

Weaponised Landscapes:

Mapping the Calais 'Jungle'

This article traces the socio-spatial transformation of the landscape in which the Calais 'Jungle' sat. Through mapping the endo- and exogenic forces that shaped the landscape of the now-demolished migrant-constructed urbanity we aim to expose the imaginaries and ideologies that have informed the trajectory of the site along three significant stages: the formation of the camp as an extraterritorial refuge; the weaponisation of landscape as an instrument of production and reproduction of existing power relations; and finally, its demolition and ongoing redevelopment into a 'renaturalised' protected coastline area.

The migrant camp first emerged in the form of various smaller camps along the French-British border 19 years ago. Throughout 2016 the camp transformed into a migrant-constructed urbanity and was at the centre of the mainstream media's attention throughout its demographic peak the same year. Following the eviction of refugees and demolition of the camp in October 2016, the landscape of the former camp began being redeveloped into a nature reserve. The report's findings are based on five field trips we carried out between May 2016 and July 2018.

The Jungle historically emerged in 1999 [1] in the form of clusters of small-scale encampments along France's northern coast. The camps were located within close proximity to major infrastructure nodes, such as the Port of Calais or the Eurotunnel Terminal. Those nodes facilitate and regulate the pan-European flows of trade, finance and information. The states, and by extension corporations, who operate those nodes accelerate flows that are considered to be of value to the neoliberal economy and slow down those that are perceived malign or deemed a threat to the ethnocentric imaginary at the foundation to the nation state [2].

The camps have repeatedly been subject to demolitions and evictions commissioned by the local authorities. Although a number of camps have been dubbed 'Jungle' over the past decade, it is the camp's instantiation on the sand dunes east of the Calais Ferry Terminal and on top of the former landfill site Le Lande that became the Jungle's most noted architectural form until its estimated 7,000 to 10,000 inhabitants were evicted and the camp demolished.

The migrants' motifs for relocating into the Jungle shifted from seeking a temporary base to attempt further migration towards constructing a more permanent refuge. The Calais Jungle was inhabited by those that were forcibly displaced by war, economic

marginalisation, climate change and corporate landgrabs outside of Europe [3]. While the camp's population was initially made up of migrants trying to cross the French-British border in attempts to relocate to the UK for social and economic reasons, the camp later became a refuge for bodies repeatedly displaced elsewhere in Europe's cities under the pretext of the Dublin agreements and local laws. Based on interviews conducted as part of our field trips, the longing for a space to settle and exercise everyday life became a reoccurring leitmotif for life in the Jungle and perhaps more important than the urge to continue migration across the Channel [4].

Everyday life in the Jungle expressed itself through various mundane but, in the face of constant displacement and the annihilation of the everyday, nevertheless political acts. Sitting in a makeshift café, a cup of tea in hand and smoking Jungle cigarettes with locals allowed us to observe some of the everyday social practices within the village: praying, eating, learning, gardening, gathering, smoking and socialising. The Jungle had turned into an extraterritorial refuge that allowed its dwellers to exercise everyday life – a practice that had been impossible elsewhere subject to repeated displacement and abuse.

As the rationale behind the collective settlement initiative shifted from temporary to permanent its architectural form evolved from that of a camp to the one of a village. Along with acts of socialising, architectures of everyday life emerged: religious buildings to pray together, cafés to gather, restaurants to eat with friends and strangers, a hotel for guests, educational buildings to learn and high-street shops to hang out in. Beyond its intrinsic urban characteristics, the Jungle had further formed into an integral part of Calais' socio-economic fabric. As its inhabitants traversed Calais and its nearby cities they built up supply chains stemming from local and regional retailers in support of their local entrepreneurship [5]. The architecture of the village and the social practices within promised a sense of permanence. A promise that would be unfulfilled, as we shall see.

As much as the village was a place of urban entrepreneurship, life within it was far from romantic. From interviews with humanitarian volunteers and inhabitants we learned that human trafficking, organised crime and the exploitation of vulnerable bodies was as oppressive as the excessive violence enforced by the police [6]. The village was a space of refuge - but also one of perpetual fear. There was a constant oppressive police presence that monitored

Figure 3.1: A chronocartography of the Calais 'Jungle' maps the emergence and destruction of the camp in relation to the construction of new border architectures from 2014 to 2016.

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Figure 3.2: Migrant encampments in the Calais region in relation to infrastructure nodes and weaponised landscape elements.

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pedestrian flows and heavily controlled vehicular movements with the aim of subjugating the village's inhabitants to a life of temporality and preventing the permanence they were seeking so dramatically. The battery-powered drill that we were hiding under a pile of clothes in order to smuggle it into the village - unseen by the police - became an illegal weapon; a political object that was considered a threat to the politics of displacement. The act of construction puts the perceived temporariness and disorder of the camp at risk. While architectural violence could be read clearly in the landscape, through the construction of barriers, fences and walls, as well as through the acts of demolition and mass clearance, it was the carefully calculated control of architectural flows into the camp that sustained a condition of permanent temporariness for its inhabitants. Humanitarian intervention, in this case, was vital to the survival of the camp's inhabitants but also complicit in enabling the necro-political governance that limited life within the camp to just above the threshold of death [7]. The camp was in crisis - yet the crisis was not migration itself but rather the conditions produced by the state itself.

Weaponised Landscapes

If landscape is a perceived social and architectural construct we produce and reproduce through everyday life it is also necessarily a medium *through* and by which power relations materialize [8]. The study of the transformation of the landscape of Calais reveals its territorial dimension: landscape becomes an instrument of power, rigidifying the ideologies and imaginaries of those that modulate it, thereby naturalizing existing racial hierarchies and legitimizing displacement.

Throughout the duration of our study, the media discourse changed: first a moralistic humanitarian imperative to help refugees was the media's predominant narrative, later, and with local elections drawing closer, the popular media started portraying migration as a threat against an imagined ethno-nationalist base of power [9]. While the former media portrayal - that of the 'deserving' refugee - dispossessed migrants of any political agency, the later narrative ultimately justified extraordinary spatial responses akin to those facilitated in war zones. The proclamation of immigration as a 'crisis', a 'threat' and an 'emergency', by publications of all political leanings, gave way to and enabled the state to commission extensive policing and the militarisation of the landscape.

The militarisation of the vocabulary went hand in hand with the weaponisation of the landscape against those that 'don't belong' to the imagined landscape of the 'rightful' inhabitants of Calais. The setting up of checkpoints, police raids at night and the application of architectural violence against the 'other' in the form of fences, walls, flood-lights and security barriers gained 'legitimacy'.

The typology of architectural interventions is plentiful and diverse - and compares to colonial architectural tactics and strategies historically employed elsewhere across other sides. Elevated access roads to the Eurotunnel that stretch across large bodies of water limit the use of the terminal to those that travel by vehicles, rendering it inaccessible to anyone else and resembling the apartheid infrastructure occupying Palestine. The topography of the motorway leading to the Port de Calais has similarly been raised, creating an oblique slope that requires effort to climb up towards the elevated position of the more powerful. Following the

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deforestation of 103 hectares of vegetation in September 2015, the Eurotunnel Group, which owns the land and ditches adjacent to the terminal, closed the rainwater drainage system's locks in order to deliberately flood the landscape preventing direct access to their fences [10]. Topographic modulation, deforestation, surveillance, the construction of security infrastructure and patrol vehicles all form part of a set of instruments that aim to rigidify prevailing power-relations. The constantly reproduced imaginary of the 'other side', manifested through media and architecture, is at the heart of the landscape we perceive when travelling through the pan-European gateway. The intervention itself - the fence, the wall etc.- is no longer an external object placed within a landscape but constitutes the landscape itself. Steve Pile suitably notes: 'Political struggles are not fought on the surface of geography but through its very fabrication.' [11]

The landscape surrounding the ferry terminal has seen very similar interventions, most notably the setting-up of police checkpoints that went hand in hand with the enforcement of a security zone around the camp. The erection of seemingly never-ending security fences and walls are a materialisation of a fascist imaginary. Dotted with CCTV cameras and flood-lights those multi-layered defensive structures form a barrier that runs along the infrastructure of the port of Calais and remains impermeable for those who are undocumented.

The responsible actors involved in weaponising the Calais landscape are of both corporate and governmental nature: the French, British and other European administrations as well as the Eurotunnel Group, the Port Boulogne Calais and the

Figure 3.4: The land of the Calais 'Jungle' after its eviction and demolition. What remained was the institutional container camp and a heap of old mattresses. The tracks of the bulldozers clearing the landscape remained impressed into the soil.

various subsidiaries and contractors of large scale design and construction companies are all accountable and have become the 'landscape architects' of Calais. The Groupe Eurotunnel SE is not only operator of the Channel Tunnel but holds shares in various operations revolving around transport and trade. The conglomerate acts as a land developer of golf resorts, shopping malls and eco-villages [12]. The holding is listed at the NYSE Euronext market in Paris and London and one quarter of all UK trade in goods with the European Union are transported through the Channel Tunnel every year. It is no coincidence that the 'architects' that envisioned and constructed the securitised landscape surrounding the terminal were two ex-militaries, trained by the armies of the nation states and now employed by corporations [13].

Framed through a demagogic humanitarian imperative the government commissioned the construction of an 'official camp' within the 'Jungle'. The institutional camp, constructed out of shipping containers, can be critiqued for its macabre materiality which evoked that the bodies they contain are goods that are to be traded with and shipped away. Beyond the symbolic means, however, the container camp and all its institutionalised counterparts, dubbed 'Welcome Centres', across Europe are ultimately spatial typologies that intend to contain and control bodies in space, separating them from public life and dismantling any sense of agency.

Eviction and demolition of the camp were spread over two stages. In a first move, and to establish territorial dominance over the landscape, the local authorities commissioned the demolition of

Figure 3.3: The Eurotunnel Terminal from afar: a water body dissects the landscape into two; a tight maintenance regime enables effective surveillance of the land in front of the terminal; wind turbines contribute towards offsetting the company's carbon foot-print.

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the Southern half of the irregular urbanity in late February 2016. Numerous makeshift shacks, tents as well as communal buildings were destroyed using machinery backed up by police forces. A church and an educational centre were among the few structures spared from the trajectories of the D6N Caterpillar bulldozers. The demolition activities were preceded by the clearance of a one-hundred-meter wide strip along the access road to the port of Calais to create a ‘secure zone’ that enabled a more efficient policing of the landscape. Eight months later, the urbanity-that-could-have-been was then demolished and evicted in its entirety throughout October 2016, again under the veil of ‘humanitarianism’ and coinciding with the heating up of French Presidential election campaigns. The eviction of the village’s inhabitants created new decentralised irregular growth of new encampments which spread across the region and were inhabited by those not willing to formally apply for asylum and fleeing relocation into one of the state-run camps.

The remaining migrants experienced ongoing excessive police force, abuse and constant displacement [14]. The demolition was followed by a ban for activists and volunteers to serve food to those in need and the prohibition of public assemblies in Calais [15]. The racial-other had to be dispersed and removed from the landscape altogether, at any cost, and in line with the nationalist imaginary of the ‘natural landscape’ of Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

Natural Landscapes and Naturalised Power Relations

Following eviction and demolition, migrants and their homes gave way to a ‘restored natural landscape’ and a ‘natural habitat for rare [animal] species’ [16]. In March 2017 the local authorities released an invitation to tender with the aim to transform the landscape in which the Calais ‘Jungle’ once sat into a nature reserve and an ‘ecologically valuable’ site. The tender documentation [17] detailed the cleaning, earthworks and construction operations: dunes, sand-cliffs and moors are supposed to form a natural habitat for native plants and birds. Construction of the large scale green belt project is currently underway. Once finished, the project will feature a hiking trail and an observatory to allow the public to experience views of the natural landscape. The highlight of the site, the coastline conservation authority claims, will be to climb onto the Battery Oldenburg, a historic battery built by the Nazis as part of the Atlantic Wall during World War II. The adjacent site of the former Jules-Ferry-Migrant-Centre was excavated, revealing the sand beneath and allowing for natural vegetation to reclaim the site. Beyond its aesthetics, the site will also consist of natural barriers and anti-trespassing interventions to prevent unauthorized access and thereby future migrant settlement. It should not surprise that the project was paid for by the regional authorities and the British Border Force. [18]

The modulation of the landscape in line with ethno-nationalist imaginaries reproduces prevailing power relations and formulates an exclusionary territorial claim. While the design of landscapes

forms part of the forces that weaponise and enclose the land - for ecological as much as military reasons - the discipline has also the potential to challenge state narratives and ‘devise new modes of narration’ for the ‘articulation of truth claims’ [19]. In taking not the material intervention as a starting point but understanding the formation of the landscape as social and architectural process we hope to challenge both, the intervention itself and the imaginary at the foundation of it.

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- [4] The longing for ‘a place to be’ and to simply exercise everyday spatial practices has been communicated to us by migrants during interviews we conducted as part of a number of field trips in 2016 and 2017.
- [5] Interviews with shop owners in the camp showed that their products - such as cigarettes, flour for bread, tea and other supplies - had been sourced from nearby supermarkets and other regional suppliers from Northern France and Belgium.
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- [13] Engaged by the Eurotunnel group in 2015 Dominique Schmitlin, now appointed Security Director for Channel Tunnel Concession and Philippe de Lagune as Chief Operating Officer in Safety and Ethics, formed the groups response to an increase in migrant attempts to get to the UK. Philippe de Lagune was French Safety Coordinator for the 2012 London Olympic Games and has worked for the French Defence Department and the French armed forces. Dominique Schmitlin is a Lieutenant-Colonel and has served in the French military for over 33 years. Groupe Eurotunnel SE, Groupe Eurotunnel SE Appoints Philippe De Lagune As Chief Operating Officer – Safety And Ethics, 2016, <https://www.getlinkgroup.com/uploadedFiles/assets-uk/Media/Press-Releases/2016-Press-Release/160104-Groupe%20Eurotunnel-SE-appoints-Philippe-de-Lagune-as-Chief-Operating-Officer-Safety-and-Ethics.pdf>; Groupe Eurotunnel SE, Dominique Schmitlin Appointed Security Director For Channel Tunnel Concession, 2016, <https://www.getlinkgroup.com/uploadedFiles/assets-uk/Media/Press-Releases/2016-Press-Release/160201-Dominique-Schmitlin-appointed-Security-Director-for-Channel-Tunnel-Concession.pdf>.
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Figure 3.5: Photo of the Eurotunnel Terminal border landscape. The “native” landscape is being employed as pre-text to forced eviction and used as an idealized aesthetic for violent development of border landscapes.

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