounters of the orientalist image of Tuareg, as perceived by Europeans, and the occidentalised image of Europeans, as perceived by the Tuareg, can transcend this dichotomy and serve as a starting point for understanding and solidarity. Friendship and love have a subversive role in overcoming bureaucratic obstacles of mobility over the Schengen border. What is new in this time of globalisation and of new opportunities for encounters with Europeans in tourism and in development projects is not changing the principles of nomadic travelling or the nature of networks, but is enlarging these principles to travels to Europe and enlarging the networks to European friends. Again, travels to Europe are an enlargement of the principles of nomadic society and do not damage it. Therefore, I can confirm other authors' findings that the Tuareg society is well adapted for travelling (Lecocq 2010:58) and that in times of severe crises of pastoral nomadism nomadic principles are applied in cosmopolitan space (Claudot-Hawad 2006:242).

Networks of European friends are first explained as a continuity of traditional and other (rural-urban, urban-urban) practices of travelling. Then, they are considered also from the perspective of diaspora. This demonstrates how different analytical approaches shed light on different

aspects of the same phenomenon. Migrations to Libya are included in the analysis to demonstrate another rather recent form of continuous migration along traditional paths in the Saharan region. Networks of other *ishumar* are used in these inter-regional migration paths. At the same time, migrations to Libya are not imagined as a way to Europe, but Libya itself has already been replacing the role of Europe as an economic migration destination.

I would claim that the analytical approach which is common in studies of (intra) African migrations is important to show the continuities in the practices of migrations of Africans to Europe. In the case of nomadic societies, like the Tuareg society was, and to a certain extent still is, the continuity of nomadic principles of travel is shown at work even beyond traditional forms of mobility. On the other hand, the reader can look further for similarities with nomadic principles of travel in other practical examples of migrations elsewhere.

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## TUAREZI PUTUJU U EUROPU: OSEBUJNOSTI I KONTINUITETI

U promišljanju o migracijama nigerijskih Tuarega u Europu mogu se zamijetiti dvije glavne odlike: prvo, obrazac povratne migracije te drugo, uključivanje prijatelja iz Europe u mreže koje se koriste na putovanju u Europu. Prva odlika u skladu je s određenim nomadskim idejama o putovanju kao što je stjecanje novog znanja koje će se prilagoditi kod kuće. Stoga se sve ostale odlike iskustva Tuarega na putovanju do Europe mogu usporediti s nomadskim konceptom putovanja (*esufi* ideja kulturne prtljage). Druga odlika predstavlja kontinuitet mobilnosti u kojoj se koriste mreže rodaka i prijatelja. Kako bismo vidjeli kako se uključuju prijatelji iz Europe, najprije treba promotriti prilike za njihove susrete. Drži se da migracije u Libiju pokazuju kako ona preuzima ulogu Europe. Autor ističe kako se sagledavanjem kontinuiteta u mobilnosti, na što pozivaju studije o afričkim migracijama, ujedno može bolje razumjeti obrasce migracije u Europu.

**Ključne riječi:** Tuarezi, migracije u Europu, nomadizam, putovanje, mreže