

Humans of Calais

Migration from the Perspective of Migrants



Map of the Calais camp

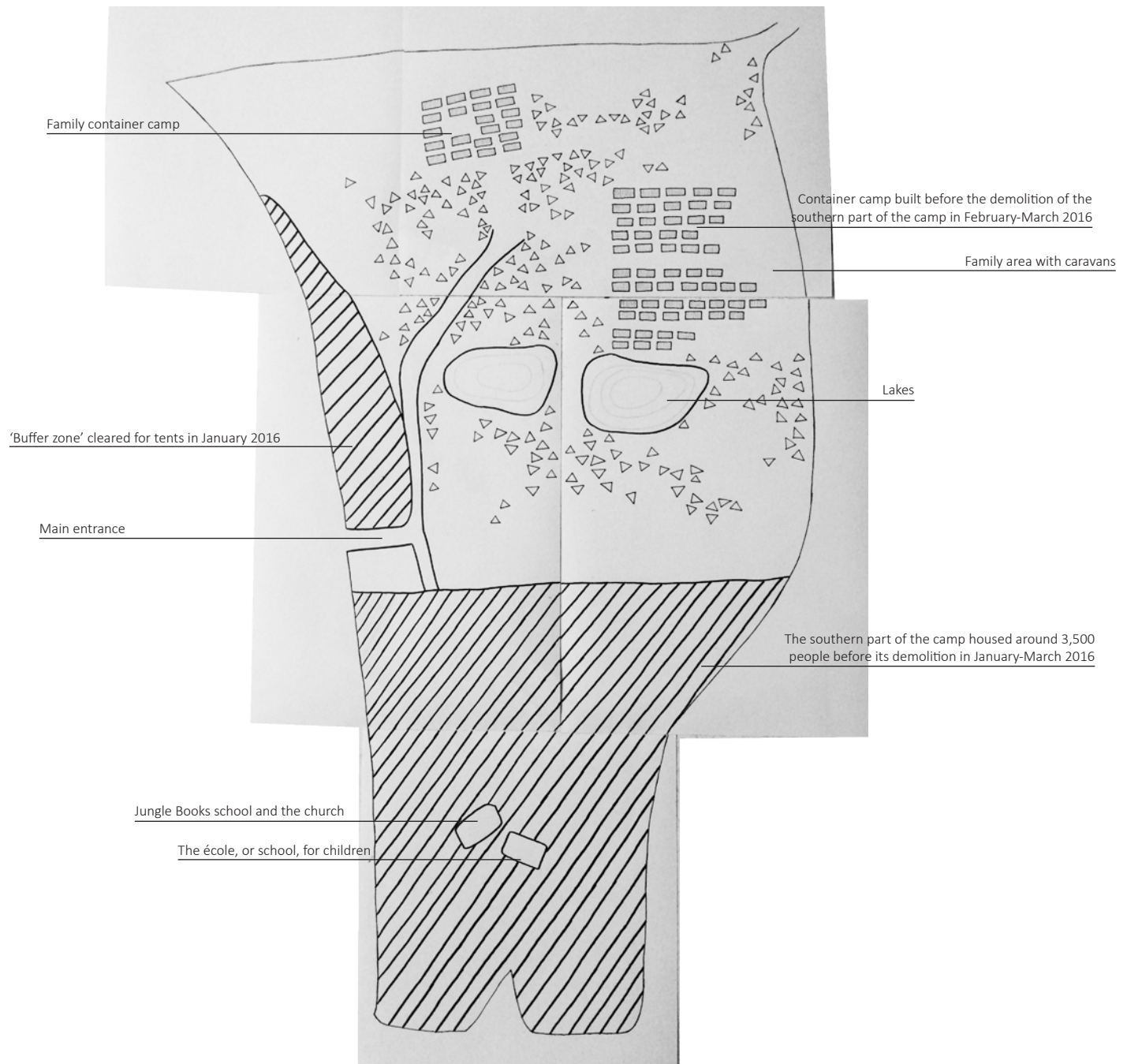



Table of contents

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Methodology | 5 |
| (Co)existence in the Camp | 6 |
| An Unofficial Camp | 12 |
| In Limbo in Europe | 20 |
| Graffiti in the Camp | 26 |
| Conclusion | 28 |
| Further readings | 30 |
| Thank you | 31 |

Researchers

Ishita Singh, Tara Flores, Layla Mohseni and Signe Sofie Hansen

Photos by researchers and residents living in the Calais camp at the time of research. All rights reserved.

KCL Migration Research Group | King's College London
mrg@kcl.ac.uk |  @MRG_KCL

November 2016

Introduction

“I think it is good what you are doing,
because maybe one day the Jungle is
gone, and then it can be remembered
via work like yours.”

When we planned our research trip to the unofficial refugee camp in Calais in July 2016, we knew that the camp's days were numbered, but we did not realise how quickly it would be dismantled. However, it was with the above intention, of documenting daily life and the experience of migrants living there, that we set out to conduct our research. In light of the destruction of the camp in October 2016, we do hope that this report will ensure that the Calais camp and the experiences of those living there are not forgotten.

Our principal aim when we began the research was to present a picture of the camp which was painted by the residents themselves. The camp has been well documented; security issues, political stances and actions, as well as descriptions of the camp and the migrants living there. While this documentation is important for understanding the camp in Calais, we wanted to gain a deeper understanding of what it was like to live there. To achieve this aim, we used a different and innovative approach by providing migrants in the camp with the tools to share their perspectives and experiences. Through photographs taken on disposable cameras, we were able to see the camp through their eyes, rather than through just our own. In addition, we aimed to learn more about migrants' journeys through Europe, focusing on their experiences with, and understanding of, the fingerprinting processes they encountered along the way.

Before presenting our findings, we would like to briefly explain some of the terms we chose to use in discussing this sensitive topic. Firstly, we chose to avoid the term 'the Jungle' despite its popular usage. We instead refer to it as 'the Calais camp' or simply 'the camp'. This choice has been made for numerous reasons. Many residents of the camp expressed their unhappiness with the title of 'the Jungle', as the term carries assumptions about those residing in the camp. 'The Jungle' implies it is a place that is uncontrolled and uncivilised, where wild animals reside. The term thereby works to dehumanise those living there and creates a separate 'them' category for those in the camp. Further, the term creates a separate category for the people in the camp as being distinct from the residents in Calais town and European citizens more broadly.¹

Additionally, we have chosen to use the term 'residents' when referring to people living in the Calais camp to minimise the 'us and them' dichotomy. Furthermore, the distinction between refugees and migrants often leads to political judgements made about those who are vulnerable and deserving and those who are not. In order to avoid this, we have referred to every resident of the camp, as well as displaced people more broadly, as 'migrant', regardless of their legal status.

The report will begin by discussing our methodological approach to the research conducted in the Calais camp on 15 - 27 July 2016. The report then discusses three major themes: (Co)existence in the Camp, An Unofficial Camp and In Limbo in Europe. Our discussion draws on semi-structured interviews and informal conversations as well as photos taken by residents and our own observations. Accompanying the text are some of the photos taken by participants in the research project, as well as our own documentation of the camp.

Methodology

Our research was qualitative and informed by ethnographic methods. We spent two weeks in the Calais camp undertaking the fieldwork for this project. We used a combination of participant observation, auto-photography and semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation is a classic ethnographic method, which normally takes place over a long period of time, typically 6-12 months. Due to our limited timeline, we were not able to spend this much time in the Calais camp, and therefore did not reach the desired level of blending in among the researched population. However, it is arguably never possible to really blend in; as a researcher, one will always remain different from the field. The camp was unquestionably a different experience for us as researchers, because residents behaved differently whilst around us and we stood out quite obviously as a group of young females in a camp primarily consisting of men. Not blending in is not necessarily a bad thing though, as it is also interesting to see how we, as researchers, see and experience things differently than the residents of the camp. Having one foot in the camp among the residents and also having one foot in Calais town and among the police and volunteers gave us interesting insights on the borderlands of migration and how these borders enable different actions. Participant observation was therefore not used for the purpose of becoming 'one of them', but rather as a way to compare our observations with theirs as well as creating a trusting environment between us and the residents of the camp.

To gain a better insight into the individual experiences of the residents of the camp, we used the innovative method of auto-photography. This is a visual method, which is rarely used in the social sciences, despite its potential for retrieving different information through the use of photos rather than just words. We distributed 15 disposable cameras to participants, who were then asked to take photos of their lives in the camp. After 24 hours we collected the cameras, had the photos developed and then did a follow-up interview with each participant, using the photos as the structuring basis.

We also did separate interviews to gain an understanding of migrants' journeys throughout Europe. We enquired about residents' perspectives on fingerprinting during their journeys through Europe; how and where the residents had been fingerprinted, how they perceived and understood fingerprinting procedures, and how they thought that fingerprinting will impact their futures in Europe.

When selecting our participants we approached residents of the camp, aiming to include people from different origins, sexes and areas of the camp. It was difficult to get females to participate, as there were very few women in the camp and they often kept to themselves or to areas where we did not have access. We did, however, manage to include one woman in our research. We tried to reach different kinds of people by not only speaking with participants from restaurants and shops and people who actively approached us, but also people from neighbourhoods away from the main streets who we sought out. No minors participated in our research for ethical reasons. As language was a barrier at some points, we primarily had participants who could speak English. However, as one of our researchers, Ishita Singh, speaks Hindi, she spoke with some of the residents who spoke Urdu. In addition, the visual element provided through photography helped to overcome further communication problems, as the residents could explain themselves using fewer words.

All participants in the research have been anonymised for ethical and confidentiality reasons and all participation was completely voluntary with no incentives offered. Furthermore, consent was obtained to use the photographs and words of the participants.

We have written this report based on residents' narratives, but we have also included our own observations and knowledge. Throughout the report we make this obvious by expressing when the written information is something that we were told by a resident and when it is something we know from elsewhere.

(Co)existence in the Camp



'I am Sudanese, my neighbours are Afghans, and we get along well'



There has always been a discrepancy in the population estimates made by authorities and by NGOs, with the latter consistently estimating a higher total. This discrepancy is largely due to the difficulty of conducting a population census in an unofficial camp. At its demolition in October 2016, estimates were anywhere between 6,000-10,000 people.²

Found throughout the camp, often in the form of graffiti on structures and caravans, were the French words 'lieu de vie'. Translated to English, the phrase means 'place of living'. For many migrants, whether they had been in the camp for years or for days, their experience was characterised by uncertainty and waiting. Despite this reality, the camp was a place where everyday life and routines unfolded. The photos of daily life demonstrated a sense of simply existing as time passed, as well as active coexistence between residents, between different communities in the camp, and between residents and volunteers.

Place of living

For many, living in the Calais camp was a waiting game; waiting to go the UK, for asylum applications to go through, Dublin procedures to be decided or the situation in their home country to stabilise. In the meantime, there was lots of time to fill.

Many spent hours every day in distribution queues, waiting to be given food, tea, clothing, and shower tickets. Time was also spent walking into Calais town to process asylum applications or buy supplies. When asked how their day was going, many residents would laugh wryly, saying "nothing", "sleeping" or just, "the same thing as yesterday".

Despite this, many were still positive

about other activities which could fill their days including religion, meeting new people and playing sports and music. As one resident stated, "sometimes we need to enjoy the jungle."

Education and learning in particular featured prominently in participants' photos. English and French language classes took place everyday, and many attended these on a daily basis. One resident noted "school is very special for me." This particular resident was one of many who had had his university education cut short due to the situation in his home country. For him, it was very important to try to continue his education in any way possible.

A lot of residents that we spoke to particularly emphasised the importance of language classes for integration and asylum claims. Language skills were seen as a way of actively preparing for the future they hoped for but was not yet in sight, the idea being that the day they were granted asylum, they would be ready for it.

Many residents also discussed with joy spending hours utilising the free internet access provided by a volunteer organisation in the camp. The 'info-bus' helped residents to keep in touch with friends and family, keep up to date with news headlines, and inform themselves on how to continue their journey.

Some we met also filled their time with work. All of the shops and restaurants which exchanged money were owned and operated by residents of the camp. The owners of these small enterprises wanted not only to earn money but to use their time productively, seeing their shops as integral to the camp and providing a valuable service to other residents. As one

resident told us, his restaurant was “not just to make business, but it is good for the people”. Others also worked with the volunteer organisations in the camp providing translation services or assisting with the construction of new shelters.

Coexistence

Multiple residents informed us about clashes between different communities or individual residents in the camp, and many shared their personal experiences of arson or looting. One family told us that on multiple occasions other residents broke into their shelter with the goal of stealing their gas. In addition, many of the residents warned us against being in the camp after dark, as there was an increase in clashes and violence. One resident warned of guns and other weapons, adding that these were often sold to residents in the camp and were not brought from their home countries. This violent side of the camp is something we as researchers did not personally see, instead learning about it through resident's narratives. Residents experiences with what one called, “the bad face of the camp,” points to the fact that sometimes the

mixture of different people and nationalities does not always lead to coexistence. As one resident told us, “people do not have respect for one another here.”

While these negative aspects certainly existed, many we spoke with preferred a sense of camaraderie towards fellow residents of the camp. The two biggest populations were Afghans and Sudanese, and each of these populations were said to have a ‘mafia’. Often major clashes in the camp were divided along these ethnic lines. However, one resident explained that the clashes between the Afghans and the Sudanese did not occur because either group are bad people, or because they are from different regions, but rather simply because they were the two largest populations in the camp. One Sudanese resident talked at length about his good relationship with his Afghan neighbours, mentioning that during Ramadan the two groups broke their fast and shared food together.

Throughout the camp residents formed small communities based on nationality. However, these communities lived side by side with other small communi-





ties and came together in a number of ways. There were no authorities present in the camp, and these communities tended to coexist peacefully. This was encouraged through a network of community leaders who met every Wednesday to discuss matters of the camp.

One way in which communities came together was through the sharing of food. Many received pre-made meals from the various distribution points around the camp, while others got raw ingredients from distribution and cooked themselves. Many photos and interviews included residents cooking and eating with those outside their ethnic group. In the morning and afternoon there was a tea van, which not only provided beverages, but games and musical instruments as well, allowing residents to interact in a relaxed environment. In addition, many residents bought food from each others' shops and restaurants, thereby supporting one another's businesses.

Many of the residents included places of worship in their photographs. A church, a Shia mosque, and a Sunni mosque could all be found within the camp. When

asked about these places, many expressed the sentiment that one's religion does not matter in the camp and that people are free to practice any religion they wish. One resident stated, "We have church, we have masjid. Freedom for everyone." Another commented, "All religions exist in the Jungle. It's good, we live together."

There were several inter-community places or activities that brought residents together in the camp. During our time in the camp a Sports Day was put on by a volunteer organisation. There was one rule of sports day: that all teams must be made up of mixed nationalities. Sports day featured prominently in the photographs taken by residents. One participant said of the event, "It's good. We are all refugees and coming together." In addition, places of learning, like Jungle Books, helped to enhance the feelings of community by providing a space where all were welcome.

Friends were also a prominent feature in photographs. It is clear from our time in the camp that many have created strong bonds with other residents, regardless of nationality. As one resident optimistically remarked, "Lan-

guage and understanding are a problem, but smile is the universal language.”

Volunteers

Volunteers interacted with residents on a number of different levels. Some worked at the distribution centres preparing food and sorting donations, while others had more active roles in the camp such as teaching and building. The majority of the residents we spoke with appreciated the work of the volunteer organisations and individuals.

Many volunteers were featured in photographs. When asked who was in the photograph, residents often replied, “that’s my friend.” This eludes to the blurred relationship that we both observed and experienced that exists between volunteers and residents. During our time in the camp we experienced the generosity and hospitality of several residents. Peo-

ple often invited us into their tents or shelters to share tea and chat, even offering to cook us food, a limited commodity. This was a common experience amongst other volunteers. Some long term volunteers had taken up offers from residents to share their homes in the camp.

The strong bonds that often formed between residents and volunteers were mostly viewed in a positive light by residents. One resident told us that they were glad that we were “on their side.” However, the volunteer-friend divide is complicated in many ways. In speaking about volunteers one resident stated, “we cannot go wherever in the world we want, but the world [i.e. volunteers etc.] is coming to us”. While this conveys appreciation for volunteer work it also implies the dichotomy in situations between migrants and volunteers. Volunteers can easily cross the borders that migrants often wish to but cannot.

‘Together we are a stronger,’ a powerful sentiment found among many in the camp.
Photo by researchers.





Guitars provided by the tea van fuel a relaxing afternoon for these three migrants. Photo by a resident.



Pictured here is one of the long queues in which residents waited for hours to receive food and other supplies. Photo by a resident.



This photo captures the camaraderie found among participants in the camp's Sports Day. Photo by a resident.

An Unofficial Camp



‘Container camp is good, but for entry you need to give fingerprints’



In the Calais camp's recent form there was no official accommodation provided by the French government until January 2016, when the container camp was built. Therefore, the majority of those who arrived in the camp lived in outdoor makeshift structures created by the migrants themselves with help from volunteer organisations. The unofficial portion of the camp has been produced as a space of illegality by the authorities. This has justified intervention by the authorities in the camp and has contributed to the camp being repeatedly raided and bulldozed.³ Our experience in the camp shed light on the official structures which existed within this unofficial camp.

By 'official' we are referring to state-run or state-sanctioned practices or organisations. When we use the term 'unofficial' we refer to things that fall outside of the 'official' category. The camp itself is considered 'unofficial' because it is not sanctioned by the state. However, within the camp certain official policies or structures formed in order for the authorities to obtain more order and control over its continuously growing population. In addition, communal and volunteer-led structures emerged in order to bring further organisation and leadership, which was lacking due to the camps organically unofficial nature.

Container camp

The container camp was built as an attempt by the French government to provide residents of the camp with an alternative and secure living space. There were 1,500 beds constructed within 125 shipping containers with each container housing up to 12 residents. The accommodation was equipped with heating, power sockets and electricity. Fabienne Buccio,

the Prefect for the Pas-de-Calais region considered it as "a stop-off point leading to integration" into the French society.⁴

The presence of the container camp stood in stark contrast to the surrounding tents and makeshift structures. The contrast between the two types of accommodation was clearly one which preoccupied the residents - it not only featured heavily in conversations, but also featured prominently in the photos. Many of the residents were initially reluctant to move into the containers, which were under the control of French authorities. Nico Stevens, a coordinator for a volunteer organisation said that the container "looks like a detention centre, it has very tall fences, and people don't want to move from their homes. They're so displaced already and it's important psychologically to have their own space. So moving into a container that houses 12-14 people is very unsettling".⁵ The biometric identification system of entry into the container camp caused further suspicion among residents. It was only after the first major demolition of the southern part of the unofficial camp on 29 February and 1 March 2016 that some residents were left with no choice but to move into the containers.

In spite of the improved facilities of the containers, many residents discussed the disadvantages with us of living within them. Gaining a place in the container camp was subject to official registration, which included giving palm prints. The entrance of the container camp was equipped with a hand scanner, which allowed the residents access once their palm prints matched their access code. Many residents told us that they did not know how their palm print data would be stored and feared that this could neg-

actively affect future asylum applications. As one resident stated, “It’s good, but for entry you need to give fingerprints”.

Some residents also recounted how each night they would try to make their way across the Channel to the UK on lorries. The French security systems in the container camps meant that residents living there could not as easily leave at night to attempt their journey to the UK. This sense of freedom was very important to them.

On the other hand, when we interacted with the residents who lived within the containers, we were presented with another perspective. These residents told us that the containers mostly had families with children, as well as individuals who had already sought asylum in France. For them, it did not matter if their palm print was taken. Within the confinement of the container camp the residents felt safer than in the unofficial part of the camp due to the presence of security guards. This, however, also meant that there was a lack of privacy as the guards could en-

ter the containers at any given moment. The lack of privacy was also compounded by the fact that containers were shared by up to 12 migrants, sometimes complete strangers. One resident who had turned down the containers told us that there are “too many nationalities and not enough trust”. The father of a family we interviewed admitted that although the containers had “no privacy, people look inside, steal things”, he still preferred to have his young son and wife sleep inside the containers than in the camp.

In contrast to the unofficial part of the camp, the tight-knit sense of community was lacking in the containers. A resident living within the containers expressed disappointment that his friends could not visit him in the containers, “I live there, but it is not good because my friends can’t visit”.

French Police

Increased police presence around and in the camp coincided with the aftermath of the Paris attacks in November 2015; before this, the police did not enter the

The family area consisting of donated caravans.
Photo by a resident.





This makeshift shelter was in several of the participants' photos and shows the use of different materials for construction.
Photo by a resident.

camp, instead having low numbers patrol around and outside of it. After the state of emergency which followed the Paris attacks, the French authorities were able to enforce more coercive and violent practices, such as daily raids, rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons, which were often justified in terms of security. The unofficial status of the residents frequently gave the police the opportunity to exploit their official authority.

The residents often complained of harassment and violent actions on the behalf of the police. We were told by a resident of an incident during which the police had caught him walking outside the camp and forced him to take his shoes off. The police then walked off with his shoes leaving him to walk back to the camp barefoot and wait for the next distribution of shoes or help from a friend. The resident also told us that the same thing had occurred with a number of other residents of the camp. Residents of the camp displayed the rubber bullets and gas canisters throughout the camp as evidence of police raids and the violence they had suf-

fered at the hands of the authorities. The police also did not discriminate against minors. We were told of one incident in which a minor's cheek was shattered due to a rubber bullet being shot at his face one night. We ourselves witnessed a three day raid during our visit during which armed riot police blocked the major entrances to the camp, in order to raid all of the shops and restaurants in the camp.

One insight learnt from speaking to migrants about the police was how differently they perceived the violence. We were very moved and concerned by the stories they recounted of their treatment by the police. However, one resident of the camp told us that the fences, walls and police treatment were not much of a deterrence for them when considered in the context of their long journeys. Having already crossed borders and dealt with authorities who have orders of shoot to kill, European police were no deterrent.

Community Leaders

The existence of different nationalities within the camp led to the formation of

different communities. These communities had leaders and worked in an organised manner, resembling a hierarchical community structure. From being in the camp we could see how the presence of the community leaders was required to help maintain order in the absence of 'official authorities' within the camp.

We experienced the importance of the community leader when we visited a small community in the camp. The leader was well respected and no one undermined his authority. It was not until the leader had gotten to know and trust us and had become comfortable with our presence that the other residents engaged in conversation with us. We also had the opportunity to witness an interaction between leaders of two different communities during our time in this small community. The authority of the community leader was evident immediately as all the other residents stood up with respect upon entrance. The leaders discussed the recent terrorist attack in Nice and together organised a one minute silent vigil in memory of the victims.⁶ The residents were very insistent on letting the world know that they also condemned any act of terrorism and grieved with France and the rest of the world for its loss.

The importance of community leaders led to a chain of communications in which information was transferred from leaders to their respective communities in an effort to keep residents informed. This led to coordination of activities between different communities within the camp to further strengthen inter-communal bonds, which brought some amount of control and order within the camp, minimising violent clashes. The communities worked in collaboration with aid organisations to provide important psychological and social support to the residents of the camp. Many residents of the camp had suffered trauma in their home country and on their journey to the Calais camp. Often during the interviews they did not want to talk about tragic incidents that had caused them to flee their home country or encounters with authorities on their journey to the camp. Under the given circumstances, support provided by communities and the volun-





The family container camps did not provide the ideal settings for children but they were better than tents.
Photo by a resident.

Volunteers and residents from different communities during one of many activities arranged by organisations.
Photo by a resident.



Creative use of empty teargas canisters, which the police often fired towards the camp.
Photo by researchers.



Police raids on shops and restaurants within the camp happened regularly.
Photo by researchers.



teers was an important service to many.

Volunteer Organisations

Another unofficial form of organisation that played an important role in running the camp were the NGOs and aid organisations. The French authorities did not want to provide organised aid for residents in the fear of creating an official and permanent camp. Therefore, the main provisions and basic humanitarian aid were highly dependent on civilians volunteering resources and time.

The community leaders often coordinated with the volunteer organisations, which enabled the organisations to work in an organised and targeted manner, thus increasing the number of residents assisted. The volunteer organisations worked to provide the residents with hot meals, clothes, raw food materials and other necessities. Many residents relied on the pre-made food from volunteer organisations, while others would get raw

ingredients from distribution and cook their own meals. To manage the increasing numbers and limited resources available, one of the biggest aid organisations created a ticketing system, which enabled the organisation to carry out targeted distribution in addition to the distribution lines.

The volunteer organisations also interacted personally with the residents to understand their needs and provide assistance more efficiently, and they also helped the residents build and repair shelters up until the French authorities banned the entry of building materials into the camp. In general, the work of the volunteer organisations was highly respected and much appreciated by the residents, who would often comment “volunteers good”. The residents told us that the volunteers made them feel that the world still cared for them and had not forgotten their existence.

The residents show their support to France and the families of victims of the Nice attack in 2016, while the police raid the camp.
Photo by a resident.



In Limbo in Europe



‘We are near to the good world. The Jungle is in darkness’

Fingerprinting in Europe

Upon arrival in Europe, migrants are required to give their fingerprints to authorities as a way of registering them. However, EU law also dictates that whichever country your fingerprints are first taken in is the country in which you should claim asylum. This is intended to deter people from claiming asylum in their country of choice. In theory, it means that all migrants are fingerprinted at their point of entry into the EU. In practice though, this is not the case.

Nonetheless, even if fingerprints are taken, many migrants continue their journey through Europe hoping to claim asylum elsewhere. Under the Dublin Regulations, however, migrants can be deported back to the country where they were first fingerprinted, if they are found in another European country. The Regulations are more complex, however, as migrants can request that their fingerprints are erased from the European database. When arriving in a new country, where they might want to claim asylum, migrants can approach the authorities to start this erasure process which takes up to six months. If the fingerprints are successfully removed from the database, the migrant can start an asylum application in the new European country. Many countries such as Italy and Greece are accommodating to these requests for erasure because it means that they are no longer responsible for the migrant's application.

As a result of this long and arduous process, however, many migrants arriving in Europe do not want to be fingerprinted in, for example, Greece, when they are attempting to reach family living in, for example, Germany. It would mean that if they do make it to Germany, they cannot claim asylum there because as soon as they do, the European database, EU-RODAC, will show their fingerprints in Greece and they risk being sent back to apply for asylum in there. They must request that their fingerprints are removed from the system and this is not guaranteed, nor indeed are all migrants aware that this is even a possibility.

In a further complication, countries such as Italy and Greece have been very reluctant to fingerprint everyone arriving on their shores. Some that we spoke to had never been fingerprinted because authorities had waved through hundreds at a time in an attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility. This is something that the EU has tried to counteract. Frontex, an EU border agency, sent taskforces to Greece and Italy intended to relieve the Greek and Italian authorities as well as ensure that the fingerprinting system is thorough.

The result has been that Italy and Greece became very strict in enforcing the fingerprinting process over the last year. However, countries where the majority of migrants arrive still did not want to take responsibility for them all. Thus, even those who were fingerprinted given temporary papers and legally allowed to move around the Schengen area. Others, of course, were not supposed to leave Italy but did so anyway.

The result is thousands of migrants who have a legal right to be in Europe, but are in limbo. If they try to claim asylum, Italy will be asked to take them back. However, Italy can refuse (and indeed has refused in the past) to do so, leaving migrants in perpetual uncertainty. One resident of the camp in fact told us ‘Italy is just giving out papers’. That is, they want migrants to be able to travel around Europe so that they do not stay in Italy.

There were many french flags throughout the camp.
Photo by a resident.

The fingerprinting system and its implementation are evidently complex and yet not always well understood by those caught up in it. It is an important constraint which dictates how migrants travel around Europe and yet the system has rarely been comprehensively explained to those who it impacts most: the migrants. Most of the people we met in Calais told us that they knew that “giving fingerprints might affect other things”, but were unsure exactly what.

Many in the camp had a visceral fear of giving their fingerprints due to a lack of understanding of what the consequences were. We were asked many questions about fingerprinting whilst there because of a sheer lack of information available to the residents of the camp. We also witnessed volunteers trying to help residents of the camp by advising them, but many volunteers were not legally trained and additionally did not fully understand the processes themselves. The camp did, however, have a Legal Centre which was volunteer-run and aimed to provide legal knowledge to migrants about their rights and the asylum process. Whilst we were at the camp we tried on a couple of occasions to speak to volunteers working there, but the Centre always had

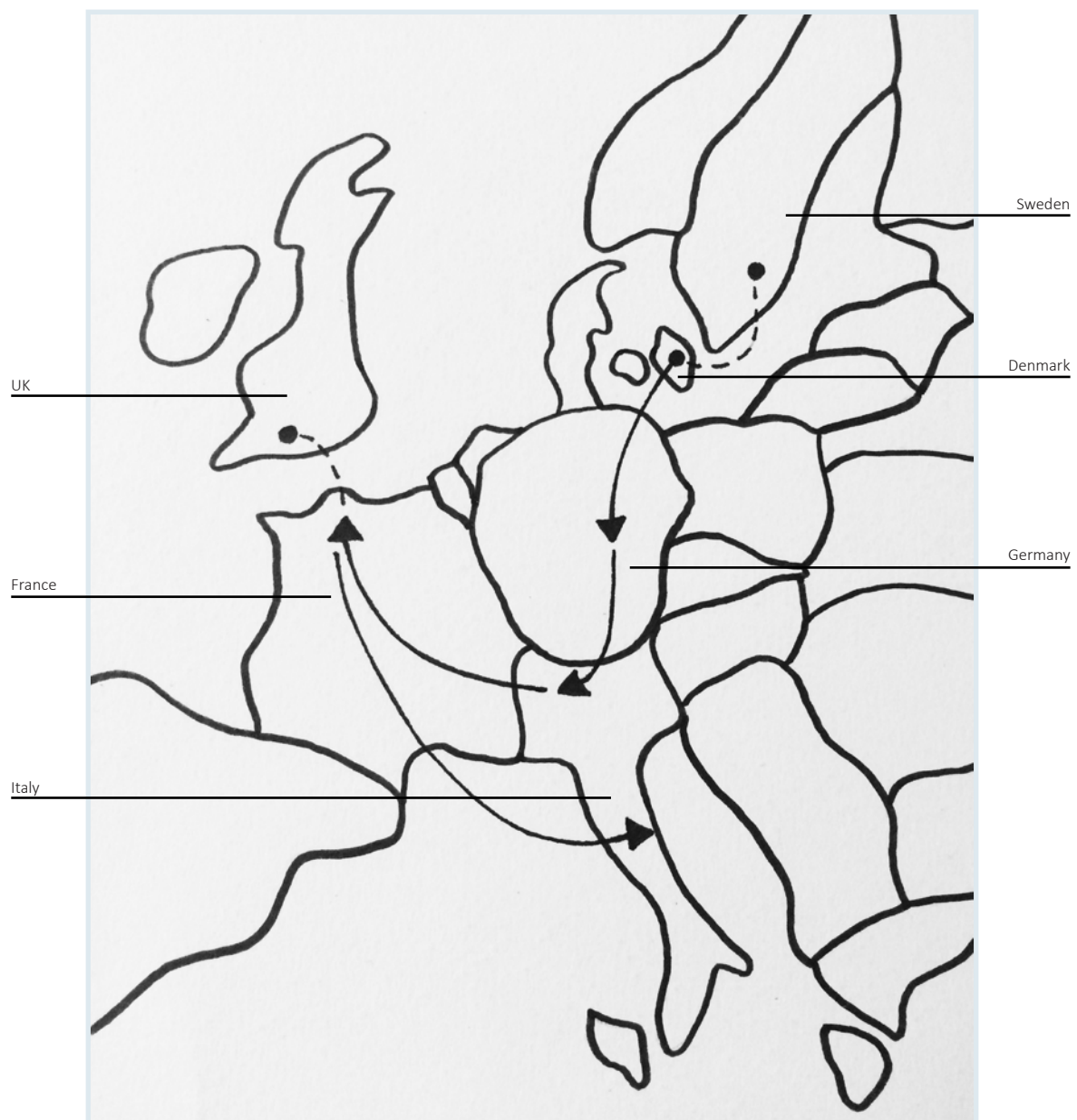
a long line of migrants waiting patiently to understand their complex situation.

To add to this, the way that the fingerprinting processes is imposed on migrants tends to be arbitrary and haphazard. Many of those living in the camp were arrested if they wandered outside the camp and two residents told us very contrasting stories of what happened during their arrests. One told us that he simply refused to give his fingerprints to the police, telling them “in your dreams, you will have to cut off my hands”. He escaped unscathed and un-fingerprinted. Another told us that he was physically beaten and forced to give his fingerprints, which resulted in him being deported back to Italy within a couple of days with no chance to collect any of his belongings from the camp. This was not an anomalous occurrence as another resident told us: “Dublin is a big problem, many get sent back to Italy.”

Whilst some migrants were scared and lacked knowledge of the Dublin Regulations, there were certainly some residents of the camp who had researched immigration and asylum policies in Europe and knew the processes very well. One resident very carefully explained to us the different types of asylum and im-

The sand dunes divided the ‘buffer zone’ from the tents and makeshift shelters where the majority of residents lived.
Photo by a resident.





A journey made by one resident in the camp to illustrate the European fingerprinting system

He left his home country five years ago, walking from his home country in the Middle East to Europe where he was first fingerprinted in Denmark. He was trying to make it to Sweden, but the Danish authorities forced him to give his fingerprints before he could make it to Sweden. Having given his fingerprints, he was forced to claim asylum in Denmark. After two years living in Denmark his temporary asylum ran out and the authorities started the process of trying to deport him back to his home country. He therefore went to Germany: "it was good for refugees back then." In Germany, under the Dublin Regulations, they attempted to deport him back to Denmark (from where he would be immediately deported back to his home country). After a year, he escaped to Italy where he spent a year and a half. The Italian authorities gave him Subsidiary Protection, giving him five years in Europe. This is a protection afforded to those who would be at risk if they returned to their home country, although they do not fit the strict definition of a refugee. The resident in question only managed to achieve this, however, by finding himself a lawyer to fight his case. No one ever explained the fingerprinting system to this young man, he learnt about it from those he met along the way who had experience of it. He asked us several questions about where his fingerprints were, who had access to them and when they would be taken off the system.

migration offices which exist in France and which ones processed which parts of the application. Others were aware of the possibility of having their fingerprints erased from the European database and were taking advantage of this.

Moreover, many residents were using the camp specifically as a waiting place. If a migrant does not have a formal address then they cannot be deported. Perhaps more important in practice is that it was very hard to locate individuals in the camp. Therefore, many waited in the camp whilst they applied for their fingerprints to be erased from the system knowing that, even if they were rejected, there was less chance of them being deported.

One resident we spoke with wanted to seek asylum in France but he had already been forced to give his fingerprints in Belgium. He therefore opened a case in France in order to erase his fingerprints from the EURODAC database. This resident waited in the Calais camp for three months for this process to be completed. Migrants are not, however, automatically notified when their fingerprints are erased and so this resident spent those three months going into Calais town centre on a daily basis to check his application. When we met him again this process was complete and he had proceeded to file an application for asylum in France, which he expected to take around 10 months. Above all, this resident lamented the fact that he had wasted a whole year of his life trying to process his application. "Fuck the Dublin regulation," he told us.

Inside and outside of the system
The fingerprinting system has clear flaws in its practical imposition, as well as in principle. One of the problems which we particularly noticed is that it creates a division between those in the system and those out of it.

Those living in the unofficial camp are regarded as being outside the system, but

this is not always the case. Contrary to popular misconception, not everyone in the camp was attempting to illegally travel to the UK. A large number of people we spoke to in the camp had applied already for asylum in France and were waiting to be processed. However, under French asylum laws, you do not receive housing until your application is processed, hence many wait in Calais where there was a sense of community and a semblance of infrastructure to support them. One resident told us, with a huge smile on his face, "I am French now." It is important to note, however, that when we visited the camp, there were strong rumours surrounding an imminent demolition and everyone felt that the camp would not last much longer. It was largely as a result of this sense of the impending destruction that migrants had started to apply for asylum in France. In the early days of the camp, many had refused to even consider this possibility.

A complex system

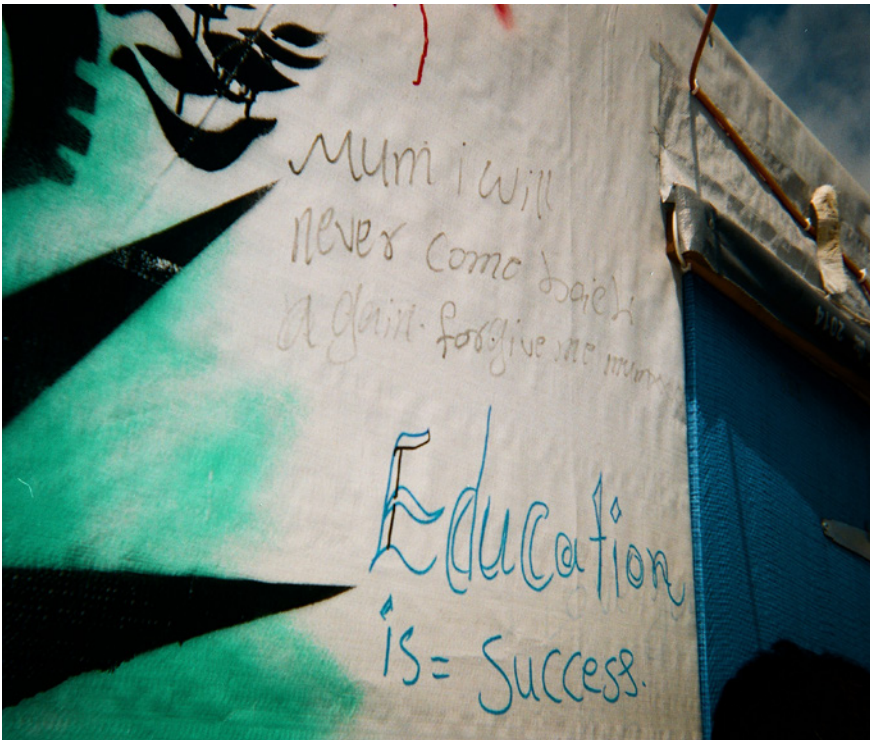
One of the major conclusions which we drew from discussing the Dublin Regulations with migrants was how little they knew or understood of a system which had such a fundamental impact on their futures. One of the reasons for this lack of understanding is the sheer complexity of the system; due to amount of migrants arriving and the amount of countries trying to coordinate, it is perhaps inevitable there are so many flaws in the system. Sadly, though, this means that many have been left with no official status; even if they are not 'illegally' moving around, they have no rights and no country is willing to take full responsibility for them. The complexity of the way that fingerprints are taken and stored and how this impacts future asylum applications has created a set of processes which left many migrants in limbo, waiting in Calais until this was – if ever – resolved. As one resident movingly told us: "Calais is a place where [people] go when they're in between systems and states."

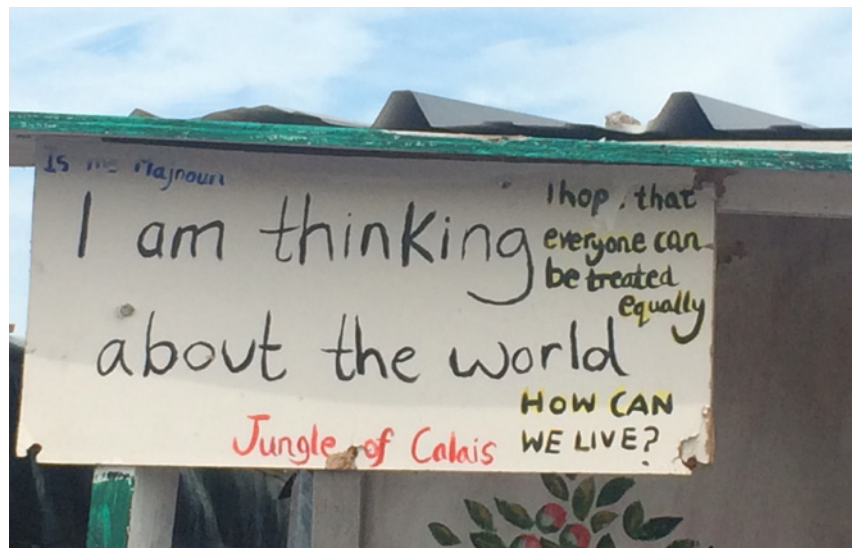




Taken in a part of the camp with more official authorities present, this political statement was one which resonated amongst all residents of the camp.
Photo by researchers.

Graffiti in the Camp





Conclusion

The aim of this report was to shed light on migrant experiences of living in the unofficial camp in the French border town of Calais, as well as their experiences of navigating through Europe and the fingerprinting procedures that accompanied that journey.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of migrants' experiences, we did not want to simply ask questions as we felt that these would have inevitably been based on our own normative assumptions and how we perceived the camp from our perspective as researchers, rather than as residents. Instead, we wanted to see the camp through the residents' eyes. It is for this reason that we gave the residents disposable cameras to take photos of the camp, in order to form their narrative of living in the camp without any real direction or influence from us. This brought us unique insights of everyday life in the camp and it showed us patterns and themes which we might not have otherwise spotted. It broadened our understanding of what mattered to the residents and what aspects of the camp they felt the need to show us. As detailed above, we discovered three major themes which consistently reappeared in the photos: existence and coexistence within the camp, the interplay of formal structures within an informal camp, and the Calais camp as a place of waiting and limbo.

This project provided us with a unique research experience. We were provided with an intimate look into residents' lives. As opposed to an interview or simply asking questions, the photography was done by the participants without the presence of the researchers. While the participants knew that the photos were for a specific project, and therefore probably tried to show specific scenes they felt were important, we still believe this approach provided more individualised insights. Through a method like ours, participants are given more freedom to guide the narrative of their story. They choose what to take photos of, and therefore have some control over what will be discussed in the ensuing conversation. This reconsiders the typical relationship between participant and researcher.

As researchers, we also felt that the project allowed us to broach new topics that might not have otherwise been discussed. More than anything, it meant that we dealt with topics that we would not have even considered bringing up with the participants. In some situations this method also allowed conversations to be guided into personal territories that we may not have felt comfortable bringing up. For example, one participant took a photograph of graffiti that contained the message "Mum, I will never come back. Please forgive me." During the discussion of this photo we learned that the participant had actually written this graffiti. The participant then spoke at length about missing home,

'Peace' written in the Jungle Books make-shift school, where English and French was taught.
Photo by a resident.





about his family, and about the difficulty in staying in contact. These intimate details might not have been provided with the absence of the visual stimulus of the photograph.

In addition, this method allowed for multiple meetings between the researchers and participants. We met the participants a minimum of three times throughout the research process: the initial meeting when the participant receives the camera, the second meeting when the participant returns the camera, and the photo interview. We felt that multiple meetings over time allowed a trusting environment to form between researchers and participants. Therefore, by the time of the photo interview many of the participants felt comfortable speaking about their journeys and lives.

We believe that this is an innovative way of investigating refugee and migrant camps and in gaining a better perception and understanding of the migrant experience in Europe. This type of research could help to inform debate and policies around the complicated topic of migration and migration regulation in Europe. It would be especially informative if migration from the perspective of migrants was investigated at larger scales and throughout different camps throughout Europe - both official and unofficial.

'Humans after all' written by the entrance to the youth centre.
Photo by a resident.



Despite certain methodological limits, there was an overriding sense that those in the camp wanted their message to be heard and spread. Our research project allowed migrants to regain some of their agency through telling their stories how they wished to tell them. One of the main conclusions we drew from our interaction with residents of the camp was their acute awareness of the situation in which they found themselves. They wanted to emphasise that they were not just letting this 'happen' to them, but they were reacting and actively trying to navigate the system. Every action and object which they described as special or personal was linked to their futures and they were consistently acting with this in mind - be it by learning a new language, erasing fingerprints or building ties to a new country and nationality.

The camp in Calais has now been demolished and the thousands of people who lived in the unofficial camp have either moved on elsewhere to other countries or cities in France, either remaining in limbo or applying for asylum. Considering Calais' long history as a border-zone between France and England, it will be interesting to see for how long the British and French authorities can prevent the organic emergence of another unofficial camp in northern France.⁷

While there often is a political perception of the possibility of controlling, regulating and managing migrants, our research in the Calais camp underlined that migrants are not just bodies you can move around; they are people with a will and with hopes and plans for the future who are constantly interacting with and reacting to the policies imposed on them. They are displaced from where they call home, but they are nonetheless humans. This concluding thought formed the bases for the title of our project: Humans of Calais.

Further readings

References

1.
Ian Hacking discusses the notion of ‘making up people’ and how classifications of people interacts with those being classified, quoted in Ruben Anderson: *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe* (2015: p16)
2.
Refugee Rights Data Project: *The Long Wait: Filling data gaps relating to refugees and displaced people in the Calais camp* (2016)

Independent: *Demolition of Calais Jungle could begin later this month, says head of France’s human rights watchdog* (6 October 2016)
3.
The Connexion - The Newspaper for English-Speakers in France: *Dawn raid on Calais “Jungle”* (22 September 2009)
4.
World News: *Container Replace tents for 1,500 migrants in Calais ‘Jungle’ camp* (11 January 2016)
5.
Guardian: *Calais ‘Jungle’ residents defy bulldozers as police issue ultimatum to leave* (12 January 2016)
6.
BBC: *Nice Attack: At least 84 killed by lorry at Bastille Day Celebrations* (15 July 2016)
7.
Guardian: *Refugees take to hiding in northern France after Calais camp demolished* (5 November 2016)

Recommended reads on migration

- Anderson, Ruben: *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe* (2015)
- Guild, Elspeth: *Security and Migration in the 21st Century* (2009)
- Squire, Vicky: *The Contested Politics of Mobility: Borderzones and Irregularity* (2011)
- Vaughan-Williams, Nick: *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (2012)

Thank you

The King's College London Migration Research Group and its researchers, Layla Mohseni, Signe Sofie Hansen, Tara Flores, and Ishita Singh, would like to thank King's College War Studies for providing us with the opportunity and funding to pursue this research project. We would like to thank Dr Leonie Ansems de Vries for bringing this group of interested students together and for her insights, encouragement, and help through every aspect of this project. We would also like to thank the KCL Centre for Integrated Research on Risk and Resilience (CIRRR) for their interest and funding.

We are very thankful to all those we met in the camp for making our experience an unforgettable and enriching one. We would like to thank the organisations and individual volunteers we encountered who provided us with information and took interest in our project. Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank all those who participated in the research. It was a pleasure and an honour to hear about your journeys and be let into your lives.



