Stories That Cut Across: The Case of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Calais, France

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Abstract

In this thesis, I sought to accomplish two things. First, the thesis is written in a reflexive and even an auto-ethnographic manner. It invites the reader to follow the ethnographer through the metamorphosis of the study, from the point of conception, through the ethnographic fieldwork to the interpretation and, finally, to the presentation of the result. Doing so was an attempt to give the reader a vivid understanding of the process of making an ethnographic text. The ambition with auto-ethnographic dimension is to unveil and problematize the condition for ethnographic fieldwork, as well as to add nuance to the stories of my informants.

Second, the thesis strives to answer a simple question: why the UK? The genesis of the question finds its roots in the departure of my friend Kanan, and it was by tracing Kanan’s journey that I found myself in Calais. By focusing on a transit zone like Calais, I have aimed to depart from a dualist approach of migration theories that only focus on destination and origin countries as their analytical points of reference and to present the everyday experiences of exile and statelessness as a continuous journey. The conduit for examining the experiences of my informants will be Chris Dolan’s concept of social torture. Through the concept of social torture, Chris Dolan interlinks the exercise of everyday violence and abuse on a mass scale and torture by focussing on the impacts of such acts on the individual’s body and mind. By doing so, Dolan identifies debility, dependency, dread and disorientation as the four impacts to identify a victim of social torture. The daily life experiences of my informants in Calais were that of social torture. In this regard, I seek to show how social torture was an apparatus used to force unwanted populations from the French territory and into the UK and other European countries.

Keywords: Social torture, transit migration, immigration, refugees, asylum seekers, Calais, France, UK, EU
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Ismael
### Abbreviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEAS</td>
<td>Common European Asylum System</td>
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<tr>
<td>CESEDA</td>
<td>Code de l'entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d'asile</td>
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<td>CRS</td>
<td>Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Council</td>
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<td>ECRE</td>
<td>European Council on Refugees and Exiles</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations Human Rights Council</td>
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<td>UNCAT</td>
<td>United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</td>
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Preface: face-off

On the 18th of July 2012, I found myself travelling on a German highway. Though the 29-hour bus ride had just begun, I was already feeling disoriented and cramped. As the bus slowly came to a halt, fear and regret consumed me once more. I knew what was coming! My visa had expired over two weeks ago and with it my right to be in Germany and the Schengen area as a whole. Watching the police make their way into the bus I was certain that it was the end of the road. That hot summer afternoon on the side of a highway, I thought my journey would end in a detention centre. Detention centres were not new to me since I frequently visited my informants in Calais, but this time it was different. If I ended up in a detention centre, it would not be for an interview or a friendly visit. In a strange twist of fate, following some unfortunate events, I found myself unwittingly transformed into the very subject I set out to study, an “illegal” migrant, a ‘Homo Sacer’.

Passport and visa, he said, the tall German policeman with his eyes fixed on me. Well, this is it, I thought. As I reached to hand him my passport with my sweaty and unsteady palms, I kept thinking about how I had ended up here. Just over a year ago I was still searching for my academic interests; I barely had an interest in researching “illegal” immigration, let alone going “native.” Back in April 2011, I could not help but feel like a blufo as I watched my friends make their way to anthropologydom, as they dispersed all over the globe in search of the mystery, opportunity, and excitement that waited for them in the field, while I was still trying to figure out my academic interests. Fieldwork is a “sine qua non” event, a “rite de passage” (Robben 2007, 1–13) in the discipline of anthropology, especially for young graduated students waiting to prove their abilities and courage (Robben 2007). Eagerly anticipating to experiment upon their method and art and, above all, looking to grasp knowledge and wisdom not only from their success but also from their failures and mistakes. Fortunately for me, I would not stay as a blufo for long; little did I know that a phone call from a friend would spark my academic curiosities, leading me to a path that changed my life in so many ways.

1 Home Sacer, a criminal cast away from the Roman society deemed, so an unclean and unworthy cannot be sacrificed, yet be killed by anyone without committing an act of murder (Agamben 1998, 8)
2 “Blufo [is] someone whose penis still had a ‘hat’; that is, an un-circumcised person of age; someone who, despite being old enough, had not yet gone to his [rite de passage] … Being a blufo means being symbolically stuck in the position of youth without possibilities of gaining the authority and status of adulthood” (Vigh 2006, 32)
Late in the afternoon, on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of June 2011, I received a call from my former roommate Kanan. The call took me by surprise. Since we were in constant contact, what surprised me was not the call itself, but its purpose. Minutes into the call, Kanan expressed his intentions to go to the UK. \textit{What is so surprising about going to the UK?} One might wonder. It is true; it would not be surprising if this was an ordinary trip, where you purchase your ticket, head to the airport, wave your passport and ticket once or twice, walk into the plane and land safely at Heathrow. Oh no, on this trip there was no need for a ticket or a passport, it was a different kind of trip, where you dealt with smugglers instead of immigration officers and instead of aeroplanes, you had the underbelly of a cargo truck. Kanan had made a keen decision to get smuggled into the UK and ask for asylum using France as a gateway.

The call was more than a goodbye call, it was also an invitation – “Join me,” he said. Since he was going to be staying in Paris for a short while until he got in touch with smugglers, he told me that I had time to think things through, and if I ever decided to join him I could fly to Paris, and we could figure things out from that point on.

Kanan and I often talked about going to the UK, but it was never in our minds that either of us would cling to the underbelly of a truck, holding for dear life for hours, only to reach the “Land of Her Majesty.” The whole thing started a couple of months before when we took a trip to Stockholm. Although I don’t recall the reasons for our trip, I vividly remember hearing about the port city of Calais for the first time. That night in Stockholm, we met up with some Ethiopian students from Stockholm University for dinner; somehow the conversation was about going to the UK. That was when one of the guys started talking about an alleged smuggling route through Northern France. At the time we did not give much weight to the story. In a sheer coincidence a month later Kanan ran into one of the guys from the dinner. One of the guys from that night in Stockholm had already managed to get smuggled to the UK. I later found out that this incident was the stressor for Kanan’s decision to go to the UK. On the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of June, his mind was set. At dawn, he took one-way flight from Stockholm to Paris.

A year later I followed in his footsteps, not as an “illegal” migrant or an asylum seeker but as a trained anthropologist. Along the way, I met others in the same predicament as Kanan. This thesis is about their lives, struggles and journeys as they negotiate and navigate to find their places in this world.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Contextualising the study

With each passing second, our society is further immersed into a highly defused time and space. Our time is marked by globalisation, which entails the circulation and movement of ideas, music, and fashion, as well as language and culture. On a darker note, poverty, environmental disasters and territorial/global conflicts uproot more and more people to the global arena (see also Rapport and Dawson 1998). When I embarked on the field, the latest report put the global refugee number of concern to the UNHCR at 45.2 million, the highest in 19 years (UNHCR 2012b). As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres put it, it means “one [refugee] every 4.1 seconds,” pointing the fact that each time you blink, another person is forced to flee (Aljazeera 2013). At the same time, as of 2005, the UN estimated the number of international migrants\(^3\), to be more than 200 million (Koser 2007a). Three decades ago, John Berger (1984, 55) described movement as being “the quintessential experience” of our age, observing how mass communications, travel, tourism, and global market was placing the individual, ever so, on to the global arena. His observation was not farfetched from the truth, cognitively speaking; globalisation, with the help of new information and communication technologies, has given us a sense of movement through time and space. As such, we are more connected than ever before. At the same time, it is evident that cheaper and faster ways of transportation have made it possible for millions of people to move at ease (see also Castles and Miller 2009). But contrary to Berger’s remark, closer observation of immigration policies of the last decades reveals a paradox of globalization (Friedman and Friedman 2008; Fassin 2011); as globalization shades its true colour, it has become apparent that for the majority of men and woman, transnational movement is mirage on the horizon of globalization.

For now, if we take Petras and Veltmayer’s (2001) definition of globalisation as the “upsurge in direct investment and the liberalization and deregulation in cross-border flows of capital, technology, and services, as well as the creation of a global production system- a new global economy”, the expected outcome of globalisation is to bring global equality and the

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\(^3\) International migrant is defined by the UN as person who lives outside of their own countries for more than a year.
weakening of the nation-state. Instead, globalisation appears as a new form of imperialism, reinforcing the power of core Northern states and their ruling classes (Castles and Miller 2009, 52–53). As the governmentality\(^4\) of immigration becomes the crucial issue of contemporary societies, in relation to borders, anthropological studies suggest the strengthening of the nation-state in implementing “surveillance apparatus\(^5\) of frontiers and the territories, regimes of exception for the detention and deportation of illegal aliens” (Fassin 2011, 213). In light of this, I defer to Khosravi’s (2011, 1) observation that our age is not of movement, but a “triumph of borders, an epoch of border fetishism”. This paradox of globalisation reveals the “polysemic nature of borders” (Balibar 2002, 81); while some are privileged with freedom of movement, others are caught on the social and political web that involves gender, racial, religious and class inequalities (Balibar 2002; Khosravi 2011).

Borders, in Etienne Balibar’s (2004, 1) words, are “places where the dialectic between confrontation with the foreigner (transformed into a hereditary enemy) and communication between civilisations (without which humanity cannot progress) is periodically played out.” In recent times, around political circles and popular media, the role of the “enemy” for the past few decades has been fulfilled with “belligerent” characters such as immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This is so because, as Shahram Khosravi (2011, 2) explains, borders are the medium through which a nation-state (the sovereign) can identify itself, between the functional nexus of determinate territory and state, “a nexus mediated by automatic regulations for inscription of life, individual or national, …[where], zoe, naked biological life, is immediately transformed into bios, political life or citizenship”. Balibar (2002), explains that marking out a border includes

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\(^4\) Foucault (1982, 790) used the term governmentality to denote “the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed”. He also used the terms ‘governmental rationality’, ‘rationality of government’ and ‘art of government’ to also denote the concepts inherent in governmentality.

\(^5\) According to Foucault(1980) apparatus refers networks strategic forces made out of heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, etc. Accordingly, apparatus has a dominant strategic function by that he means that “manipulation of relations of forces, of a rational and concrete intervention in the relations of forces, either so as to develop them in a particular direction, or to block them, to stabilize them, and to utilize them(see also Agamben 2009). The apparatus is thus always inscribed into a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain limits of knowledge that arise from it and, to an equal degree”. Following Foucault, Agamben (2009, 14) defines apparatus as literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings.”
mainly defining a territory, delimiting it and registering the identity of that territory. The essence of the nation-state, since its development is built upon the idea of a shared culture and political unity (Castles and Miller 2009). In light of this, modern-day “border transgressors [undocumented migrants and asylum seekers] break the link between nativity and nationality and bring the nation-state system into crises” (Khosravi 2011).

Refugees and asylum seekers were not always seen as the antagonist. For instance, the status of refugees and asylum seekers from Eastern Europe fleeing Communism in the Cold War era was left uncontested by the receiving West (Hansen and King 2000; Neumayer 2005). At the time, refugees and asylum seekers played a geopolitical role to shame and to symbolise defeat of their adversary nations. Moving to the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the origin of the refugee population changed from Eastern European to “Third World” countries and now to the Middle East. Developed countries were faced with a population with no cultural similarities to their own, and at the same time, there were less geopolitical rewards up for grasp (ibid). The changing pattern in the discourse of international migration can be attributed to “economic globalisation, shifting patterns of conflict in post-colonial regions, and, most recently, the ‘securitisation of asylum’ following the events of 11 September 2001” (Castles 2007, 26). Consequently, these changing patterns reshaped the North-South, as well as the North-East relationship. These changing patterns are lucid on the “walls around the West,” literally and figuratively erected by policing physical borders and boundaries as well as restrictive and repressive immigration policies to keep unwanted aliens at bay (Anderson & Snyder 2000; in Fassin 2011, 216). The very existence of borders necessitates ‘illegal’ border crossing; one is defined through the other (Khosravi 2011). Not surprisingly, this has resulted in a considerable amount of undocumented migrants coming into Europe (Fassin 2011). The logic raised in the last few paragraphs is embodied and engraved in the everyday lived experiences of undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Calais, a port city in northern France situated at the narrows point of the English Channel (34 Km wide). They wait for a better life in the UK or, as the Mursi people of the lower Omo rift valley of Ethiopia might say, they are “in search of a cool ground” (Turton 1996). These people on wait-hood are the main protagonists of my thesis.

After receiving 27,400 asylum applications for the year 2012 and showing a 6% increase from the previous year (UNHCR 2012a), UK remains one of the most popular destination
countries in Europe for asylum seekers. The question that kindled my interest and the writing of this thesis is rather simple and straightforward: why do migrants choose to go to the UK rather than other European countries? In particular, I was interested in how refugees and asylum seekers negotiate and navigate exile.

Now more than ever, immigration draws the attention of everyday people and scholars from all range of disciplines. As such, questions like why people move, who moves and what happens after they move, are central themes that most disciplines share (Brettell 2003, 1). Depending on the discipline, the above questions will be approached from diverse theoretical perspectives, as well as different levels of analysis. Politicians and economists mostly approach this question through neoclassical economic theories of migration that give full responsibility to the individual in deciding when and where to go. For example, Massey and his colleagues argue that “migrants estimate the costs and benefits of moving to alternative international locations and migrate to where the expected discounted net returns are greatest over some time horizon. Net returns in each future period are estimated by taking the observed earnings corresponding to the individual's skills in the destination country and multiplying these by the probability of obtaining a job there (and for illegal migrants the likelihood of being able to avoid deportation) to obtain "expected destination earnings” (Massey et al. 1993, 434). Such analytical trends, for the most part, are used to draw a link between economic migrants and refugees and lay the claim of “bogus asylum seeker”.

In reality, migrants’ decision making is much more complex than an individual’s response to economic and political constraints by weighing the cost and benefit of a destination. Neoclassical’s rigid and dualistic approach to migration that analyses migrant experience in a functional nexus between emigration and immigration overlooks a crucial moment in the migrant experience which lies between the two points (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008), which is crucial in explaining the pattern of movement. Especially in the case of refugees and asylum seeker, migration is not a simple move from a country of origin to country of destination; rather it is a ‘step-wise’ movement (Suter 2012). Recently, this “step-wise” movement has been defined by policymakers and found its way into the academic circle under the concept of ‘transit migration’ (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008). As such, by stepping away from the dualistic approaches, the
research focuses its attention on the movement itself. In this regard, this thesis is a study of the “step-wise” movement of people.

For those in exile, their journey takes them through desert and sea, moving from country to country and from one continent to the other. The journey is arduous, and it takes days, weeks, and months and at times years before the exiled can finally settle. Being a refugee or an asylum seeker by definition is being stateless, which means losing one’s nationality and in part losing one’s identity. As such, the experiences of the exile in transit zones is disorienting and ambiguous; it is without a doubt a “liminal” (Turner 1995) experience. The stateless neither belongs to their original community nor the host community in transit; they “neither here nor there” (ibid).

The thesis is primarily anchored in the narratives of the informants I met in the course of my fieldwork in Calais and Isbergues, their decisions are “not made in a vacuum” (Brettell 2003, 7). Although neoclassical theories on migration have their shortcomings and are incapable of giving a well-rounded explanation of movement as a continuous process, if we are to come up with a well-rounded theoretical explanation on the patterns of movement of refugees and asylum seekers, neoclassical theories should not be overlooked. My argument here is that to have an in-depth understanding of migrants’ decision making and patterns of movement; we ought to take a holistic approach, “because a single lens offers only a partial truth” (Brettell 2003, 4). As such, an anthropological study of migration should encompass both structure and agency; it should include macro-level contextual issues and micro-level strategies and decision making, within which the individual operates, “it needs to articulate both people and process” (ibid). For the majority of the world’s population, especially those at the fringes of the global economy, as I tried to explain, their lives are affected by macro-structure conditions beyond their direct reach, but not fully invincible to their agency (Mahler 1995; Suter 2012). It is here, between structure and agency, where the crux of this anthropological study lays.

In the following section, the aim and objective of the study will be explicitly presented, which is followed by the theoretical framework that is used to interpret the everyday lived experiences of my informants.
Aim and Objective of the Study

In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Bronislaw Malinowski mentions the importance of adding accounts of methods and conditions upon which ethnographic knowledge has been acquired and produced. This is so because “at a glance, the reader could estimate with precision the degree of the writer’s personal acquaintance with the facts which he describes, and form an idea under what conditions information had been obtained from the natives” (Malinowski 1922, 3). In this manner, the thesis has two aims. Primarily, it is the story of stateless people, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, in relation to borders and boundaries in borderland Europe. It is a life story of the disenfranchised. In the words of Caroline Brettell, what I am trying to achieve through recording the life history of the individuals is to have a detailed and precise “documentation on ongoing process of making choices against a broader and undoubtedly more representative statistical sample that catches a group in a single moment in time” (2003, 5). Accordingly, the aim is not to present a typical or a representative individual, nor is the goal to arrive at an empirical truth. The objective is, instead, to understand one person’s life and what it means to that person in a broader context of culture and history (ibid.).

At the same time, the thesis is an auto-ethnography of an anthropological research method. By this I mean, the thesis invites the reader to follow the ethnographer through the metamorphosis of the study, from the point of conception, through the ethnographic fieldwork to the interpretation and, finally, to the presentation of the results. In this regard, my aim by writing detailed accounts of my experiences (for example in the preface and the post-face) is to guide the reader through the metamorphosis of the study. As Malinowski further points out, “such ethnographic sources are of unquestionable scientific value, in which we can clearly draw the line between, on the one hand, the results of direct observation and native statements and interpretations, and on the other, the inferences of the author, based on his common sense and psychological insight” (Malinowski 1922). Here, I need to stress that auto-ethnography, as I choose to use it, is not a claim for an insider perspective, rather it is used to give an in-depth view to the reader about the daily activities of the ethnographer and the making of an ethnography (more discussion in chapter 2). In the pursuit of this objective, I dedicate the last chapter of the thesis to presenting a “complete” encounter of my fieldwork experience.
Going back to the primary objective, this thesis aims to explore how mainstream discourses of the “migration crises” in Europe dehumanises and criminalises refugees and asylum seekers, and how these discourses are being used to legitimise inhumane treatments of these populations. The daily life experiences of the refugees and asylum seekers in and around Calais which includes physical violence, dread, disorientation, dependency and debilitation as well as humiliation, all of which suggest that what they are experiencing can be equated as torture. Chris Dolan (2009) coined the concept of social torture to explain the exercise of torture that targets the whole population rather than individuals as the primary site of torture as it is normally conceived. The crux in the analysis of social torture lies in its departure from “dichotomised possibilities”, such as victims and perpetrators and recognition of multiple actors and putting focus also on those who are considered bystanders in relation to the dynamics of power in social torture. As such, this thesis is primarily about the exercise of social torture on the refugees and asylum seeker population in Calais. The main argument that is forwarded is that social torture is an apparatus used by the state with the sole purpose to create mobility of the migrant population from the borders of France, while simultaneously using social torture as an apparatus to discourage further mobility into France. The analysis goes beyond the action/inaction of the government that propagates social torture and explores the multiple actors operating in Calais. As it will be discussed in the following section (Theoretical section), social torture is not confined to the exercise of power of the state over the migrant population in Calais; there are multiple actors (such as NGO’s, humanitarian organizations, the media, the civilian population and migrants themselves) that directly or indirectly contribute to the social torture of these populations. Further, though the study is primarily an ethnography on the social torture of migrants that were stranded in Calais, the study also tries to paint a broad picture of the experiences of social torture on refugees and asylum seekers in other parts of Europe and how that affects their decisions to move from one country to the other.

Chris Dolan describes social torture as “cross-generational”, meaning that the traumatic experiences of torture go beyond the individual victim and seep into the collective memory of others closest to them (2009, 242). As such, the second the purpose of the study is to investigate how the experiences of social torture are lived through the families and friends and how their memories of pain and suffering are negotiated and navigated, and how memories of social torture affect the decisions of refugees and asylum seekers when it comes to where and when to migrate.
In migration studies (mostly in relation to labour migration and to a lesser extent in refugee studies) social networks are extensively studied as one of the main factors for the decision of migrants for choosing a destination. The central assumption is that migrants go to places where they have social networks, where they can use their social capital to find jobs, secure housing and integrate into society. Such migration patterns are not exclusive to labour migrants; to some extent, this pattern can also be seen among refugees and asylum seekers. In addition to social capital (jobs, housing, and integration) that is considered a pull factor, my observation suggests that emotional and psychological supports are of primary concern for refugees and asylum seekers. At the same time, contrary to the underlying assumption in social network theory, considering my observation in Calais, I will argue that social networks can also push migrants to other geographical areas if their experiences in those countries are unfavourable.

Finally, the third objective is to challenge the mainstream discourse that tries to explain why refugees in Calais are trying to cross to the UK. Mainstream discourses pushed by politician and the media is that most refugees and asylum seekers are “bogus” refugees (economic migrants) and they come to the UK because they think it is “soft”, meaning that the asylum policy is easy to abuse and they are coming to take advantage of the welfare state. For my informants, there is a delicate balance that they are striving for, a balance between, seeking safety, physical proximity to family, and also securing a future where they can be economically stable in a place where they can take care of their families and themselves. At the same time, it can be argued that the decision for my informants to strive to cross to the UK is predicated on the social torture they have experienced throughout their journey. Up to this point, the introduction, as well as the purpose and aim of the thesis have been presented. In the following section, I will offer the theoretical framework through which the ethnography will be analysed.

**Theoretical Framework: Social Torture**

Before delving into the definition and the intrinsic working of social torture and exploring how it can be used to analyse the apparatuses used in the governmentality of migrants in Calais, I first ought to clarify how to identify torture and its inner workings in an effort to re-conceptualise it. By doing so, I strive to draw parallels between what is commonly understood as
torture and the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in Calais. Once I conclude framing the conceptual base for torture, I will continue explaining Social Torture.

**Conceptualising Torture**

For a long time, it was inconceivable for me to characterise what I was observing in Calais as torture. It was not until I found the ethnography of Chris Dolan (2009) on “protected villages” in war-torn Northern Uganda that I connected Calais to sites of torture. When I first ventured onto the field and even long after leaving the field, what I thought I saw in the every experience of people was social exclusion and segregation. Though I understood human rights were being violated on consistent bases, even in moments of extreme violence and abuse by the police, both physical and psychological, it was not easy to draw the link between the atrocities that were taking place and torture. The main reason for not instantly drawing such connections might owe itself to the fact that the visualisation of torture from history and its subsequent coverage in the media or popular culture did not fit with what I was witnessing.

Torture is usually conducted in secret, in heavily fortified and guarded sites such as dungeons, concentration camps and prisons. In most cases, the individual (the victim) faces the perpetrator (the torturer/s) in a locked, secretive and isolated space of violence. In this manner, Calais is undoubtedly different from historical sites of torture like the Auschwitz Concentration Camp or the infamous modern sites of torture such as Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, Abu Ghraib in Iraq or Hoeryong Concentration Camp in North Korea. But a closer inspection of the definition of torture suggests that it is possible to understand that torture is not and should not be bound to specific actors and places. Instead, what matters the most is the acts committed and the implication on the victim.

Article 1 of The United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, torture is conceptualised as:

“any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official
capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions\(^6\) (UNCAT 1987).

According to this definition, the initial emphases is given to the infliction of “pain or suffering” regardless of the setting. In addition, the fact that the Article does not specify the scale to which the torture is being committed makes it possible to use in broader and wider scale in places like Calais and societies where atrocities are being committed in mass. Although the infliction of pain and suffering “on a person” by “a public official or other person acting in an official capacity” might sound as though the term is limited to individuals, Article 3 of the convention prohibits the return of an asylum seekers to their country of origin in cases “where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture”, inferring substantial grounds as “flagrant or mass violation of human rights”, which allows the use of the term beyond individual torture (Dolan 2009, 7). Hence, it should be possible to draw a connection between the torture that an individual experiences and atrocities and human rights violations on a mass scale. Specifically, by looking at methods of torture and the implication on the victim, such links can be drawn.

Methods/Impacts

As the Cold War raged following the end of the World War II, the Central Intelligence Agency, commonly known as the C.I.A, invested in research to find the most effective ways to interrogate and extract information from supposed Communist enemies. The result of the 25 years of research, mainly with the aid of psychologists from American universities, was the Debility, Dependency, Dread (DDD) paradigm for treatment and interrogation of detainees (Soldz 2008). According to Suedfeld (1990: 3; in Dolan 2009), the DDD paradigm can manifest itself as symptoms on tortured victims long after the torture has ended. In addition to debilitation, dependency and dread, Suedfeld identified disorientation as a pivotal symptom to identify in a tortured victim.

\(^6\) The United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 39/46 of 10 December 1984 entry into force 26 June 1987.
Debilitation is the act by which the torturer inflicts physical and mental weakness on the victim. According to Soldz (2008, 594), the main tactics in debilitation include semi-starvation, sleep deprivation, chronic pain, and attacks on the senses through sensory deprivation and overload. As it will be discussed in Chapter 4, most of these tactics of debilitation are visible in the daily lived experiences of my informants. The most prominent cause is the lack of shelter from the elements because of the strategic and systematic demolition of abandoned buildings that were being used by the migrants in the Calais area. In addition, sleep deprivation took place under the guise of registrations and counting of the migrant population that happened multiple times throughout the day and most frequently at night. Though not always frequent and visible, beating by the police, truck drivers and ordinary residents in the area further debilitated the migrants physically and psychologically.

Through debilitation, the torturer is trying to induce a profound sense of hopelessness and helplessness that fosters dependency. Victims become materially dependent when they are incapable of meeting their own needs. For my informants in Calais, such dependencies manifested themselves in different ways. The major things that the migrants were dependent on were food and materials such as blankets and sleeping bags which they have to receive from the local NGOs. The creation of such a dependency also had a security and surveillance purpose. The food distribution site, for example, was set up in a compound where three of the sides were walled and one side was made up of a metallic, see-through fence where the police sat in their cars and took pictures of each migrant that walked through the doors. On the other hand, psychological dependency is created when “friendship and lines of authority among prisoners are destroyed, and the prisoner is stripped of status and dignity” (Dolan 2009, 9). For the migrant, the lack of status and dignity comes from the absence of citizenship, which means the absence of rights.

Dread, as explained by Suedfeld, is achieved by inducing a state of mind where the victim is in a state of constant “fear and anxiety”. As Otterman (2007) pointed out, the state of mind of being in fear and the sense of anxiety is not only immediate in the face of torture but rather long lasting even after the victim is free. The primary strategy in creating such state of mind is to put the victim in an environment of uncertainty. In the daily life experiences of migrants in Calais, such
uncertainties emanate from the lack of assurance if one would eat, sleep, get caught and detained or deported.

Related to dread, disorientation is induced by stripping the victim’s sense of control by making events “unpredictable and incomprehensible”, a process that incapacitates the victims from developing coping mechanisms to make sense of and deal with the situation they are facing (Dolan 2009, 9). The same strategies employed to induce debilitation are used to create a permanent state of mind where the individual is uncertain about the present or the future. In addition, as Dolan stressed, torture should not exclusively be defined through the action of individual perpetrators. Rather, it should also encompass and consider “multiple actors and their roles, the benefits and functions of torture, and the mechanisms used to justify it” (2009, 8). In light of this, in the coming section, using Dolan’s model of social torture, I will try to construct the theoretical framework to analyse my ethnography in Calais. In the last few paragraphs I have tried to point out how methods of torture that are induced in an ordinary sense can be employed on a mass scale. In the next section, I will go through the key points that differentiate social torture from torture.

Mapping Social Torture

The concept of social torture is suitable for conceptualising the migrant experience and decision making, as it embraces complexity and rejects the oversimplification of the migrant journey between the country of origin and destination. In migration studies, it is rare to find literature that considers European states as transit countries or how violent experiences, neglect and social exclusion are used as a strategy to create mobility. At the same time, social torture helps to explore the contribution of those routinely considered passive actors (NGOs, INGOs, the media, UNHCR and civilians) in the dynamics of power. As Chris Dolan points out, social torture can be differentiated from the process of torture that is experienced by an individual in six significant ways. These distinctions can be seen in table 1.1 below (2009, 12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual torture</th>
<th>Social torture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Intensity</td>
<td>Low Intensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact focused on individual and their direct</td>
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associates and family & Wide impact on society as a whole  
Place and Time-bound & Geographically extensive and time-indifferent  
Dependent on small set of perpetrators with specific objectives & Involves multiple actors with broad set of needs, and is to a degree self-perpetuating  
Perpetrators justify actions to themselves, using psychological mechanisms & Relies on justification to society as a whole, using public discourses  
Interventions focus on individual justice and the identification of intention & Interventions need to focus on social systems and recognise that intentions are secondary to causal responsibilities  

**Low intensity, Wide Impact**

In a situation where an individual is being tortured, the process is incredibly intense and intrusive, mainly for the victim and his immediate family. Individual torture is catered around the individual and its impact resonates only to those who are close to the victim. In the case of social torture, the process is “low intensity”, which means the brute force of the act is not committed on the individual but rather on the society as a whole. As such, “while in individual torture only a minority are directly affected, in social torture only a minority will escape the impact” (Dolan 2009, 13).

In addition, the low intensity application of social torture makes it less visible and, combined with its wide application, difficult to identify. On the other hand, the low intensity of the torture, which leaves psychological trauma such Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder rather than visible physical symptoms on the body of its victims, further makes it difficult to identify (ibid.). In situations where such symptoms become apparent, it is not always possible to draw the link between particular acts and perpetrators and the manifestation of symptoms on the victims, as
symptoms can be the result of multiple low intensity acts committed on the victim over a more extended period.

The symptoms of torture can manifest themselves beyond the individual victim and manifest on individuals close to the person (family members and friends). As such, the effects of social torture can also be described as “cross-generational” (Dolan 2009, 242). For example, for some of my informants, the anxiety and stress of being trapped in France and Greece or Italy emanated not only from their own experiences but from the rough experiences of members of their social networks who have passed through those countries before them. As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, the stress and anxiety that consumed them is due to the feeling that they are trapped in these countries. As such, the urge to continue their journey can be attributed to the traumatic experiences of their social network that they are living through. In this regard, it can be argued that social torture is not only used to push unwanted populations from one’s territory, but also to stop further generations of people from coming to a particular country.

Geographical Extension and Time - Indifference

As I have alluded to earlier, torture in popular understanding is associated with particular places that are secretive and isolated from the general public. In the case of individual torture, the scene goes as such: one is grabbed and taken from the gaze of a society to a place where no one can observe the horrors that await the potential victim. The victim alone faces the torturer or a handful of people until the moment the torturer/s get the information or confession they wanted. Or perhaps, if the purpose is punishment and to inflict pain, the torture continues until the torturer/s is satisfied or to the extent to which the body of the victim/s can take. On the other hand, in the case of social torture, “rather than taking place in very restricted locations in short bursts, social torture is both geographically extensive and time indifferent” (Dolan 2009, 13).

In light of this, whenever and wherever in Calais it might be, the migrant body is a site of torture. The abandoned buildings and jungles that the migrants call home are in constant threat of demolition. And if that is not the case, they are evicted continuously and left to the elements.

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7 The according to Saberan (2012, in Belfort 2012) word "jungle" comes from the Pashtu word "jangal" which means the forest, and also designate where they sleep. Thus, "jengal" was transformed to "jungle" and commonly accepted.
In the cases where migrants were found in the act of trying to get into trucks that are crossing the
Channel, the migrants encounter beatings and violence from the truck drivers and the police. As I
will discuss in chapter 5, one of the most effective tactics used by the police to unsettle the
migrants is to arrest them, take them to a detention centre and let them go a few hours later so
that they can walk 4 km back to the city, only to pick them up once again and make them walk
back once more. The migrants experienced such a cycle of abuse on a daily bases. Such tactics of
abuse also continued through the night; as I pointed out earlier, sleep deprivation was also used
to break down the migrants. Throughout the night, the police will go around in Calais and wake
the migrants from their sleep under the guise of registration, which happened at least twice a
night. In this manner, as pointed out by Dolan, one is not “whisked away from daily life to be
tortured; daily life was torture” (2009, 14).

Such constant acts of violence and abuse are used to induce debilitation. The longer it
continues, the more the individual is broken down both physically and mentally. The only way
one can end such a cycle of violence is to leave the French territory. One of the main things I
want to highlight in this thesis is how social torture is an apparatus used by mainly the French
government to create the mobility of refugees and asylum seekers from the French territory.

Multiple Actors

As mentioned earlier, in conventional models of torture actors can be broadly divided
into perpetrator and victim, with bystander located outside the dynamics of power as passive
observers, whereas through social torture those who are considered passive bystanders (NGOs,
INGOs, the media, UNHCR and civilians) come to the full front as essential contributors to the
the actions of perpetrators and those of ostensibly passive bystanders suggests that over time the
distinction between the two can break down” (2009, 10). For example, as suggested in chapter 4,
the actions of humanitarian workers can be seen as an honest effort to alleviate the suffering of
the migrants in their daily lives. At the same time, though these organisations did important work
that alleviated the suffering of the migrant, the consequences of their engagement (humanitarian
organisations) is a political strategy by the government to present France as a humane country
where human rights are upheld under international law. Thus, it makes these organisations
symbolic as they cannot function independently of the influence of the state power that presides
over them. This is clearly shown, for example, when an organisation was not allowed to distribute information in Sangatte refugee camp about the asylum process in France but they were allowed to give information about the UK. As such, their engagement contributes to the overall strategy of the government that creates mobility out of the French territory. In addition, some migrants come to Calais just because they can receive humanitarian aid, and once they are there social torture is used to push them out of the French territory and towards the UK. Of course, this is not to suggest that humanitarian organisations are actively participating in social torture; it is rather a call for a critical examination of the consequences of their engagement that enables and contributes to the system. In my observation, the humanitarian organisations have an understating of their contribution to the mobility of migrants. Of course, you will see humanitarian works trying to convince migrants to stay in France, but their overall engagement is predicated on the idea that all migrants are trying to pass to the UK. As such, their primary goal is to help them to achieve “what they want”. My central argument here is that it is not the intentions that are important but rather the consequences of those intentions.

Similarly, when it comes to victims, in the social torture model the victims are not always objects of power. In some situations, it is possible to observe instances where victims situate themselves in power positions where they become perpetrators themselves. One example to draw from is the position smugglers hold in the migrant community. In most cases, the smugglers are refugees and asylum seekers themselves who at times contribute to the subordination and suffering of other refugees and asylum seekers. When a refugee turns into a smuggler, on the one hand, it is because of the financial gain that comes with it; on the other hand, it is the power and a sense of control that one regains in their own life. In light of these revelations, “it is necessary to hold two viewpoints simultaneously; on one hand the snapshot or cross-sectional view, in which the perpetrator-bystander-victim distinction is clear, on the other the filmed or longitudinal view over time, in which individuals shift between roles or indeed experiences several roles simultaneously” (Dolan 2009, 10).

**Self-Perpetuating**

The act of torture can be bound to a particular time and place where the objective is to induce physical as well as mental debilitation, induce dread, create dependency and disorient the victim. Primarily, the victim must be acquired for torture to commence. Even though that makes
the body the initial site of torture, the true essence of torture lies in the “invasion of people’s mind, which is difficult to reverse” (Dolan 2009, 15). In such a way, the methods used to elicit the objective become the impacts. As Dolan (2009, 245) puts it, “perhaps the most disturbing feature of the social torture dynamic is that it acquires its own momentum which does not require the continued involvement of the original perpetrators”, which means long after the torture has ended the victims can remain physically and psychologically debilitated. Such manifestations of symptoms long after the torture has stopped are commonly defined as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Research conducted among South Korean torture survivors, Choi et al. (2017) found a high prevalence rate of psychological disorders; the study demonstrated that 33.3% suffered from PTSD and 41.6% were symptomatic of depressive disorders. In addition, they have pointed out the contribution of poor economic conditions and the lack of social support in exacerbating post-traumatic responses.

Thus, torture is not only debilitating in the present but the continuity in the victim’s mind creates uncertainties in the future. The self-perpetuation of torture can hinder the individual from participating in normal day to day activities, which furthers their debilitation and strengthens their dependency (Dolan 2009, 15). On the other hand, those notwithstanding the suffering of everyday experiences can resort to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism. Such acts of self-abuse as a coping mechanism were rampant among refugees and asylum seekers in Calais, especially in Paris. Similarly, others can resort to violence against others as a means to discard their own subordination and improve their situation. For example, in his research in Northern Uganda, Dolan (2009) observed how some youth join the same military that has committed acts of violence against them and to their people to break their subordination and empower themselves by suppressing others. In addition, Dolan argues that the decision of these youth who join the military is ambiguous, suggesting that “it is more likely to consolidate psychological dependency than to break it, and it is almost certain to feed into the further escalation of violence”(2009, 245–46). In this manner, social torture becomes self–perpetuating and gains momentum on its own.

**Discourses for the Justification of Social Torture**

The scale through which social torture is exercised and the multiple actors that are associated with the dynamics of power necessitate that actions and inaction are legitimised by
public discourses (Dolan 2009). The genesis for the current discourses that surround the “European migration crises” can be traced to the early 1970s (Chapter 3). Following the oil crises of 1973/74, the discourse surrounding international migration to Europe drastically changed. As the economy slowed down, suddenly migrants who were seen as the backbone of the economy in the previous decades were a problem and a threat to the economy that they have helped to rebuild. Simultaneously, political and economic instabilities and human rights violations in post-colonial Africa, Asia and Latin America brought a considerable number of asylum migrants and irregular migrants to Western Europe (Chapter 3 background). These new non-European and non-white migrants were for some culturally too distinct and echoed a “clash of civilisation” (Huntington 2011) and a threat to Western culture. The hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers is strengthened by the scepticism that portrays these groups as economic migrants or, as they are commonly referred in the media, “bogus asylum seekers”, which further portrays them as the threat to the economy of the nation-state. Whereas from a security perspective, the attack on 9/11, followed by the London and Madrid bombings as well as the multiple attacks that followed formed the migration security nexus that currently dominates Western politics. Hence, in light of the social, economic and political changes in Europe in the last century, migrants came to be viewed as a threat to the culture, economy and security of Europe. As such, I will argue that such discourses are central to the dehumanisation and criminalisation of refugees and asylum seekers. At the same time, by establishing migrants as a threat to the sovereign state, it becomes possible to declare a “state of exception” (Agamben 2005), where inhumane treatments (social torture) of refugees and asylum seekers become legitimised and normalised.

In this regard, the overt function of social torture in Calais is to elicit a particular response from its victim (mobility from the French territory) and the subordinate inclusion of unwanted population. Through social networks, stories of inhumane treatment that migrants experience in their daily lives are transmitted to other migrants. Such stories/experiences become particularly influential in the decision to go or not to go to a particular country; in this regard,

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8 The concept of state of exception denotes the augmentation of government powers in times of crises in which the sovereignty state is perceived to be under threat like in a state of war. In a state of war or state of exception the government suspends the rule of all and strips individuals of their rights under the law. The state of exception allows the government to exercise its power in a manner which can be considered illegal under normal situations. Agamben gives Guantanamo bay as an example where the state of exception gives the government the power to detain and torture prisoners in disregard of international law. In a similar manner Agamben considers detention centres and the camp as zones of exception.
social torture is also used to deter other migrants from coming to France. Alongside the obvious function, social torture also serves a political function. Politically speaking, on the national level, its purpose is to show a posture of strength that the government is tough on immigration. Similarly, the particular treatment of migrants in Calais is to show the UK government that they are doing everything they could to control the migrant flow, although the situation on the ground suggests the intention of the French government is the contrary.

Diagram 1.1 an Elaborated Model of Social Torture

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is composed of eight chapters. The chapters are structured in a way to best highlight the aim and objective of the thesis. In the previous section following the preface, a brief introduction is presented to the reader in regards to the core ideas of the thesis. In the same
chapter, the aim and objective of the study are explained in detail, followed by the theoretical framework for the analysis of the ethnographic chapters.

**Chapter 2** gives the reader an in-depth look at the field and fieldwork methods used for the research. I start by introducing the reader to the field sites and continue by explaining why the study is designed as a multi-sited research. In the section that follows, I discuss the processes of entering the field and how the data was collected, and the specific methods used to fulfil the research design. In the section titled “reflective ethnography”, I further explain how I constructed the thesis and stress the limits of auto-ethnography in this research. The chapter then moves onto an in-depth discussion on fieldwork ethics and legal issues concerning the thesis. The chapter concludes by pointing out the limitations of the study.

**Chapter 3** presents the background of the research. This chapter aims to act as the historical lens upon which the ethnographic chapters will be observed. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I present the migration trends into the European Union after WWII up to the present, followed by immigration trends to the UK within the same time frame. The second section of the chapter focuses on the response of the European Union as well as the UK regarding the policy framework in relation to the previously discussed migration trends. The historical background and the policies adopted in regard to the historical events are imperative as they are the anchors through which the discourse of migration in Europe is constructed.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 are ethnographic chapters where I present and analyse my findings. **Chapter 4** explores how the logic of security and humanitarianism come together to establish the “state of exception” (Agamben 1998, 2005) and the apparatus through which social torture is systematically deployed to create mobility of the migrant population from the French borders. The chapter will also show how the migrants negotiate and navigate the experiences of social torture in their daily life. At the same time, the chapter explores the complex power dynamics and the multiple actors (police, NGOs, smugglers and the migrants themselves) that can be directly or indirectly implicated in social torture.

The purpose of **chapter 5** is to explore the second objective of the thesis, which is examining the “cross-generational” nature of social torture. By focusing on social networks, the chapter tries to show how experiences of social torture are lived through the families and the
friends of victims. It also shows how the memories of pain and suffering are negotiated and navigated, and how memories of social torture affect the decisions of refugees and asylum seekers regarding where and when to go. The chapter opens with the life-history of Kanan and uses his story and others to show how social networks impact the decision making and patterns of movement of refugees and asylum seekers. The chapter also explains how new social networks are made and maintained in transit zones and how those networks influence migrants’ decisions. The final section of the chapter veers the discussion to concepts and categorisation in migration studies and discusses why we should re-conceptualise some of our approaches to challenge mainstream discourses that distinguish between economic (bogus) and refugees (real) migrants.

Chapter 6 explores how the perceptions of the UK regarding social, economic, political and, more importantly, asylum policy are constructed among the migrant population and how that perception affects their decision making and patterns of movement. The intention in this section is to present a counter-narrative to the common assumption that is put forth by politicians and the media that people want to go to the UK because the country is “soft” on immigrants and immigrants come to “abuse the system”. The main argument in the chapter is that migrants hold limited knowledge about the UK and their decisions are mainly the consequence of the negative experiences they have encountered in other countries, the positive experiences their social networks and, at times, just rumours.

Chapter 7 takes the reader back to the field and guides the reader step by step through ethnographic fieldwork. The chapter explores, in detail, the liminal experiences of doing fieldwork. I consider fieldwork a “vital event” (Johnson-Hanks 2002) in the discipline of anthropology when the student of culture comes of age. I will argue that the liminal passage into incorporation is neither clear nor coherent or produces fixed statuses. Instead, statuses are negotiable and contested, fraught with uncertainty, innovation, and ambivalence, and to a great extent, our ability to negotiate and navigate liminal “fields” (Bourdieu 1977) is influenced by one's identity.

Finally, chapter 8 summarises the research and presents the main finding of the thesis.
Chapter 2: The Field and Fieldwork Methods

Field Site

The fieldwork for this research was conducted from the 10th of April to the 17th of July 2012 in Calais, France. Calais is a port city in the North-Western part of France. It is the largest city in the district of Pas-de-Calais. The town lies at the narrowest point of the English Channel, overlooking the White Cliffs of Dover, which are only 34 km away. Standing on the shores of Calais the cliffs can easily be spotted on any given sunny day. Its geographical position has made it an essential location for transporting goods and services between France and the UK and also for the movement of people both legal and illegal. In recent times, because of the latter, Calais has been a site of border tension between France and the UK. The city first became synonymous with irregular immigration over two decades ago following the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of the war in former Yugoslavia. Following the Kosovo war in 1999, hundreds of refugees arrived in Calais. To respond to this humanitarian situation, the Red Cross opened a camp called Sangatte that provided food, shelter and emergency healthcare to the migrants between 1999 and 2002. Its reputation quickly spread among asylum seekers intending to reach the UK (Waters: 2007), becoming a legend in countries as far away as Iran and Afghanistan (Belfort 2012). In three years, more than 67,000 people transited through Sangatte (Clochard: 2007). The high number of migrants present in Sangatte made it easy to politicise the situation in Calais; transforming Calais’s reputation as a hub for illegal immigration. With pressure mounting from the UK government, the French authorities ordered Sangatte to be dismantlement in 2002 (ibid).
However, this did not lead to a decrease in the number of people present in the region; instead, it merely led to the construction of multiple informal camps called the “Jungle” all along the coast (CFDA 2008). The situation demanded better and stronger cooperation between the two neighbouring countries. In light of this, the *Treaty of Le Touquet* was signed between the UK and France. The treaty made it possible for both countries to step-up their own border checkpoint inside the other’s territory. But the treaty did not do much to halt the construction of the Jungles in Calais. Though the French government has tried to disperse migrants by demolishing the camps on multiple occasions (2009, 2012, 2014 and 2016), the demolishing of the camps only disperses the migrants momentarily since it does not prevent them from coming back to Calais.

With geographical shifts in global conflicts, the migrant population in Calais has evolved over the years. From refugees mainly from Eastern European origin in the early 1990s, the present population of migrants consists mostly of migrants from Africa and Asia. During my fieldwork, there were no less than 15 nationalities present: Iranian, Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Afghan, Uzbek, Palestinian, Syrian, Egyptian, Indian, Somali, Bengali and Chadian. Following the Syrian War, currently, the majority of the migrants’ populations in Calais have Syrian origin. Gender wise, the demography was almost exclusively of a male-dominated population.

In the words of McCleary, “All reflection is situational, none can be total” (1964:xx; in Finnström 2008, 25). Although many of the discussions and arguments in this thesis are valuable for current migration discussions, since the conclusion of my fieldwork in 2012 there have been many events, such as Brexit and the Syrian War, that bring complexity and challenge to the ideas forwarded in the thesis. In light of this, while reading this thesis, I would like to remind the reader that my writings are situated in a specific time and space.

Although the majority of the data for the research came from Calais as it was my primary field site, I frequently visited the Jungles in a small town of Isbergues, and I also went back and forth to Paris with my informants on multiple occasions.

**Research Design**

The highlight of early anthropology used to be living among the “natives” for months at a time, even years in hopes of understanding the researched others. Times have changed since the
days of our forefathers and mothers, when anthropologists like Boas, Malinowski and Mead dedicated months and years at a time in a given place. This epistemological and methodological research dedication was in place to “enhance the scientific rigour and improve the empirical basis” of anthropology at the local level (Robben 2007, 331). Much has changed since then, in the present age of globalisation, in a time where the silver lining between the local and the global, or the periphery and the centre is very much blurred. Thus, to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in a highly diffused time-space demands an ethnographic research design which does not limit itself to only a single space (Marcus 1995). This requires an ethnography that is fluid and flexible, an ethnography that is capable of using multiple sites as a point of analysis (Johnson-Hanks 2002).

Migration studies are perhaps one of the most notable among contemporary research genres to be based in multi-sited ethnography. Due to their high mobility, it is only fitting that ethnographic research focusing on the daily life experiences of undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers can be achieved by following the subjects of the study along their journey. In this respect, the research was designed to be multi-sited anchored between two points. Approaching Calais as a transit point as my primary field site and London as a potential “destination”, I was determined to go wherever they went. But embarking on the field proved the uncertain and unpredictable nature of ethnographic field research. I went to the field in early April thinking that I would complete my field research by the first week of June. The intensive nature of the field coupled with the loss of my passport forced me to stay in the field for well over three months. The uncertainty continued with the rejection of my application for a UK visa, which threatened the multi-sited research. Hence, compromises had to be made to keep the multi-sitedness of the research by following my informants along their journey without actually being there. As participant observation is vital for ethnographic research, it was tough for me to settle for electronic means of communication via Skype, email and telephone to stay in touch with my informants once they were smuggled to the UK. Although my abilities to follow my informants physically was hindered, it should be stressed that the research design could only be characterized as “translocal” than an in multiple sites research due to the fact that it is not the change in location that matters the most, rather the interconnectedness of the spaces that are linked with stories that cut across (Robben 2007). What I am trying to say is that, although I lost the physical nature of doing fieldwork, by using a different approach to the field it was possible
to keep alive the multi-sitedness nature of the research. As Marcus (1995, 97) noted, “strategies of quite literally following connections, association, and putative relationships are thus at the very heart of designing a multi-sited ethnographic research”. In the words of De Certeau (1984, 129), what should be understood is that “What the map [borders] cuts up, stories cut across”.

**Entry to the Field**

Before stepping into the field, throughout a ten month period, I had informal interviews with Kanan while he was staying in the Ethiopian Jungle. Kanan stayed in the Jungle from late July to September 2011, and his experience and knowledge of the Jungle and the surrounding areas helped me design and strengthen the methodological and practical matters of the research. Through him, I managed to get in touch with a volunteer social worker named Louise. Louise was a volunteer for Terre d’Errances, an organisation focused on helping refugees and asylum seekers in the town of Isbergues. Having Kanan and Louise as informants while on and off the field was indispensable to the research and made entry to the field as smooth as one could hope for. Especially through Louise, I managed to plan my fieldwork onsite. Louise helped me to find all the NGOs that were working in Calais, contacted people with responsibilities in those organisations and set up meetings.

Furthermore, since she was known among the migrant community, it was easier to show up in the Jungle with a familiar face. For that reason, I stuck with her while visiting the Jungle in Isbergues, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork. Once I found out a place called SALAM, a placed used to distribute food and cloth in Calais by an NGO that bears that same name; I started showing up every single day so people would get familiar with my face and warm up to me. The fieldwork routines that I followed were effective in creating rapport with potential informants but at the same time, my identity as a person was also influential for building stronger relationships with my informants. It’s a fact that fieldwork relations are profoundly affected by the similarities and dissimilarities between the researcher and subject of study. Social classifications such as culture, nationality, religion, profession, gender, age, ethnicity, race and colour all come into play when building relationships in the field. Notably, at the initial stages of the fieldwork and throughout the whole process, these social classifications were influential in the rapport building process. That will further be discussed in chapter 7.
Participant observation and Data Collection

Participant observation is the heart of ethnographic fieldwork. It is essential for rapport building and data collection. For me, participant observation meant embedding myself in the daily lives of my informants. This meant waking up every day and queuing for breakfast, lunch and dinner like everybody else, eating what they ate and drank. It also meant following them like a shadow as they wandered around, waiting for their chance to be smuggled. As Powdermaker noted, physical proximity appears to be essential for establishing strong rapport between the ethnographer and the research participants (1967, 267). As such, to maintain physical proximity sleeping on the streets of Calais and Paris was part of the daily routine; embedding myself in such a manner to some extent gave me the opportunity to understand my informants’ daily lives better. This kind of methodological approach to the field was indispensable in creating a psychological and emotional bridge with my informants.

Further, a sound understanding of the language of the people we study has always been an essential aspect of anthropology. I am not going to claim that I managed fluency in Arabic and Uzbek or Farsi for that matter, but my greatest accomplishment was to learn things that matter in various languages that were spoken by the migrants. The nights were tough for those who were sleeping on the streets, so one of the first things I learned in the field (and the one that mattered the most) was how to ask people how he/she slept the previous night. To listen to others speak our language is always fascinating. Hence, language ability with the proper content is crucial in ethnographic research.

Once I met potential informants I used unstructured as well as semi-structured interviews to record life histories. Although I had established good rapport early on, until I felt like I had good control over the field and earned trust and respect of my informants and vice versa, informal interviews were indispensable in the data collection process. Throughout the fieldwork, using unstructured interviews was very important in filling the gaps and strengthening the data from semi-structured interviews. Since I was interested in life histories, I found it essential to focus on a small group of people and record their experiences in detail. Consequently, I managed to interview 32 migrants, of which 8 offered detailed life histories, and I also came back with over 120 pages of field notes generated from informal interviews/conversations and participant observations. Even after leaving the field I continued following my informants using Facebook
and Skype as often as I could. Through those follow-ups, it was possible to observe how my informants’ lives transformed after reaching their destinations.

In the beginning, I managed to record some of my interviews, but in time I found it somehow hindering my informants from expressing themselves freely. As I understood from some of my informants, this feeling was somehow generated from their experience of being in detention centres and police stations, or in the asylum offices. So, it was imperative not to make the interviews have an atmosphere of interrogation. This was one of the reasons I refrained from using the word “interview” while I approached potential informants. Instead, phrases like “can we talk” or “can you tell me something” were more effective and less alarming.

Volunteering as an interpreter at UNHCR in Calais for people who originated from Ethiopia and Eritrea was a different level of tapping into the field. In addition, photographic and written materials such as asylum papers and case files of my informants as well as graffiti were used to gather additional ethnographic data. In anthropology, it is quite the norm to record and present our ethnographic research in a written form. By doing so, we focus mainly on what was said or observed in our presence. Photography makes it possible to explore what was experienced and noted in the absence of the anthropologist. This form of collecting data produced a considerable amount of information which was valuable for the research.

**Reflexive Ethnography**

In a sense, it is true that all ethnography is self-ethnography (Goldschmidt 1977, 294). However, unlike depersonalised ethnographic narratives, auto-ethnography “places the relationship between knower and known at the centre of knowledge created and so moves beyond positivist assumptions” (Moore: 1996); it “places the self within a social context” (Reed-Danahay 1997, 9) and manifests “multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 739; in Khosravi 2011, 4). If there were ever a checklist for what the stereotype immigrant would be at this moment in time my identity, in terms of nationality (Ethiopian and hence African), black, male and a Muslim would check most of the boxes. It was for this reason almost everybody in Calais thought I was a refugee. This assumption without no doubt affect the ethnography positively and at times put me in dire situations (see chapter 7). One can say it was a gift and a curse.
Similarly, Abu-Lughod (1986), reflecting on her ethnography among the Bedouins of Egypt, points out how her identity as half Palestinian-American (“halfie”) or “insider” (Abu-Lughod 1989, 270) gave her access but at the same time restricted her. Yet Abu-Lughod stresses that “truth-claims made by even an indigenous anthropologist [insider]” have to be subjected to the same level of scrutiny (ibid.). Though I might agree with her last comments, here I would like to take a pause and stress the limits of my conviction. Auto-ethnography within the context of this research is not a claim for an insider’s view and I am not presenting any “truth-claim”. Rather, the ambition with auto-ethnographic dimension is to unveil and problematize the condition for ethnographic fieldwork, as well as to add nuance to the stories of my informants. As such, it is used to give an in-depth view to the reader about the daily activities of the ethnographer and the making of ethnography. In the critically acclaimed Living with Bad Surroundings, discussing his approach to the field and his informants in war-torn Uganda, Sverker Finnström (2008, 17) refuses “any methodological claim to have suffered with his informants”, in “bad surrounding”, acknowledging his privileged position as an anthropologist from Sweden compared to his Ugandan informants who were at all times struggling to achieve “good surroundings”. I too hold a similar position of privilege. Claiming otherwise would not only denigrate the traumatic experience of my informants but also belittle the pain and sorrow of millions of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people all over the world (see also Finnström 2008).

An incident that took place in Isbergues in the earlier days of my fieldwork has firmly shaped by stance. One afternoon I sat for a game of dominos with an Ethiopian asylum seeker named Sara. Since the chance of getting smuggled is greater in the cover of darkness, besides resting their fatigued bodies from unsuccessful nights, the daytime was for preparing their cases for the asylum interview and playing dominoes or card games, while others prepared food for the day. While playing, Sara mentioned her plan to write an autobiography one day. As those words rolled out of her tongue, another girl (Lidya) burst into laughter. By the looks on her face, the laughter was a mixture of sarcasm and anger. She belittled Sara’s ambitions by saying, “Darling, you are too new to tell the story.” At that moment Sara replied by asking, “Does that mean I

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9 The term halfie denotes “people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (L. Abu-Lughod 1989). The term is borrow from Kirin Narayan.
have to suffer like you to tell a story?’” At that point others joined the conversation, siding with Lidya. With anger and despair, Lidya added, “The only way you can write the story is with your bleeding heart, with the pain, crying.” Unlike Sara, Lidya had a terrifying experience to reach this point, although she hadn’t reached her destination yet. She endured the horror of the Saharan desert and survived the jails of Libya and the watery grave that is the Mediterranean, even gave birth on streets of Greece to a beautiful girl named Selam. Although Selam was a blessing rather than a horror, I can’t imagine how hard it was for her to raise a child on the road, all by herself.

In total it took her more than six years to reach Calais. In the eyes of others, Sara hadn’t earned the right to tell the story. Unlike them, she hadn’t spent a couple of years of her life in refugee camps, nor had she wandered in urban streets and abandoned buildings, nor for that matter had she witnessed the horrors of the Sahara Desert and the perilous journey of the Mediterranean Sea.

On the contrary, Sara took Ethiopian Airlines to Paris and had only been in the Jungle for two weeks. It was clear, even among ‘insiders’, there is a hierarchy of legitimacy for storytelling. As an anthropologist, I neither acknowledge nor discard their views towards Sara, but to me, her story remains as essential a part of the ethnography as anybody else. Then, what does this mean for an anthropologist like me? Well, the answer is simple; the fact of the matter is that I can never hold the claim to voice myself as an insider; I can only echo my voice in relation to my own experiences of borders, so I respectfully remain an outsider.

**Challenges on the Field**

The search for cultural symbols and meaning is the guiding force behind ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnographic endeavour stipulates penetrating into a community and the “silencing of others” (Whitehead 2013) to record and interpret those cultural symbols and meanings that we solemnly wish to understand. For those of us who unsilence the marginalised others, people who are at the receiving end of action of state power (refugees and asylum seekers) or individuals and groups deemed illegal and unlawful by the state, such as undocumented migrants and smugglers, the field can be an ethical and legal minefield. In this section, I will discuss those ethical and legal challenges that I faced in my own research.
Field Ethics

“What does this research do for me?” Ahmed asked the researcher who was running around for weeks asking questions and taking migrants’ photos. Caught off guard, she replied, “I do not know!” Ahmed was not ready to let her off easy. “Then why are you here?” he said staring straight at her. “I do not know,” once more she replied. Embarrassed, she got up from the pavement where we were sitting and took her leave. Though the question was not directed straight at me, it made me ponder heavily on my field ethics and the expectation of my informants on the outcome of my research in their lives. Ahmed’s question illuminates how our informants feel detached from our research while being at the heart of it. In part, my understanding is that the sense of detachment comes from the unlikeliness of instantaneous change of status quo for the people we study at that particular point in time because of our research. Going into the field, I was naive, to say the least. I started the research in a belief that my engagement was in the best interests of my informants, I believed that my research could somehow alleviate their pain and suffering. But in time it became clear that in reality that was not the case. In some instances, it was rather the opposite.

The future my informants long for and the secrecy of their identity which undermines the ability of the authorities to deport them was safeguarded through silence11. Faced with resistance and unable to break their silence, the police on numerous occasions have turned their attention towards journalists, activists and researchers to gather intelligence by seizing cameras and written materials. With each interview, it became apparent the great risk I was putting my informants in every time I wished them to break their silence and every time they allowed me to record their voices or write their stories on my field notes. The responsibility of being entrusted with guarding their future has made secrecy and anonymity the heart of the research. Using alias names in all the field notes and in some instances going as far as hiding the recorded interviews in my shoe became a necessary routine. Nevertheless, they still bared the risk of exposure.

The risk of exposing the researched others resonated not only in the field but also in the manner in which field information is interpreted and presented in the thesis. As anthropological literature is not only meant for anthropologists, explanation that is deemed to reflect resistance

11 The state cannot deport any refugee or asylum seeker if they cannot confirm their country of origin and identity. Hence it is common strategy among irregular migrant, asylum seeker and refugees to hide their identities to avoid deportation.
and agency of migrants and also show the reader the daily life experiences of the migrant’s journey can easily be used by law enforcement and policymakers to deter their movement, suppress their resistance and silence their voices, even lead to further violence. Considering this, breaking their silence might not be in their best interest. For this reason, one ought to ask: Is the production of knowledge worth the risk that we ask our informants to take? And are there any benefits for them?

Furthermore, the psychological and emotional strains that my ethnographic questioning brought my informants were irrefutable. When an informant is sitting in front you with their eyes tearing up, remembering the loved ones that were taken from them or reliving the fear and sadness they felt after witnessing the dead, motionless bodies of their friends floating in the Mediterranean, it is clear that ethnographic questions unwittingly force others to relive moments of an excruciating past. What can be grasped from these moments is the disquieting reality that ethnographic inquiries are inherently rooted in the exercise of power over others that can invigorate original moments of violence which can bring psychological and emotional suffering (see also Whitehead 2013). It was for this reason that Neil L. Whitehead (2013, 36) has recently drawn parallels between enhanced interrogation and ethnographic questioning. He writes, “What is unsettling for anthropologists is that, as with torture, the purpose of ethnography is also the gathering of information, data, and knowledge of others, who might be either enemies or allies of the government apparatus in the ethnographer’s homeland” (ibid.). It is a harsh comparison, but a valid and necessary critique that forces us to stand within our tracks and force us to observe our path in ethnographic fieldwork.

What is more unnerving for me is that most of my informants did not distinguish between ethnographic questioning and police interrogation; for them most of the time it was the same. At the earlier stages of my fieldwork, I noticed the discomfort and fear that the informants had every time I spoke of an interview. In part, the discomfort was because people do not want to tell their stories to a stranger, but their reasons for the fear and distress went beyond that. For most of my informants, interviews are associated with state authorities. In their experience, interviews are a stark reminder of interrogation by asylum or police officers while being held in a detention centre. Hence, for an informant questions are questions, whether they are coming from police or an anthropologist. As Whitehead noted, both are looking for information, both are in the act of
interrogation. But in all fairness, given the fact that we do not force our informants for an interview or waterboard them or inflict physical harm, Neil’s assessment might be too critical. Nonetheless, we cannot dismiss the fact that there are negative and unintended consequences to anthropological inquiries and that should be acknowledged.

Then what does this mean? And where do we go from here? Well, the purpose of my argument is indeed not to suggest that anthropological engagements always have negative consequences and as such we should abandon all engagements. On the contrary, I firmly believe that our work is essential but “without appreciating, and constantly revising, how ethnographic inquiry can also function as a form of domination over others, we risk unwitting cooperation into research programs that may have little benefit for their subjects” (Whitehead 2013, 28).

Legal consideration

On the 25th of February 2009, 58-year-old Monique Pouille was arrested in Norrent-Fontes, near the town of Béthune, NW France. Monique was a volunteer from Terre D’errance, an organisation that helps migrants in the region. Her crime, according to the police, was "flagrant crime of assisting illegal immigrants" (Brighton n.d., 1). When I met Monique in April of 2012, she explained that all she did was charge the mobile phones of three migrants. What is troubling is that the simple act of charging a mobile phone for an undocumented migrant was interpreted as a serious offence under the law commonly known as “délit de solidarité” or “offence of solidarity.” More specifically according to Article L622-1 as it is stated in Code of Entry and Stay of Foreigners and Right of Asylum (CESEDA):

*Any person who has, through direct or indirect assistance, facilitates or attempts to facilitate the entry, movement or residence of an irregular foreigner in France will be punished by imprisonment of five years and a fine of 30,000 Euros* (CESEDA 2005).

The unwillingness of the French government to include “for-profit provisions” in the legislation has blurred the lines between human smugglers and humanitarian works, subsequently impedying humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants by creating uncertainties that humanitarian assistance might be an unlawful act (Allsopp 2012). Monique’s arrest was undoubtedly a testament to this. The law, which is claimed to be intended to target
traffickers and smugglers, was being used to criminalise the people working in the humanitarian sectors. At the same time, the law also has a far-reaching consequence on academia, especially on how researchers engage and interact with their informants.

In the search for cultural symbols and meanings, the anthropologies must also strike a balance between involvement and detachment; this is the “heart of the participant observation method” (Sluka and Robben 2007, 1). As ethnographic fieldwork is rooted in participant observation, involvement demands a high level of human interaction and communication of ideas and knowledge between the researcher and informants, and in some instances, it might also involve the transaction of goods. In my personal experiences of dealing with undocumented migrants as an anthropologist, it was difficult to research within the confines of this law. Although the law never completely managed to halt my research it considerably affected the way I interacted with my informants and, in some instances, restricted my ability to communicate at will. For example, although anthropologists are the ones who ask most of the questions, at times the tables turn, and we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory where we have to be the ones answering the questions. The most common questions beside the research aim and my reasons for coming to Calais regarded migration policies, in particular about the UK, Sweden and Germany. Many of my informants wanted my opinion/advice as to where they would have a greater chance of being accepted as a refugee or granted asylum. Other times people would walk up to me with an open map of Europe wanting to know how they could go to Sweden. But within the confines of this law, any answer that I give can easily be considered as indirectly or directly facilitating the movement of undocumented migrants. When we are faced with this kind of questions, what would be the right response? Cite the legislation that forbid us from giving answers and walk away from our informants? The answer would be a definite no.

Despite the restriction, I still managed to collect the data to write this research and yet for obvious reasons I cannot disclose how I dealt with the ethical and legal restrictions that were cast by this legislation. As it is evident the uncertainty of being outside of the law has affected the writing process, I had to exclude a considerable amount of data in fear of incriminating myself. These ethnographic data would otherwise have been invaluable in sparking methodological as well as ethical discussion on ethnographic fieldwork.

12 Many of the migrants in Calais had the UK, Sweden and Germany as their primary choices for asking asylum.
On the 31st of December 2012, the French parliament passed a revision to the Article L622-1 after being pressured by “Collectif des Délinquents Solidaires”.13 Article L622-4 abrogates Article L622-1 in the sense that, if assistance is given in a non-lucrative way, and without another aim than humanitarian assistance to undocumented migrants the actions are still in the confines of the law (Allsopp 2012).

Another law worth nothing, a law which has been equally controversial and criticised for its potential to criminalise humanitarian and academic engagements is the US “material support” law, which makes direct and indirect assistance to “terrorist organisations” a crime. Like “délit de solidarité” the law fails to clarify what is considered assistance, it fails to make a clear distinction between those who intend to support a group’s illegal activity and those who do not. What is troubling is that the law not only applies to American citizens but also non-citizens living outside of the United States (Price, Rubinstein, and Price 2012, 1). The material support law can be more restrictive and damaging to academia than the “délit de solidarité” in the fact that one can be found guilty even in the absence of proof of intent to support a terrorist group (Price, Rubinstein, and Price 2012). In an age where the boundaries are systematically blurred and each migrant is considered a national security threat and a potential terrorist, working under such legislation is a daunting task.

The migrant population in Calais was composed of people from all the major conflict zones in the world. Some of these people might have some affiliations with one of the groups deemed “terrorist groups” by the US government. As I alluded to before, ethnographic engagements require high levels of interactions. During my fieldwork I followed my informants like a shadow; I slept where they slept, I ate what they ate. I did everything except actually getting myself smuggled. If we are to accept the restrictions set by these laws, we will be forced to abandon the most powerful tool we have in our methodological arsenal, participant observation, without which there is no anthropology. Hence, in the current migration crisis14 where, more than before, refugees and undocumented migrants are seen as a tremendous threat to the nation-state15, those of us who are engaged in research with asylum seekers, refugees, and

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13 Collectif des Délinquents Solidaires is an organization comprised of all the major refugee and migrants support groups in France.
14 The migrants in flux of 2015 and 2016.
15 Especially after the Paris attacks.
undocumented migrants should be very concerned with how these legal apparatuses are holding our discipline hostage.

These laws are turning refugees, asylum seekers and “terrorist groups” to the homo sacers of our time. They are beings “who may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (Agamben 1998, 8), beings considered so unclean "[their] rights have been rendered forfeit” (De la Durantaye 2009, 207), for their ideas and perspectives hold no ground in society for they are not of part of humanity. The purpose of anthropological engagement is to create knowledge from all vantage points, knowledge that helps us to decode social events, explain individual actions and interpret cultural symbols. If we confirm or succumb to fear of these laws, it will “create a climate in which forthright conversation was discouraged, and public discussions of important contemporary issues truncated and forced into a single interpretive structure” (Price, Rubinstein, and Price 2012, 5). If anthropological engagement in this area of study is to continue, we are ought to stand our ground and find ways to gain our academic rights back.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study come from three vantage points. First, though the research is timely, it contributes fresh insights into existing body of research in transit migration and the policing of borders. Noticeably, like most social sciences and anthropological studies in particular that have already produced a considerable body of knowledge in this area of research, the focus of the research is oriented in the Western world; leaving the phenomenon in question underexplored in other parts of the world.

Secondly, since it was a male-dominated field, the majority of my interviews consisted of male informants. Since the experience of both genders could give light to different explanations of the same discourse, the data collected is not rich in generating gender perspectives in migrant experiences. Furthermore, while interviewing female informants, I felt they were uneasy and more uncomfortable around me than male informants. As such, it was difficult to build rapport and meaningful relationships with female informants to the degree that allowed me to ask a question in detail, for example, about the most vulnerable part of their journey, like their experience in jails of Libya.
Calais is a highly diffused space regarding languages used to communicate with one another. It is a place where Farsi, Dari, Arabic, Tigrigna, Amharic, Uzbek, French and many more languages are spoken at the same time. Although not fluent, most people had some understanding of English. Hench, I decided to conduct my interviews in English and Amharic. Choosing people who only speak English is a limitation by itself, as data might only depict a particular set of people, with particular goals. Here one might ask why not use interpreters? The reason for it was that Calais was a place of paranoia, where people felt that they were being watched either by people from their governments or spies from the French police. This reality makes it hard to build trust between informants and makes it harder to bring a third party to the table.
Chapter 3: Background of the Study

In this chapter, I will present the background of the thesis. Transit migration and the movement of asylum seekers within and to the European Union can best be understood within the context of the history of immigration to Europe after WWII and the European response regarding migration policy to manage those mobile populations. As such, this chapter aims to act as the historical and policy lens upon which the ethnographic chapters are observed.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I will present the migration trends in the EU after WWII up to the present, followed by immigration trend to the UK within the same time frame. The second section of the chapter focuses on the response of the European Union regarding the policy framework in relation to the migration trends that were discussed.

Historical Perspective of Immigration in EU

Immigration to Europe in the aftermath of WWII can be best understood by dividing it into two periods. The first phase, from 1945 to the early 1970s was primarily characterised by the movement of labour migrants to Western European countries. This is due to as a consequence of large-scale investment and expansion of production in the fast-moving industries. The second phase is marked by the “oil crises” of 1973-1974 and the slowing down of the economy, which brought significant changes to the pattern of migration to Europe. This period saw the change of the immigrant population from labour immigrants that defined the earlier phase to asylum seekers and also higher number “irregular” migrants following more restrictive immigration policies (Castles and Miller 2009).

Migration Trends 1945 to 1973

The migration population in the first phase was mainly composed of labour migrants from less developed European countries from the peripheries mobilised mainly through temporary labour recruitments schemes. For example, in the wake of the World War II, the British government brought in 90,000, mostly male workers, from refugee camps and through the European Voluntary Workers (EVW) scheme more workers were recruited from Italy. The voluntary workers through this scheme were tied to designated jobs, had no right to a family reunion, and could be deported for indiscipline (Castles and Miller 2009, 99). This program was
quick, and it ended by 1951 as it was easier to bring colonial workers. Within the same period, another 100,000 European workers immigrated to Britain on work permits. Between 1946 and 1959, 350,000 Irish labourers provided manual labour in the industry and construction. “By 1951, there were 218,000 people of New Commonwealth origin, a figure which increased to 541,000 in 1961” (Castles and Miller 2009, 102). Following the heavy restrictions attached to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, immigration from these areas slowed down. However, migration from the Commonwealth countries continued in the form of family reunion until 1971 when further restrictions were put forth (Castles and Miller 2009). Despite the restriction, by 1971 the population has grown to 1.2 million and reached 1.5 million by 1981. Most of these immigrant communities from the Afro-Caribbean and Asia faced institutional and informal discrimination and put in a position where they could only work in low skilled manual jobs in the manufacturing industries and the service sector.

In 1945, France established the Office National d’Immigration (ONI) to recruit workers from southern Europe. Mainly seasonal workers from Spain and Portugal were recruited through this scheme. At the same time, a large number of workers from these areas came on their own via tourist visas, as well as illegally, and were able to find jobs and become regulars (Castles and Miller 2009). France also saw significant immigration from its colonies mainly from northern and western Africa as well as the Caribbean including small islands such as Martinique, Guadeloupe and Reunion. More significant numbers of immigrants from north African colonies mainly originated from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Immigrants from Senegal, Mali and Mauritania registered a significant number of immigrants coming from the western Africa colonies. By early 1970s 2 million foreign workers and 690,000 dependents resided in France (ibid.).

Whereas in Germany, the government established the Federal Labour Office (Bundesanstalt fur Arbeit) through which they also recruited workers from southern European countries such as Spain, Greece, Portugal and the former Yugoslavia. Through bilateral agreements, the FLO also heavily recruited workers from Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia. In 1956 about 95,000 the foreign workers resided in Germany, by 1966 the number of foreign works drastically increased to 1.3 million and 2.6 million by 1973 (Castles and Miller 2009).
In a similar fashion between 1945 and 1974 Switzerland brought in foreign workers under strict regulation. Under this scheme, until the 1960s seasonal workers were not allowed to change jobs, bring family members and did not have the option for permanent settlement. By 1970s the Swiss industries were heavily dependent on foreign workers who comprised a third of the workforce (Castles and Miller 2009).

This kind of recruitment scheme repeated itself in many wealthier West European nations. For example, Belgium had programs up until 1963 through which it recruited workers to work in the coal mine mainly from Italy. While Sweden actively recruited workers from its neighbour Finland in the same period. However, in the early 1970s the slowing down of the economy brought an end to such recruitment schemes. Complex new patterns of movement soon followed the change in the economy and with it, a new type of immigrants. As it was mentioned in the theory chapter, the migration trends in this phase can partially explain some of the asylum patterns that happened later in these countries including the UK (Castles and Miller 2009).

**Migration Trends 1973-2000s**

The economic growth throughout Europe slowed down following the oil crisis of 1973. This event was the genesis for the transformation for a new age of migration in Europe. In the wake of the oil crises, European nations strived to establish more restrictive immigration policies. Low-skilled labour immigrants, who have long been the back-bone for many of the Western European countries in the previous phase were now seen as a threat to the nation-state and warranted control. Restrictive immigration policies by the receiving countries resulted in reduced recruitment of foreign workers. The crises also led the UK and France to put restrictive measures on labour workers coming from the colonies.

However, despite the restrictive measures on Labour migration, immigration continued in the form of chain migration, as families migrated to join their respective family members (Jordan and Düvell 2003, 39). Most governments tried to stop chain migration. This effort was not successful due to previously established family reunification laws (Castles and Miller 2009).

Despite such trends, the numbers of foreign population in the receiving northern countries did not show a significant increase in the 1970s and 1980s. This was due to the growing number of returning migrants facilitated by the economic growth in the southern
European countries; countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece that have long been countries of emigration. This, in the short term, led to a balance of foreign population in the receiving countries. In the 1980s, in addition to return migrants, Southern European countries were experiencing significant immigration of their own from the non-European countries. For example in Italy, the population of foreign workers increased from 300,000 in 1981 to 600,000 in the 1990s and 1.5 million by 2001. The majority of these immigrants were from Romanians, Albanians and Moroccans. The majority of these foreign populations in Italy were irregular migrants or foreigners who have entered the country legally but overstayed their visa (Castles and Miller 2009, 111).

The other southern European countries have also seen a significant increase in their foreign population. Between 1990 and 1999, Spain has seen its foreign population increase from 279,000 to 801,000 (ibid.). While, Greece in comparison has experienced the highest immigration from the southern countries, with its foreign population constituting 8% (1.1 million) of its total population of 11 million (ibid.). In general, from the 1980s onward to the 1990s there was an increase in foreign population throughout Europe. The surge in population for the most part can be attributed to, on the one hand, to economic globalisation that facilitated the movement of the high-skilled worker. At the same time, since the 1990s, there have been significant increases in the number of asylum seekers and irregular migrants to Europe. The surge in population in the former can be attributed to the rapid changes in countries following the decolonisation process and the Cold War after the collapse of the USSR. More recently, following the Arab Spring, the Syrian conflict and the civil war in Libya have a direct effect on the “European migration crises”.

The rapid changes in the social, economic and political climate in postcolonial Africa, Asia and Latin America brought new immigration patterns to Europe. The political instability in many of these countries coupled with rapid population growth and uncontrolled urbanisation contributed to a decline in living standards and drastically increased the levels of poverty in these regions. The outcome was a high level of inequality within and between regions. In addition to the violence and human rights violations, climate change and natural disasters further contributed to the displacement of people locally and globally. For many, migration has become the only
way to negotiate and navigate the rapid transformations that affected their lives (Castles and Miller 2009, 107).

On the other hand, on the European continent, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was a turning point. The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in political instability and drastic changes to Eastern and Central European countries. Many of the population in these countries who have been isolated from the rest of the world throughout the Cold War were now in a position to be mobile. The fear of mass migration from East to Western Europe was taking hold and far-right political parties and the media stoked the fear by arguing that the “flood” of migrants would engulf Western Europe thereby lowering the standard of living and threatening the stability of the welfare state.

Although there was significant immigration to Western Europe the fear of mass migration was unfounded as the majority of the population on the move in early post-Cold War era were dominated by minorities with rights to citizenship, moving to their so-called ancestral homelands (Castles and Miller 2009, 109). For example ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union to Germany, Russian Jews to Israel, Bulgarian Turks to Turkey and Pontian Greeks to Greece (Castles and Miller 2009, 109). As it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, mass population influxes in the 1990s coincided with conflicts in the region rather than spontaneous mobility. The most significant population mobility from East to Western Europe came more than a decade later, after ten new members; the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (known as the A10) joined the EU In 2004. Except for the UK, Ireland and Sweden, the other EU15 countries put a restriction on the migration of the new members during the transition period. Consequently, the UK and Ireland had significant immigration of mainly Poles and Lithuanians but Sweden remained unaffected (Castles and Miller 2009, 115). In June 2006, 447,000 A8 citizens applied to the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) that would allow them to work in the UK (ibid.).

**Asylum applications trends in the EU and the UK**

According to the UNHCR, the number of refugees on the global arena increased from 2.4 million in 1975 to 18.2 million by 1993, a peak since World War II. Refugees from other continents started arriving in Europe in the 1970s. The first of this group of refugees were mostly
from Latin American countries following military coups in Chile and Uruguay in 1973, and Argentina in 1976 (UNHCR 2000). In the mean-time in the UK, refugees of the 1970s were quota refugees mainly from Uganda, Chile and Vietnam (Zetter et al. 2003). In the 1980s, there was a sharp increase in the number of refugees displaced all over the globe. The effect of this global movement of people in Europe was also significant. The number of asylum seekers in Western Europe increased from under 70,000 in 1983 to over 200,000 by 1989 (UNHCR 2000). Such a steep increase can be attributed to global conflicts and human rights violation but also the change in policy following the oil crises.

In the UK the number of asylum application remained steady during most of the 1980s. The number of asylum applications in the UK between 1980 to 1989 was only 37,685, an average of 4000 a year (Zetter et al. 2003). On the other hand, the 1990s were the beginning of a significant change to the migration trend to the UK. In 1990 alone there were 38,195 applications; in regards to trends in the 1980s this rate of increase was unprecedented. In 1991 the numbers of applications further increased, reaching 73,400, a 71% increase from the previous year (Zetter et al. 2003). In Europe, a new peak in asylum applications was reached in the aftermath of the Yugoslav civil wars, in 1992, in which the number of asylum seekers peaked at 695,000. The number of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the EU fluctuated throughout the 1990s and 2000s mainly coinciding with trends in global conflicts. By 2000, the number of refugees on the global arena started showing a steady decline with 12.1 million refugees registered globally. In the UK, 2002 was the highest peak on record, with applications reaching 84,132. By 2005 the number of refugees globally further declined to 8.7 million only to climb back again to 9.9 million in 2006 following the war in Iraq (Castles and Miller 2009, 191). In 2006 Europe hosted 1.7 million refugees and 199,000 asylum seekers (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008, 15), while the UK only hosted 23,608 asylum seeker. In 2012 the global number of refugees of concern reached 45.2 million (of which 10.5 million were stateless people) the highest in 19 years. As before, the increase in the number of asylum seekers is directly related to conflicts happening around the globe: Republic of the Congo, Syria, Sudan and Mali (UNHCR 2012b). At this point four out of five of all refugees were hosted in developing countries, with Pakistan taking the lead (1.6million), followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran (868,200), Germany (589,700) and Kenya (565,000). During the same period 296,700 asylum applications were made in the EU a 7% increase compared to the previous year (UNHCR 2012a). The UK
hosted 27,400 asylum seekers, a tiny number compared to Germany and the number of refugees hosted in poor developing countries (ibid.).

![Figure 2: Asylum trends in the UK (1984-2016)](image)

Source: (Hawkins 2018)

Though poor developing countries host most of the world's refugees, the western societies’ overall response to the new migration trends has not been positive (Castles and Miller 2009, 109). The media portrays them as bogus migrants, which fosters the growing hostility towards these groups (Castles and Miller 2009, 109). Migrants and asylum seekers are now seen as a security threat to the receiving countries through links to organised crime, terrorism or Islamic fundamentalism. Political parties were able to use the migration question and redefine and problematize it as a socioeconomic and cultural concern (Boswell 2003, 632–624). As a result, the overall move by EU member states was to try to restrict legal means of migration for low-skilled workers and limit family reunion, access to welfare benefits, expel long-term residents and restrict asylum. In the coming section, I will further explain the policy frameworks the EU has taken to stop and manage this mobile population.
European Migration and Asylum Policies

As it was established in the previous section, in the past few decades immigration to Europe has evolved in terms of size and complexity. It would not be an exaggeration to state that immigration has become the most divisive topic in the social and political sphere in Europe. A new type of immigrants, in the form of refugees and asylum seekers, who are culturally distinct from past immigrants who have dominantly been European, are presented as problematic. On the other hand, in the post 9/11 era, irregular migration has been raised more than ever as a serious issue to the security of the nation-state. In this section, I will examine steps taken by the EU more specifically the policy frameworks meant to manage and tackle these new forms of immigration. When European nations came together to form the EU, the goal has been to create a single market to increase the free movement of capital and goods as well as the mobility of useful workers inside of the EU while simultaneously, restricting immigration from outside of the EU and decreasing the irregular migration. The creation of the Schengen area meant the removal of the internal border and depending on periphery states for the security and border management for Europe. To that end, it was evident that new external and internal policies had to be amended. The first step was to set “the European external dimension of migration and asylum policy” new policies for managing external borders and security in collaboration with transit and sending countries and also “tackling the root causes of migration in origin countries” (EU 2016). At the same time, EU countries had to take a step towards a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) for the protection and management of refugees and asylum seekers within its borders. I will try to demonstrate that the creation of the Schengen area of free movement coupled with these two dimensions of EU migrations strategy is one part of the puzzle in understanding the mobility and decision making of refugees, asylum seeker as well as irregular migrants in transit inside and to the EU.

The External Dimensions of EU Immigration and Asylum Policy

In the governmentality\textsuperscript{16} of migration, the external dimensions of the European immigration policy can be seen as a two-layered strategy. The first strategy focuses on combating the “illegal” immigration, smuggling of refugees and asylum seekers and trafficking

\textsuperscript{16} Throughout the thesis I use the term governmentality in the way Foucault used it. Foucault(1982, 790) defined governmentality as “the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed” (see also Foucault 2007).
operation to the EU. The strategy is focused on strengthening cooperation with sending and transit countries in areas of border security and reemission protocols for those who have crossed the border without documentation. Among member states, the strategy also calls for closer cooperation and mutual technical assistance between the Member States' border control services, such as exchange programmes and technology transfer, especially on the maritime borders. In early 2000s, for example, on the eastern borders, the EU negotiated with Poland and Hungary for stricter border controls and immigration measures as well as to accept back illegal entrants in exchange for visa-free entry to the EU for their citizens and as a prelude condition to their future membership to the EU (Jordan and Düvell 2003). The above negotiations resulted in the formation of the PHARE program. Also, the TACIS program was shaped to fight against irregular migration at the Ukrainian- Moldovan border. On the Southern front, under the Tampere programme, ARGO (2002-2006) an action programme was launched for administrative cooperation in the areas of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration, supports cooperation projects between member states and southern EU countries like Spain, Italy, Greece and Malta. The culmination of all these programmes was a prelude for the creation of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders also known as FRONTEX, which became operational in 2005 under The Hague Programme.

In the wake of the “European migration crisis” 2015-2016, the European Parliament voted to extend FRONTEX mandates and to transform it into the European Border and Coast Guard Agency following a proposal by the European Commission. FRONTEX’s primary responsibilities include monitoring migration flows, carrying out risk analyses and vulnerability assessment including the assessment of the capacity and readiness of member states to face threats and challenges at the external borders. In addition, maritime control is one of the most important tasks done by the agency, supporting search and rescue operations at sea and facilitating the return of third-country nationals that it deems not having the right to stay in the EU territory. Currently in central and eastern Mediterranean, the agency is running operation Poseidon and Triton, which provides Greece and Italy respectively with technical support in relations to border security and surveillance, while operations Hera, Indalo and Minerva operate on the western Mediterranean front.
In addition to the supporting member states and EU bordering transit countries, the EU under FRONTEX, provides support to northern African countries for maritime patrols, in programmes such as HERA II in the Canary Islands, Moroccan and Mauritanian coast (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008). On the other hand, in the wake of the “European migration crises,” the European Council expanded the mandate of operation Sophia\textsuperscript{17} to include training Libyan Coastguard and Navy to enhance their capacity to disrupt the smuggling and trafficking networks in Libya and also perform search and rescue operations. Though such operations done by the agency have saved countless lives and should be acknowledged, it can also be argued that the surveillance programs under FRONTEX collaboration and assistance programmes that were mentioned above are deterrence operations more than rescue operations. To this end the FRONTEX has been criticized not only for running deterrence operations that hinder the ability of those who are trying to seek protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention, but also for exposing those who seek protection to far more danger and abuse especially to those coming through Libya where they are exposed to torture, slavery, rape and prison.

Ahead of a European Council meeting in Valletta, the UNHCR and IOM (2017) in a joint statement stressed that “it is not appropriate to consider Libya a safe third country nor to establish extraterritorial processing of asylum-seekers in North Africa” and urged for the council to “move away from migration management based on the automatic detention of refugees and migrants in inhumane conditions in Libya towards the creation of proper reception services”. Nevertheless, on 3 February 2017 following the meeting, the EU approved for Italy to pay €200 million to the Libyan Coastguard and provide training to stop any vessel transporting migrants. In addition, in August 2017 Italy’s Parliament passed a bill that allowed its Navy to deploy two military ships that would give technical and logistics support to the Libyan Navy to stop and return migrants to Libyan mainland (CNN 2017). According to IOM (2017), the number of migrants arriving (10,781) in Italy in July 2017 decreased by more than half compared to the previous year (23,552) which is a success for Italy and Europe. The external cooperation with transit countries has been a point of contention both in academia and humanitarian organisations. The EU has described such corporations with transit countries as “lifesaving”, however considering the horrific human rights abuses that are happening in Libya, some have questioned the

\textsuperscript{17} Lunched on the 22 June the original mandate of the operation is to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers.
motivations of the EU and pointed out that the “ultimate motivation is to keep people from coming to Europe” (Amnesty International 2017). On the other hand, Papadopoulou-Kourkoula (2008, 17) argues that although there is credence to such criticism “the arguments are in most cases based on partial assessment or knowledge of the situation prevailing on the ground in third countries” and the “negligence about the need of refugees living in these countries and the states’ obligations to deliver refugee protection”.

The EU’s €3 billion arrangement with Turkey in 2016-17, a country that the Union considers as a dictatorship, is also another questionable move by the EU which created another point of contention. Without a doubt, the funding will alleviate the suffering of the 3.9 million refugees stranded in Turkey by providing social services, including education and healthcare. However, at the same time, the agreement that the Turkish government is responsible for stopping smuggling boats makes the intentions of the EU questionable. In reaction to the arrangement, Cecilia Wikström, the Swedish representative to the European Parliament, has voiced her concerns stating that “the agreement should never have been concluded” that Turkey is a dictatorship with a history of human right abuses and oppression of minorities and political opponents and also given the fact that 275,000 migrants already crossed to EU since the signing of the agreement in August 2016 (Wikström 2016). The criticism laid by Wiström is valid, at the same time Papadopoulou-Kourkoula analysis is right, such arrangements with transit countries are not ideal considering the human right conditions in those countries, but at the same time, it will address some of the humanitarian crises in those countries. Regardless the establishment of these refugee camps in Turkey resemble the “protection villages” in Northern Uganda, as Dolan (2009) stressed the so-called “protected villages” had been anything but a site of protection. Instead, they were sites of violence and torture and in the name protection, the daily life routines have been severed and people live in dread and disorientation. This discussion shows the complexity of the current issue at hand both morally and in practice.

Development and Capacity Building as a Strategy for Migration Management

The second part of the external dimension of EU migration policy established under the Tampere Programme is a preventive strategy trying to address the root causes of migration by cooperating with the countries of origin by addressing political, human rights and development issues. This strategy calls for combating poverty, improving living conditions and creating job
opportunities, preventing conflicts and consolidating democratic states and ensuring respect for human rights, in particular rights of minorities, women and children. Although since the 1990s there has been an understanding within the EU community that its migration and asylum policy should encompass development assistance and humanitarian aid to curb forced migration. Regarding policies to address the matter, the EU has been more proactive in strengthening border security than tackling the root causes of mass displacement which entails the EU’s “security approach to migration” (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008, 20; see also Boswell 2003).

On the one hand, the priority differences between foreign and development policies have made it difficult to address such issues simultaneously. On the other hand, there has been a fear among EU development policymakers that the optics of focusing on issues to address root causes of displacement would seem routed in self-interest (Castles, Crawley, and Loughna 2003). However, in the 1990s it became apparent that the control mechanisms put in place have not had the desired effect on controlling migrations flows. Rather, it had the unintended consequences of an increase in irregular migration. At the same time, for refugees and asylum seekers, it meant that they had to depend on smugglers to reach Europe which has exposed them to exploitation and as such, new approaches to migration management had to be considered (Boswell 2003).

Following the mass influx of asylum seekers following the war in former Yugoslavia, in a meeting held in Edinburgh (1992) the European Council warned “the danger that uncontrolled immigration” would post on the stability of member states. In the council meeting, the desire for new policies in preventive and management strategies was also reflected but the meeting was concluded without setting official policies for precautionary measures (ibid.). The first step toward addressing root causes was taken in Barcelona Process in 1995 which established the EU-Mediterranean partnership to improve living and human right conditions in the area, which was the first of its kind policy. In October 1999, in a meeting held in Tampere, the European Council finally laid a comprehensive approach and the principles for addressing the causes for migration as well as the strategies for strengthening EU’s border security. The EC also agreed to take on the mandate previously set by High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration (HLWG)\textsuperscript{18} in December of 1998, which established an action plan to address root causes of migration in six

\textsuperscript{18} HLWG was established following the suggestion the Dutch government paper for creating a cross pillar action plan for addressing root causes of migration in selected countries.
countries (Somalia, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Albania, Afghanistan and Iraq) (Castles, Crawley, and Loughna 2003). The HLWG action plan is centred on protocols for cooperation with origin and transit countries in integrated categories, namely foreign policy, development and economic assistance and also migration and asylum.

Although the actions plans are the first comprehensive and coherent approaches for addressing the root causes of migration and move slightly from past policies adopted by the EU centred around border control, the HLWG action plan was a step towards the right direction but in practice, there was much to be done. Though the action plans specifically stressed the need for addressing root causes of migration by providing development and economic assistance as well as upholding values of human rights, as pointed out by many NGOs and human right organizations and also the European Parliament, most of the proposal is centred on readmission arrangements with origin and transit countries, and securing protection in the region (Castles, Crawley, and Loughna 2003; Boswell 2003). The lack of attention for attending the causes of refugees and asylum seekers is also reflected in the fact that only four of the top ten refugee and asylum seekers origin countries are part of the six action plans of the HLWG, the rest of the countries were transit and origins of labour migrants (Castles, Crawley, and Loughna 2003). Further, additional criticism of the action plan was that it was a unilateral policy pushed by the EU bypassing the main principles of the protocol which is cooperating with countries of origin and transit (ibid.). For example, the Moroccan government initially rejected the proposal presented for the country citing that the EU failed to consult them on the proposal. Finally, one of the strongest short-comings of the action plan that was raised by some was the lack of specific proposals for action in mitigating root causes (Castles, Crawley, and Loughna 2003). Building on the principles of the HLWG and “lessons learnt”, since 2005 the EU external dimension on migration prevention and management is approached through the concept of “Global Approach to Migration and Management” (GAMM)(EU 2016).

The global approach to migration has been defined by the EU as a policy “built a truly comprehensive migration policy, based on common political principles and solidarity” with origin and transit countries. That is something that HLWG failed to achieve. A shift in policy by the EU can be attributed to two factors. First, as it was mentioned earlier, border security and restrictive policies to migration have been found to be counterproductive in tackling irregular
migration. At the same time with an ageing population, the EU is faced with labour market shortages that cannot be filled by a domestic labour force. If the current trend continues uninterrupted, by 2050, the EU labour force is estimated to decrease by 48 million people (Eisele 2014). As such the Global Approach to Migration Management is an effort by the EU to find the balance between control and mobility. It is within this context that the EU’s GAMM’s four objectives (better organising legal migration, preventing and combatting irregular migration, maximising the development impact of migration and mobility, and finally, promoting the international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum) are set. In this manner, the GAMM tries to address all aspects of migration, from regular and irregular immigration, smuggling and trafficking, to refugee protection, migrant right, diasporas and remittances (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008).

The first objective of the GAMM, the legal migration and mobility strategy based on creating a partnership with specific countries for legal avenues for labour migration, the EU strategy is to fulfil the labour needs of its economy while simultaneously trying to reduce irregular migrations. For example, the mobility partnership signed on 21st of May 2008 with Cape Verde is one of a kind cooperation between the EU and an African state. This mobility partnership with Cape Verde initially allows the collaboration of five EU states (Portugal, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain) on several development initiatives covering the different objectives of the GAMM. Further agreements signed in 2012 and 2013 allows a one on visa facilitation and readmission arrangements between Cape Verde and the EU which came into force in 2014. Since the Cape Verde agreement, similar mobility partnerships have also been signed with Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Belarus.

The GAMM is also one of the most extensive policies adopted by the EU that uses development as a strategy for migration management. Between 2004 and 2013 the European Commission has budgeted more than EUR 1 billion to more than 400 migration projects, to which southern Mediterranean and sub-Saharan have been the leading beneficiaries. This was a massive leap in policy considering that the EU for many years have been reluctant to use development as a strategy for tacking irregular migration in particular, as some “believed that development aid should not constitute trade-off tool for [enhancing] border control in third
countries” (Eisele 2014, 100). But in the early 2000s there had been a shift in this view and there was a push in the EU for a development-based policy for managing migration. In a 2002 communication, the European Commission extensively pointed out the various links between development and migration, in which it presented action plans to reinforce links between both policy domains at the EU level (ibid.). Further emphasis was also made on the importance of diaspora networks and remittance transfers and how enhancing them were keys for development. Also, in 2005 the Commission building on its previous reports, stressed that a development-based strategy should have a comprehensive and collaborative approach that includes the policies of member states, non-member actors and origin countries (ibid.). To this end, for example, in relation to Africa the EU strategy, in these regards includes aims to meet the UN’s Millennium Development Goals which aims to promote development, security and good governance. To kick-start dialogue and cooperation, a series of conferences was held between the EU and African countries. The Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development held in Rabat in 2006 was one of the flagships of such kind of conferences. The conference established what is now called the “Rabat process”; a cooperation on migration and development which brought 55 countries of origin, transit, destination, of migration along the migratory route from West and Central Africa to Europe. Further, the African-EU Summit of Heads of State and Government in December 2007 in Lisbon established the Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME) that aims to ensure sustainable development through better management of migration and development. Also, with an emphasis on diaspora networks and the positive influence of remittance on development the partnership give incentive to African Diasporas by establishing oversee policies to make remittance sending easier, cheaper, safer, and more productive. Such approaches to migration certainly can be mistaken for a great leap from the standard border control mentality. But in a closer look, it becomes evident that in both the Rabat and Lisbon agreements the EU’s primary emphasis is to tackle irregular migration by building the capacity of African countries to stop mobile populations that pass through their territory. In this manner, it can be argued that what the EU is achieving is the exportation of its border through development packages. Especially in the Rabat Process, this emphasis is very much lucid as the EU specifically selected countries that are transit countries and not origin countries and as such failing to tackle route cause of migration and displacement. In this regard, Caletrio and Mason’s (2011, 306) observation is a summary of the extent to which EU member states
employ a surveillance apparatus for the governmentality of migration, as they write “it is not simply subjects, citizens and non-citizens that are mobile, but that states themselves have become mobile, partly in response to the mobility of those they seek to govern”(ibid.). What is also of concern and demands a critical attention is that of the involvement of humanitarian organisations and NGOs in the governmentality of migration. Like in the case of Turkey that was discussed earlier, the development packages are offered in transit zones through humanitarian organisations and NGOs. Although in both cases, the purpose of such development packages, as it might at first appear is to ease the suffering of the refugees and asylum seekers in route, I will argue that such development packages are there to strand these populations in transit and hinder them from reaching the EU. In a way, such strategies by the EU are forms of social torture that debilitates these unwanted populations. The experience of being stuck in a transit zone for most of my informants was like being stuck permanently in a liminal state not being able to transition and live one’s life in a meaning way. In light of this, it is impossible to view the involvement of humanitarian organisations and NGO’s as neutral and passive bystanders in this power dynamic. As Adam Branch (2012) would say, this is “humanitarian impunity”. In this regard, they “can be regarded as complicit bystanders; like doctors in a torture situation, they appear to be there to ease the suffering of victims, but in reality they enable the process to be prolonged by keeping the victim alive for further abuse” (Dolan 2009, 1–2).

**Striving for a Common European Asylum Policy**

Since the early 1990s, EU member states have been striving for a harmonised migration and asylum policy. The EU member states took the first significant step for formulating a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) under the Tampere programme that ran from 1999 to 2004. There were two main components in setting a fully functional CEAS. The first directives in the Tampere programme were to set a uniform system in all member states where there can be common standards on reception conditions, rules on who qualified for refugee status, common standards on procedures so that some destinations are not more favourable than others or in other words, to stop what the EU considered as the problem of “asylum shopping”. Secondly and equally important, the Dublin system was set as a cornerstone in building the CEAS, as it clearly allocates responsibility among the member states for the examination of
applications for international protection, and with it, the EURODAC database for the identification of asylum seekers was also established.

Now almost two decades later, it can be argued that the EU still has not managed to establish a fully functioning CEAS. Despite the initiative for a common asylum policy, there remains great diversity in asylum regulations in each member state of the EU. Many member states have been reluctant to adopt the legislation into their national asylum policies. One major area of disparity between member states that has an effect on the onward migration of refugees and asylum seekers, is the reception condition in terms access to housing, social welfare and integration programmers such as vocational training and language courses that allows a faster integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the society (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008, 25).

Another significant distinction between member states was the ability of refugees and asylum seeker to work while their claim is being processed. For example, in the UK, asylum seekers are not allowed to work until a decision has been made on their application, while on the contrary in neighbouring France as well as Belgium and Germany, refugees and asylum seekers were allowed to work. As it will be evident in the coming chapters, to a certain degree, access to employment can be a factor for mobility of irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers and to a lesser degree for new refugees and asylum seekers for choosing between members states, especially when reception conditions are poorly set up.

In 2014 Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, described the laws of the EU in relation to establishing CEAS as “half-hearted” and “ambiguities” and filled with “loopholes”. As I will show in the coming chapters (Chapter 6), it can strongly be argued that to a certain degree disparities in regulation and mainly in the differences in material support to refugees and asylum seekers, is a strategy used by individual states to deter migrants from seeking asylum and refuge in their countries and at the same time to create mobility of migrants who already reside in their territories towards other member states (See also Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008). This claim can also be demonstrated by analysing the effects of a lack of harmonisation on the working of the Dublin regulation. As it will be shown in the next section, Greece and Italy are perfect examples of countries that use underdevelopment of their asylum system as a strategy in the governmentality of migration.
The Dublin Regulation

The Dublin system was primarily set to discourage what the EU members perceived as the problem of “asylum shopping”. The Dublin convention was first signed in 1990 and came into force in 1997. At first, the system was only adopted by twelve\(^{19}\) member states and took until 2003 when it was reformed and it became the Dublin II regulation that all member states join in, except Denmark that eventually adopted the regulation in 2008. In 2008 the regulation was also extended to include non-member state Switzerland.

The Dublin II regulation determines which member state is responsible for processing the application of an asylum seeker. According to the regulations, the first member state that the asylum seeker enters is the responsible party for processing their claim. The system aimed to prevent asylum seekers from choosing which country they want to ask asylum and to prevent them from having multiple claims in a different member state. The argument being: all European countries are safe and as such asylum seekers should not have preferences unless the motivation is economical. Family reunification is possible under the regulation, that is, if an applicant has a family member granted refugee status in another member state or is in the process of application, which made it possible to request asylum in the same country.

To facilitate the operations of the Dublin II regulations the EURODAC database was set for tracking the first point of entry of applicants in the EU territory. The database compiles biometric data and information on where the asylum seeker had first claimed asylum to prevent multiple claims. In a situation when an asylum seeker’s biometric data is flagged in the database, the member states where the asylum seeker is registered, is obligated to take back the migrants. That is unless the asylum seeker manages to stay undetected for more than five months in the second member state which relieves the first member from its responsibilities.

The Dublin regulation has been problematic in multiple ways. Primary, it created disproportional responsibility between member states. The system fails to consider that member states are not equally spacious and do not have equal capabilities for receiving asylum seekers. In relation to population size in 2005, the largest application was made in Cyprus and Malta

\(^{19}\) Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom
followed by Austria, Sweden, Luxemburg and Belgium (UNHCR 2006). These six countries had one application per thousand inhabitants while the average in the rest of the member states there were 0.5 applications per thousand (ibid.).

On the other hand, as periphery states are the first point of entry for many coming to Europe, the Dublin system created more pressure on eastern and southern European countries, mostly small countries with less capacity to receive asylum applications. This disparity incapacity of member states is more evident on reception condition in terms of access to housing, social welfare and integration programmers and their absence or lack of, leads to transit migration from countries like Greece, Italy, Spain to more capable countries like the Sweden, Germany, UK and France (Chapter 6 of this thesis, See also Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008, 29). For example in 2000 in Greece, 0.7% of asylum claims led to transfers while in Denmark 29.3% of all applications were transferred (Collyer 2004). Whereas during the same time the UK had 136 requests to take back asylum seekers but registered 4856 to be moved to other member states. A working paper published five years later by the UNHCR(2006, 71–72) shows similar disparities within member states, again Greece had 565 requests to take back and had only 16 requests for other members state while the UK had 342 to take back and 1,059 requests to send to other members states. In 2013 Italy was responsible for taking one-third of all the transfers. These numbers prove the disproportionate responsibility that is taken by member states. At the same time, the Dublin regulation has been deemed ineffective in fulfilling transfer request between member states, as some member states just refused to take in asylum seekers that are registered to them. Not only this is a problem for other member states, for the individual migrant that have been identified in the EURODAC system, it makes an already difficult situation worse as they have to wait for months at the time without having any certainty to what will happen to them.

To prevent the movement of asylum seekers from one member-state to the other because of the disparities in reception conditions the European Union has set the European Refugee Fund. It has a budget of EUR 630 million over the period 2008-13 to help member states to improve their reception infrastructures. Nevertheless, as argued by Papadopoulou-Kourkoula (2008), in some cases member states have deliberately chosen not to develop their systems to avoid taking responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers in their territories. The perfect
example is the situation in Greece, as documented by Papadopoulou-Kourkoula. Greece has a below standard infrastructure and as such, is in no position to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in its territory. As further explained, reception centres are poorly equipped, “overcrowded and unsanitary, degrading and at times inhuman” (2008, 55). In addition, the absence of specialised staffs like translators and lawyers in reception centres leaves refugees and asylum seekers uninformed about their rights and the possibilities to ask for protection under international law. Those who have not applied for asylum within a month are removed from the centres and given one month notice to leave the country, which forces migrants to stay in the country irregularly or continue their journey to another member states. And for those who do apply, the inefficient bureaucratic process makes the status determination a long, arduous process often taking between one to three years on average (ibid.). A 2010 report by Amnesty International also supports the claim made by Papadopoulou. The organization voiced their concern by stating: “in practice, provisions in Greek law which protect the right to apply for asylum are not fully implemented”, the failures include “difficulties in accessing the asylum system and registering claim; unfair examinations of asylum claims; a lack of procedural safeguards as required by international law to ensure the correct identification of those in need of international protection, and to prevent violation of the principle of non-refoulement”, as such the organization recommended that member states should cease to send asylum seekers back to Greece immediately (Amnesty International 2017). The conclusions of the reports were also similar to other findings by UNHCR(2008) and Human Rights Watch (2008). Following the reports some member states momentarily stopped transferring asylum seekers to Greece but at the moment many have resorted back to standard procedures. It is also worth mentioning that Greece has one of the lowest recognition rates among member states standing at 0.6% for first instance and appeal review decisions in 2008. The only positive aspect in the Greece asylum policy despite the lack of assistance and social care like inadequate housing or the ability to work once the application for asylum has been registered. As Papadopoulou-Kourkoula (2008, 54–55) concluded, the inadequate conditions for the protection, detour refugees and asylum seekers from applying for asylum in Greece and forces them to continue their journey to Western European countries. Schuster (2005) has also made a similar observation in relation to Italy; her research highlights how the lack of assistance and social care in Italy’s asylum policy leaves migrants in social exclusion and isolation leading to further mobility into other member states. In a similar
note Brekke and Brochmann (2015), study focused on Eritreans in Italy has documented the challenges they face in Italy and how Eritreans negotiate that by resorting to ask asylum in Norway. In the same vein, other research has pointed out that migrants avoid Spain for the same reasons other migrants avoid Italy and Greece.

The disproportionate pressure that the Dublin regulation created on external border states regions and that it jeopardised the lives of those seeking protection was undisputable. As noted by the European Parliament in 2008 without harmonisation, “the Dublin system will continue to be unfair both to asylum seekers and to certain member states”, this reflection was also widely recognised by the UNHCR, ECRE and NGO’s. In December 2008 the European Commission proposed amendment to the regulation, which was welcomed by the European Parliament and humanitarian organisations. In July 2013 the Dublin III regulation came into effect, the aim of EU this time around is to allocate more funds and enhance cooperation between member states which will relieve some of the pressure from the border countries which might bring better treatment to refugees who have been rejected but at the same time one of the most significant problems with the Dublin regulations that remains is that it traps migrants who have been denied asylum in to a permanent life of illegality.

In the present chapter the historical trends of migration in Europe since WWII have been discussed. In addition, I have reviewed the policies that have been adopted by the European Union in response to the ever-changing trending. By doing so, I have tried to show the length to which the EU has gone to hinder migrants from reaching the EU. Though my ethnography is not on these transit countries and it is difficult to adequately and heartily claim the actions of the EU in this transit zones as social torture their cooperation and support of governments like the Libyan government where torture and even slavery are revived, can be grounds for calling the policies of the EU as precursors for social torture. In the next chapter by drawing on my own ethnography I will demonstrate the systematic practices of social torture in France and how that is used to create mobility from the French territory.
Chapter 4: Welcome to Calais: Governing the Undesirables

As his first act as the Minister of Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy ordered the closing of Sangatte in December 2002, less than three years after opening its doors to the first of the thousands of migrants. When first opened in 1999, Sangatte was only planned to house 600 migrants who were living in rough conditions on the streets of Calais. But the numbers quickly rose, and in average 1,500 to 1,800 migrants were housed in the crowded warehouse. During the three years around 60,000 migrants have passed through its doors and only 350 applied for asylum in France. From the start, the situation in Sangatte strained the relationship between the UK and France. The Guardian wrote a piece accusing the French government of “encouraging hordes of migrants to attempt the hazardous journey… it is cynically decanting onto Britain a human tragedy it would prefer not to deal with itself”, a view that was also shared by the UK government (Henley 2001). The British considered Sangatte as a transit hub for “illegal” migrants trying to reach the UK and pressured the French government to close the centre. This idea served as the first logic behind the reasoning to end the humanitarian aid at the centre.

On the other hand, the situation inside the centre was nothing but ideal for the migrants. Migrants queued for hours for food and medical and even to use the toilets. When undercover reporters broke the news about “overflowing toilets” and “filthy” sinks, the idea of closing the centre became a serious discussion point, but the Red Cross insisted closing it would deprive the migrant of basic humanitarian aid (Henley 2001). Also, as the UK government ramped up the border security, it meant that migrants had to depend heavily on human smugglers to cross the channel. Smuggling groups competed for control over the smuggling point into the boats and the Eurotunnel, which increased violent clashes between rival groups. The death of a Kurdish migrant after a fight at the centre following a football match between Afghans and Kurdish migrants marked a turning point (Fassin 2005). With no means to end the riots and violence between migrants at the centre, the Red Cross accepted the permanent presence of the police at the centre. The permanent presence of the police watching over the migrants invoked a revisit of dark memories in French history, to be more specific the concentration camps of the WWII (Fassin 2005). The symbolism when the Red Cross opened at Sangatte would have been the capability of the human species to care for one other. However, that symbolism has quickly faded away and been replaced by one that invokes the worst of human tragedies, the Camps.
In light of this, the French government could no longer allow this place they considered “inhumane” to exist anymore. In the end, two opposing logics drove the decision to close Sangatte, “compassionate repression” as eloquently put by Didier Fassin (2005, 1). First, the pursuit of security and control against those the state deemed undesirable and considered threatening to its absolute power, “illegal migrant” and smugglers. On the other hand, a call for the protection to the vulnerable, “humanitarianism” is used to take action against the migrants. As opposing as they may look, I will argue that both logics are used as a disguise to establish a state of exception in which social torture is legitimised. As the first logic is used as the precedents for setting up a state of exception to combat the threat of “illegal migrants” and smugglers that threaten the sovereign state, the second logic used “humanitarianism” itself to prevent humanitarian action to those who need it under international law.

As such, I will argue that the same logic and political strategies used to close Sangatte are still being used to destroy the Jungles in Calais and the surrounding areas, as well as in Paris, to create onward mobility out of the French territory. What is on display in Calais is the power of the state to effectively expose the lives of those it finds undesirable to death. By that I mean the state is systematically positioning the lives of those it finds undesirable in “precarious” state (Butler 2009). According to Butler, the state of precariously is a state of living one’s life in an exposed position, with the faith of one’s life in the hands of others. In such a vulnerable state, life is “injurable, for instance, or that it can be lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death, is to underscore the finitude of a life […] but also its precariously” (Butler 2009, 13–14). Such acts of abandonment are not confined to Calais rather they span further to Paris and beyond. By beyond, I mean to say that these political strategies of abandonment and exclusion that are used to create mobility are strategies used by other countries that brought some of the migrants to France. I will argue that the systematic use of violence and abuse are forms of social torture. This political strategy creates a power dynamic that link smugglers, humanitarian organisations, the police and the migrants that ensure their mobility from French territory. In the first section, I will try to shed light on how social exclusion, as well as security and control, on the one hand, creates the mobility of migrants and on a similar note, how the same apparatuses foster the creation of smuggling groups and smuggling channel to sustain such mobility’s. On the second section, I will pick up the logic of “humanitarianism” and how it is used as an apparatus of exclusion and as a mechanism to uproot migrants from French territory. Before concluding
this section, I will pick up the role of humanitarian organisations and the people who work in these organisations in the mobility of migrants. The last part of the chapter shows how systematic acts of abuse and violence are further used by the police to ensure onward migration from the French territory.

**Scene 1: Conversation with a Smuggler**

Fieldwork in a transit zone is undoubtedly full of uncertain experiences of recording uncertain lives. One of the difficulties of conducting fieldwork in a transit zone is waking up each day not knowing if your informants will be there. So there is always that feeling that you must always be with your informants, observing their daily lives, their struggles, and their resolve. At least up to the moment where you feel like you have acquired a complete ethnography of their world. For me to achieve this, one thing must happen. My informants have to be stranded in Calais at least momentarily. Every morning walking to Salam was an emotional roller coaster. If you see your informant that means you can continue with your research. At the same time, it means that your informants must endure another day of this hell hole that was Calais. In a way, such ethnographic engagement is without a doubt a selfish deed.

On the 9th of March 2012, I joined my informants Ramin and Ali to Paris. In Paris, another informant Abraham waited for me. I wanted to interview Abraham for some time, but I could not find the right moment to do so since I did not want to leave my other informants in Calais. At this point of the fieldwork some of my informants were already smuggled, few were in the detention centre. Ali and Ramin were with me, so it was the right time to go to Paris without the feeling of missing important events. It was also an opportunity to figure out why the migrants go back and forth between Calais and Paris.

We reached Gare du Nord station late in the afternoon where Abraham, my Ethiopian informant, said he would meet me. However, when we arrived, Abraham was nowhere to be found. Not knowing if he would show up, we decided to get out of the station and go to a nearby park. After two hours of waiting, Abraham eventually came. Ramin and Ali headed to “Zidan Stadium”20, while Abraham and I headed to La Chapelle. At first, I did not understand why we were going to La Chapelle, but Abraham insisted that it would be imperative that I meet the

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20 Zidan Stadium was makeshift camps in Paris where hundreds of homeless refugees slept rough on the streets.
Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers living in La Chapelle and I would understand the reasons when we get there. I trusted Abraham’s judgement, so I went along with his plan without asking too many questions. After all, I came to Paris to interview him, so I wanted him to take the lead.

For every step we took towards La Chappelle it seemed like the city was deteriorating before our eyes. Looking at the surrounding of La Chapelle it was difficult for me to comprehend that this was part of “the City of Light.” Every part of this community embodies poverty, social exclusion, and isolation. The sidewalks were littered with trash, and there were small tents all over the place where homeless migrants slept rough. For every step, you take a pungent smell of urine and rotten food races to your nose. After 15 minutes of walking, we reached at a Sri Lankan Café where three Ethiopian men were having tea out on the front. Abraham dragged two chairs, and we joined the circle.

Abraham wasted no time, after quickly introducing me to the men and explained why I was in France, “ask them what you want to know,” he said. His blunt approach took me by surprise, and I mumbled for few minutes before collecting myself and started asking questions. It was difficult to ask questions when you do not know what you want to know from people. After a few back and forth questions and answers, our conversation stalled. Besides asking who they were, their migration status, how long they have been in France and their plans, I could not push the conversations any further. In moments of deafening silence, Abraham tried to kick-start the conversation, but it was awkward and the conversations stalled once more. I sensed there was something he wanted me to know about these people, but I could not figure it out, and the awkward conversation continued. Surely, blinded by my interest in Abraham, I made a mistake. I should have asked Abraham the reasons why he wanted me to meet these people. Abraham tried to get the people to open up, but his effort was to no avail. They would not budge. Lucky for me, after 30 minutes of awkward conversations another Ethiopian man came to join our table. “You should definitely talk to this guy,” Abraham said. Abraham and the man greeted each other by softly bumping each other’s shoulder, a common Ethiopian way of greeting. Henok, he said, raising his hands to shake my hand. I slightly got up from my seat, as it is the polite thing to do in our culture and shook his hand. With Abraham’s suggestion, we grabbed our coffee and teacups and relocated to a new table not far away from where we were seating. From the get-go, it was obvious that he was different from the other guys. Henok wanted to talk. He wanted me to
know the details of the life of the Ethiopians and Eritreans living in France. He even offered to secretly record the lives of the Ethiopian and Eritreans living around, reasoning that “people back home should know how life is like in Europe for us and maybe this will stop people from coming to Europe if they see what is happening here”. Henok’s offer might have been exciting for a journalist, but I politely had to decline for obvious ethical reasons. It was through Henok that I came to understand the extent to which mental health was an issue in the migrant communities.

“You see that man”, he said, pointing at one of the guys who was sitting with us earlier. “That is my friend. Have you noticed the way he twitches and takes out his tongue”? Yes, I replied. Earlier I noticed the twitch and the tongue but did not know what to make of it.

“He is so much better now, but if you had seen him six months ago he was completely crazy”.

“What is wrong with him?” I asked.

A few years ago, the Eritrean man’s asylum application was rejected. Fearing for his life, in desperation, the man appealed the decision citing he has a mental health problem, and he needs care. But the authorities did not believe him, so they put him under psychiatric evaluation. As Henok recalled, fearing the psychiatrist his illness, first he started by merely “sensationalising” his stress and depression as well as his post-traumatic stress from his time in Sudan and Libya, then in his effort to further convince the authorities he “started talking and acting crazy. That is where the twitching and the tongue come from”. According to Henok, in time the action became real, and his friend went crazy. That is why he twitches and takes out his tongue randomly every few seconds.

According to Henok the community was strangled by poverty and was also plagued by alcohol and drug addictions. The addictions further fuelled their mental problems. It is “the shame that makes people go crazy and turn to drugs and alcohol,” he said. Henok himself looked alright, but his “soul is full of regrets” as he puts it. As he explains, most people borrowed money from family members back home to support their travels to Europe. Most hoped to make it in Europe and return the money they had borrowed. At the same time, most hoped to send money regularly to the families that depended on their success. He added, “All these people you see around you have been in Europe for more than five years, some even longer than that but
none have a job, no money to show for it and it is this failure and the shame that makes people crazy. If you ask these men or even me if we wanted to go back to our countries, all of us would say yes, but it is the shame of returning empty-handed that keeps us here”.

Immersed in our conversation the time flew by. By the time we concluded our discussion it was already seven o’clock and getting dark. Abraham left an hour ago promising to come back, yet again he was nowhere to be found. I came to Paris to interview him and had been promised that I could stay with him for the night. I thought about going to Zidan stadium where Ramin was staying, but I did not know how to get there which left me in a predicament. After a few phone calls I finally managed to reach Abraham, but unfortunately for me, he said he would not be able to come back and asked if I can give the phone to Henok. After a quick conversation, Henok handed me back the phone and said I could stay with him for the night. I was relieved knowing that I did not have to spend money on a hotel that I could not afford.

From La Chapelle, Henok, I and two others hopped on the train and headed to Henok’s place. Being curious, Henok asked who the friend was that came from Sweden and asked if he could see his picture. At first, I was reluctant to show him the picture. I was between “a rock and hard place” as they say. I thought about the anonymity of Kanan, but at the same time, I found it difficult to say no after asking him questions for two straight hours, so I gave into the field ethics and showed him an old picture. In hindsight seating on my study desk writing this thesis I know it was a mistake, but I am glad I did it since this moment opened the door for a new conversation that was valuable for the research.

Looking at the picture “oh this guy,” said Henok. Surprised, I asked how he came to know Kanan. “I got this guy smuggled,” he said. “Smuggled”? I responded, caught off guard by his response. “I was his contact in Paris, and I am the one who arranged for him to go to the smugglers in Isbergues Jungle that is what I do”. Needing more clarification, I asked him if he was a smuggler, a stupid question on my part. With a smile on his face, he told me that he would explain everything at his place. Suddenly I questioned my decision to spend the night in the house of a smuggler that I just met a few hours prior. My bias towards smugglers at this stage of the fieldwork was overwhelmingly appalling; I kept imagining myself getting robbed of the few Euros I had and my passport which they could fetch at least 400 Euros on the black market. The ideal smuggler in my head was a sociopathic person consumed with greed and had no empathy.
for human life. Nervous, I made sure I read the name of the station after getting out of the train. After leaving the metro, we walked for a few minutes before reaching our destination. The streets were dark, and it was difficult to memorise the route we took from the station. I was scared, but there was no going back now, and at the same time, I was not sure if I would get another chance to interview another smuggler, so I pushed forward.

As the front door opened the first thing I felt was the warm suffocated air on my face and the smell of cigarettes. The place was dark, and by the looks of it, the old stained yellow walls had not seen a brush in a while. Henok and another Ethiopian asylum seeker shared a small apartment while their asylum application was getting processed. Next to the bed in Henok’s bedroom, two mattresses lied on the floor side by side where the other two men slept. I took a seat on the edge of the bed following Henok’s offer. As soon as the guys went to the kitchen to make dinner, I took the opportunity to shove my passport in my pants and put my money in my socks leaving few Euros in my pocket for them, in case they decide to rob me. In my paranoia I texted my then girlfriend telling her the people I am with, just in case anything happened.

After dinner, the guys grabbed their Khat\(^\text{21}\) and soda water, and we went back to the lingering question. Henok did smuggle people in the past, but at the moment he was not doing that anymore, at least not directly. According to Henok, one way or another most of the Ethiopians and Eritreans at some point in time were involved in the smuggling business. The way he puts it, the smuggling business was a sort of safety net for the Ethiopian and Eritrean community in poverty who had suffered from isolation and exclusion with no chance of integration into the French society. On the other side, it was also a way to help other Ethiopians, Eritreans and Sudanese migrants in poverty in other European countries to try their luck in the UK. Henok was a middleman for people like Kanan. The way it worked was when Henok got contacted by people who wanted to be smuggled to the UK, he contacted the smugglers in Isbergues Jungle, and if they did not have too many people on their hands, they would take that person. For his part, Henok took 50 Euros from the migrants and put them on the train to Isbergues. In Isbergues the migrants would be picked up by the smugglers from the station. If the person was nervous to travel alone, they could pay an extra 25 Euros and cover the travel cost for

\(^{21}\) Khat is a shrub that is native to Eastern Africa and some parts of Arabia, when chewed have a stimulating effect.
the person who would accompany them to Isbergues. That was the job of the other two guys. Through other contacts, migrants came all over Europe to Paris to get smuggled to the UK.

Once the migrants reached Isbergues, they handed the 500 Euros the smugglers charged for each migrant. Compared to the price smugglers charged in Calais, this price was extremely low. In Calais, the lowest price was between 1,200 and 1,700 Euros. The price could go between 6,000 to 13,000 Euros for those smuggled by fishing boats. As Henok explained the reason why they charged so low was to help their people. At any given time there were three to four smugglers in the Jungle. These smugglers would work from two weeks up to six months at the time, before being replaced by other smugglers who wanted to earn money. According to Henok, it all depended on the number of people who were in need of extra money. When a transition happened between smugglers, the previous one would take the money they made during their time and hand in the money of the migrant that are still waiting to get smuggled.

For the 500 Euros, the migrants were able to try to get smuggled as many times as they wanted. The lucky ones might make it on the first try, and others like Kanan might have had to wait for months to get smuggled. Others might have not even made it at all. If at any point in time the migrant decided that they had had enough, the smugglers would keep 100 Euros and return the rest to the migrant. During the time the migrant was trying to get smuggled they would have access to food three times a day via the local NGO’s working in the area. Every few days volunteers would bring food to the Jungle, sometimes food that was already made and other times the migrants themselves had to cook the food to their liking. The presence of the NGO was beneficiary for the smugglers and apparently for the migrants. For the smugglers, first, it gave them the place to operate; second, having access to food and shelter meant they had unlimited time to try to smuggle a client. The situation certainly created the power dynamics that made the smugglers dependent on the NGO’s.

In such a manner the jungle existed within a sphere of understanding between the smugglers and the NGO, on the role each played in relation to the migrant's needs and that one did not hinder the others’ activities. The understanding was that the NGOs were there in a humanitarian capacity to provide legal advice, food, clothing, and shelter, while the smugglers are there to provide the means for the migrants to cross to the UK. For this to work, there were strict rules that should be followed by the smugglers at all times. These unwritten rules were;
primarily and most importantly, the migrants were not to be harmed or exploited in any shape or form. Secondly, the smugglers must keep the number of migrants under 50. As long as these rules were met, the NGO looked the other way and would have kept providing food, clothing, and shelter, while the smugglers continued with their business. The specific number of migrants was significant because every time their number increased, the migrants become “visible” as one volunteer described it and “the CRS shows up and dismantles the jungle” as they did in 2009.

When it was time for bed, Henok gave me his bed for the night while he slept on the floor with the others. My engagement with these smugglers was my first introduction to the complex nature of their world. By the end of the night, I certainly did not hold the same prejudice as before. The experience of my informants and their feelings towards the smugglers they encountered were also complicated. Their emotions ranged from gratitude and appreciation to contempt and anger. One respondent attributed his success for making it safely this far to the smugglers, a sentiment shared by many who have endured the treacherous journey of refugees and asylum seekers.

On the other hand, the experiences of others were filled with acts of exploitation and deceit that exacerbated their vulnerability and suffrage. Sadly, Henok’s own experience with his smugglers on the borders of Sudan and Libya was one that reflected the malicious side of smugglers. He recalled the horrific journey he and his fellow travellers had to endure after being left in the middle of the desert by their smugglers for refusing to pay double of the money that was agreed before venturing into the Sahara Desert. At the end of our conversation, I felt sympathy for these smugglers as they were also abandoned by the state the same way as the people they ferry. Nevertheless, not all smugglers are the same, and we should always critically view their actions.

**Scene 2: “Discretionary humanitarianism”**

After I concluded my sobering encounter with the smugglers and before returning to Calais, I decided to go to Isbergues to see the progress in the construction of the new Jungle. In the winter time in accordant to French regulations that allowed for migrants to be housed indoors, since November the NGO in Isbergues has been housing migrants in a small abandoned theatre. As the winter season drew to a close and as the sun shined once more over the fields of
Isbergues, the change in the season meant one thing for the migrants, they had to leave the small theatre that sheltered them from harsh winter and return to the Jungle once they have occupied. But the Jungle they once called home was no more there. The barely standing structure made of wood and plastic canvas for a roof was bulldozed by order of the préfect (chief administrator) a few months earlier before my arrival\textsuperscript{22} (Figure 2). The reason cited for the destruction of the Jungle was that it was an unsanitary environment to live in. In other words, their action was humanitarian. By the time the police were done destroying the camp the only thing that remained was a gapping creator exposing the fertile black soil of the farm.

For the migrants and the NGO that supported them, a tall task stood before them. Once more they had to collect all the material and come up with the money to re-build the Jungle again. Despite the lack of funds and pressure from the police the organisation was determined to build the jungle once more. When I arrived only one room out of four was completed. The other two rooms had only walls, and the work on the forth had not yet started. While the reconstruction was underway, across the lush, green fields, the police stood watching with their binoculars as the Jungle came alive once more like a Phoenix rising from the dirt.

\textsuperscript{22} The Jungle was destroyed on 30th of January 2012
Indeed this cycle of destruction and construction hinged on humanitarianism logic can best be described as the original act of the ban, evoked by the power of the state to control and abandon at will.

To enhance their intimidation and to make their presence known, once in a while the police would drive by as closely as they could and leave in silence. This has always intimidated the migrants and the volunteers for they did not know what the police were going to do. Especially for the volunteers, they were always in a legally ambiguous situation as their work was neither legal nor illegal as it was left for interpretation as the authorities saw it fit. As part of a humanitarian organisation assisting an “illegal” migrant was not a crime under the law. But as an individual, the same acts were considered illegal and brought a hefty punishment (see chapter 2). But it was not always easy to make out where the lines were drawn. The case of Monique Pouille (see chapter 2) a humanitarian worker who was arrested for charging a phone to “illegal” migrants can be the most appropriate example. This ambiguous political strategy by the government makes humanitarian assistance in France discretionary, an oxymoron strategy of looking after the most vulnerable people while simultaneously repressing them and compromising humanitarian assistance to them. I will argue that this strategy is intentional, and it is a biopolitical mechanism to push migrants out of the French territory.

After spending two days in the Isbergues Jungle, I decided to return to Calais upon hearing the demolishing of the Palestinian house by the police. If the name is of any indication, the abandoned building’s name comes from the origins of the migrants who formerly occupied it for many years. But recently it was home to many African migrants mainly from Sudan and Egypt. The destruction of the building and the increased abuse of the police towards the migrants had brewed great anger among the NGO’s and the humanitarian organisation's staff that prompted a demonstration in front of Calais’s town hall. The demonstration was mainly attended by volunteer workers from the various NGOs and few migrants who were not intimidated by the presence of the CRS (riot police) that surrounded us in all sides. The demonstration was peaceful, and it concluded without any incident, but it would soon prompt a series of “retaliation” by the police as a punishment for their protest that made the migrants suffering visible.
On the 17th of May, few days after the demonstration I woke up early, did my usual routine, checked up on some of my informants at Selam and headed to UNHCR office to help with some translation. After concluding my affairs at the UNHCR, I headed to Selam once more. The closer I got to Selam I got the sense that something was wrong. There were at least 100 people gathered outside the entrance, which was unusual. When I got closer, I could see that people were angry, but I could not figure out what was happening. At first, it was complete chaos, and there was no way to make sense of the situation, everybody was screaming, the Iranian in Farsi, the Arabs in Arabic, and the Afghans in Dari. Then I heard some people shouting “No food.” There was a big plank of wood covering the small entrance to the food distribution which made people think that there was no food for that day.

As soon as people noticed my presence in the crowd, the questions started flooding in. Distraught, one migrant asked, “What should I do Ismael”? But I had no answer to his question or to any of the barrage of questions that kept coming. It was at this moment, my informant Marae screamed at me for the first time. “What can you do for us, Ismael”? He said. To make matters worse one migrant pushed all the other men who surrounded me saying “he cannot do anything for us.” There was truth in his sentiment, and the truth was dreadful. I was ashamed, for I was powerless and there was nothing I could do to alleviate their situation.

The chaos and anger continued for a while; it seemed as if there would not be lunch for the day. But to everyone’s relief, after one hour delay, the big green doors opened, and people rushed in. People were glad, knowing that they did not have to go hungry. But for some, the joy was short lived. The courtyard where the food was distributed was also home for many migrants. The roofing covering one side of the courtyard was a shelter from the cold winter of Calais. The lucky ones, those with tents had more protection from the environment, while others just had cardboards that acted like a mattress and blankets distributed by the NGO’s to keep them warm through the night. But when we walked in all their belongings were gone. According to one migrant, the police took everyone’s belongings; even the cardboards were not spared. Following the suggestion of one of the volunteers, we went to a nearby dumpster sight to see if any of the migrant’s belongings could be saved. As the volunteer suggested, everything was there, but all their belongings were drenched in a liquid with a whiff of pee and alcohol. According to the volunteers, this was nothing new. Even in the past when the police confiscated any material from
the migrants, they often poured a special liquid on everything before it was discarding, rendering it unusable.

This inhumane and unlawful action by the police was made possible by evoking “humanitarian reasoning.” Sleeping in the courtyard was forbidden, as it was considered a health risk being too close to the food distribution. But the action of the police had nothing to do with the welfare of the migrants. After all, the migrants lived at all times under precarious conditions where ever they might have been in Calais. Whether they slept in the Jungles one time and crumbling building on another, or on the streets, at all times, they were living under inhumane conditions. Once more “humanitarian” logic is used by the government to punish and govern the same people it claims to protect.

It was not the first time that the police had taken such action. As one, No Borders volunteer described the situation; the action of the police was no more than “retaliation” for the demonstration. Something they had experienced before. This kind of retaliation was a controlling mechanism used by the government to keep the NGOs “in their place”. Some of my informants also understood the action by the police as retaliation which created a slight animosity towards the humanitarian organisation, even though they understood that they were protesting for their rights. Such situations put the humanitarian organisations in a tight spot. In one hand, they must address the human rights violation committed by the police, but at the same time the retaliation by the police end up exacerbating the situation to the very people they are trying to protect.

In her defiance and anger one of the volunteers described the situation and the organisation stance as:

It's like a little "war." The préfect always wins, but we are not dead, we are still there to help the person who needs help coz we will never accept that person live in this conditions, without nothing, even if they don't have paper. It's not normal. They can do what they want; we will never accept and tolerate it. We don't care about the paper, if one person, white, black or red pink blue! needs help, we will help him. (The above statement was extracted from an email conversation with volunteers in an organisation and hence written in an informal way).
The above quotation is a reflection of the noble intentions that was shared by almost all NGO and humanitarian organisation workers I met on the field. I have no desire or base to question the purpose and integrities of the individuals who work in the humanitarian organisations, but at the same time, it is imperative to move beyond the intentions and critically analyse how humanitarian assistance can be an instrument in the biopolitical mechanism of migration management. I can give three examples where humanitarian assistance creates mobility of migrants out of the French territory. The first example can be drawn from the power relationship that exists between the NGO in Isbergues and the smugglers. As I have explained, the relationship works because the NGO operate under the assumption that what they are doing is in the best interest of the migrants (which is reaching the UK). This assumption leads me to my second example which is the information distribution by the NGOs both in Calais and Isbergues. Majority of the legal information distributed by the NGOs, centres on the UK’s legal system and the right asylum seeker and refugees have under the 1951 Geneva Conventions. But the focus on the UK is not only because of their assumptions that migrants want to go to the UK but also the fact that the French Ministry of Interior at the time restricted the distribution of booklets on the rights of asylum in France. This makes humanitarian assistance problematic as these organisations cannot function independently of the influence of the state power that presides over them.

On the other hand, although for the most part, the UNHCR in Calais does a very important job, some of their actions or inactions were very questionable. One of the main responsibilities of the UNHCR was to help refugees and asylum seekers with their application process in France. According to the UN mandate and international law, the UNHCR can only help people if they (the refugee or asylum seeker) themselves want to be registered. In light of this, some UNHCR staff goes around giving information in the Jungle. But one thing that I found to be surprising was why the UNHCR office did not have any visible signs of any sort. For such an important organisation in such a city, one would expect a flag, a billboard with a name or any identification for visitors and passer-by’s to identify the small white office on the main street of Calais. A lawyer at the UNHCR explained the reason for the absence of any identification was because of threats of violence the office had continuously received from individuals in the community. It is difficult to make any assessment on how this affects the refugees and asylum
seekers from coming to the UNHCR, but it is for sure not convincing the migrant to reach out to the organisation.

**Scene 3: “They are all gone”: Policing in Calais**

Something unusual had happened in Calais. It was the 5th of June, lunchtime, and the Sudanese are missing from the queue. The usual scene would have been a group of 20 or more men aged between 15 to mid-50th lining first on the queue to get the first scoops of whatever was being served for the day. And as quickly as they came, they would disappear as soon as they finished their meal. Unless we asked them to play street football that is. They loved their football. Football was the only time all the migrants came together. But the last few weeks had been difficult and quite dangerous for everyone. Group fighting was happening more often than usual. At first, it was a group of Albanians with another group of Albanians. The word on the street was that there was bad blood feud between the grounds because of a drug deal that went wrong. Then it was multiple individual fights which lead to the stabbing of a Bangladesh man on the neck. Lucky for him, he escaped with only a few stitches to patch his wounds and ego. And the latest and most serious fighting involved the Sudanese and the Egyptians. The violence that followed started over shoving on the shower queue and escalated with few exchanges of strong words. It was as if everyone was on edge.

At first, when the Sudanese did not show up, everyone thought they were trying to avoid further confrontation. But that was not the case. One migrant said, “they are all gone” and I heard the same thing from a few other migrants. A lot of people were surprised by the latest revelation. By any measure, the smuggling of these many people from the same group in one night was nothing short of a miracle. At the same time, the Sudanese were not known for actively trying to cross the channel. Although some had aspirations to go to the UK most of the Sudanese had been in Calais for a few years and it seemed as if they had no intentions to go to the UK. In fact, in a conversation a few weeks before their departure, one NGO worker expressed his guilt for the Sudanese refugees. In his mind, if it were not for the existence of the support that they were receiving from the NGOs, maybe the Sudanese would have been in a better place. In a way he was right, the existence of the NGOs in Calais and the Pas-de-Calais region in one had certainly influenced the flow of migrants to the area and also to the “own ward migration” to the UK, but at the same time, as in the case of the Sudanese it created a “sable” environment for some
migrants to settle. But the sudden mobility of the Sudanese had less to do with the action or inaction of the NGO’s and everything to do with the methodical police abuse and violence with the intention of creating “own ward migration.” The case of Sudanese was not an isolated incident instead it was merely the latest in a long history of apparatuses of the management of the migrant population in Calais, through violence and abuse.

The primary strategy was to systematically demolish abandoned buildings in and around Calais depriving the migrants of shelter. The Palestinian house was one of many scouter buildings that were destroyed by the police. As such, the “unusual” movement of the Sudanese was directly linked with the destruction of the Palestinian house. For the Sudanese and everyone else who was sheltered in the Palestinian house, there was nowhere to shelter. Instead, they had three choices: First, they could go to Paris like most migrants did until the police violence reduced and could come back after a few months. Secondly, they could decide to go to the UK or continue their journey to another European country. In a way, every aspect of the police activity was an apparatus used by the government to create an onward migration. Their action might have not necessarily been directed to create an onward migration to the UK, nevertheless it would make the migrant try harder to get smuggled or leave French territory and go to another European country. The third and last choice was to live on the streets, but even that was hard to do.

The other way of governing the migrant population was by depriving them of sleep. As one migrant describes this situation “the police arrest us all the time they come at night arrest us, ask our names and arrest us again a few hours later, they do not let us sleep.” I to have experienced what my informant just described. In few occasions when I was sleeping in the courtyard of Salam, the police would come after midnight wake everybody up and write the names, age, and country origin, only to return two hours later wake everyone up to do the same thing once again. Even when we give them different names and bogus country of origin, they did not care. For the police, the migrants were no more than numbers on a sheet of paper, dehumanised objects that can be quantified and moved around. They were nothing more than pawns in a political chessboard that were moved continuously between the British and the French.
Daytime was not so different from the night. As in the night, the police would patrol the streets and stop anyone that fits the profile of a migrant, and the same routine continued. In addition to the routine stops, multiple migrants and NGO workers pointed out how the police would take the migrants to the detention centre which was located 3 km outside of Calais. Only to let them go by the highway so that they had to walk back and pick them up again when they reached Calais and make them walk back once more.

The embodiment of such experiences not only resonates in the testimony of many of my informants but also can be found throughout Calais on wall writings and graffiti arts. The drawing on the next page is of such examples. The pavement drawing was done by Milad, age 8, and his older brother, age 11. It reads, “Come come, do you have pegh pegh ([paper])? No. I was 7 times in office police.” The kids’ experience with the police was not unique; rather, it was the daily life experience of every migrant in Calais. In this chapter, I have shown how abuse and violence was the main apparatus through which unwanted populations were forced out of French territory. Chris Dolan describes social torture as “cross-generational” (2009, 242), by that he means that the traumatic experiences of torture go beyond the individual victim and seep into the collective memory of others closest to them. In the chapter that follows I will explore how the experiences of social torture of individuals affects the decision making of others. The chapter will also explore other aspects of social networks.
Figure 4: Drawing on a pavement by Milad and his brother. (Picture taken by the author)
Chapter 5: Social Networks

In this chapter, by using Kanan’s story and decision making as a point of departure two distinct yet overlapping discussions will take place. Primarily, the chapter explores the impact of social networking on the decision making of refugees and asylum seekers on how, when, where to migrate. In addition, the chapter also explores how new social networks are formed and sustained in transit and how migrants utilise the social capital of their networks to negotiate and navigate exile.

The second underlining discussion is that of migrant categorisation between economic migrants (“bogus” migrants) and refugees. The chapter will discuss the reasons why it is impossible to neatly separate refugees and asylum seekers from their ill-perceived counterparts; economic migrants. Along this line, the methodological, as well as ethical difficulties and implications of migrant categorisations will be discussed.

A social network approach to migration is a framework formulated initially to analyse chain migration in the context of labour migration. Much of the political and media perception in the UK is built upon the assumption that frames asylum seeker and refugees as economic migrants in masquerade who “abuse the asylum system”. As such, by using a framework used to understand labour migration as one to apply to refugees and asylum seekers, not only will we be able to see the impact social networks have on their decision making, but we will also be able to compare the thought processes of “economic migrants” with that of refugees and asylum seekers and as such highlight how the lines are blurred.

“The Journey Begins”

In autumn 2009 I sat down with a friend in a crowded internet café to apply for graduate school in Sweden. The application was quick and simple. We finished the application in less than an hour. We paid our dues, to the smiley young shopkeeper and left to enjoy the rest of the day. Moving eight months forward, I found myself vacantly staring at my computer screen for hours, anxiously waiting for my mail of acceptance. Finally, late at night, it was there, the sudden realisation that I was accepted to a well-recognised University was overwhelming. Getting accepted was the easiest part; the hardest part was yet to come. Securing a visa for Sweden or to the “developed world” for that matter was a daunting task for an Ethiopian, but at that moment I
did not care. My older brother who was with me at the time was thrilled, knowing what the news meant for me.

A few weeks later, as I made my way to the Swedish Embassy, all the thrill and excitement had faded. Instead I was consumed with anxiety and fear. Just the thought of rejection sent a chilling sensation down my spine. With the necessary document in my hand, I stood in a very long queue outside the wall of the Embassy. For a moment, it felt like the whole of Addis was trying to leave the country. Every ten minutes a guard holding a baton kept reminding us that we would be thrown out of the queue if we did not keep it straight. The line mainly consisted of Somali refugees, who were looking to get resettled in Sweden. For decades, since the start of the civil war in Somalia, Ethiopia had been a refuge for many Somalis. After waiting for two hours, under the burning Ethiopian sun, I finally made it inside. Among the unfamiliar souls, one unlikely face stood out. I was surprised to see the shopkeeper among the crowd; the surprises did not end there. Later that week a friend hearing my worries about going to Sweden promised to introduce me to someone who just got accepted to Uppsala University, that person was Kanan, the shopkeeper.

In the months that followed while waiting to be granted a visa, I got to know more about Kanan. We had more things in common than I expected. We both came from a middle-class family, and we also shared similar hobbies and interests which made it easy to bond. After all the stress of providing bank statements and interviews, when I first saw the visa stamped on my passport, I felt free like I had been unshackled. I cannot speak for all the youth in Ethiopia for their thoughts are too broad to be voiced through mine but if I can speak for those who are always around me, family, friends and colleagues the sense of being trapped was not a burden I only bear.

Moving abroad to a place that is foreign to you in all aspects of life, feels adventurous and exciting but it can also be unsettling. Having someone you know to share your worries can make migration easier. One of the things we were worried about was how to support ourselves in Sweden. Before making the final decision whether if I should be going to Sweden or not, I sat down with my father to discuss if it was the right decision to pursue my master’s education in Sweden. Although my father was happy that I was accepted to Uppsala University, he was reluctant to let me go since I did not receive any scholarship to cover my living expenses and as
my parents could not afford to cover those expenses. It meant that I had to work while going to school. Through a friend, Kanan and I managed to contact other Ethiopian students in Sweden to see what the working situation was for students. A lot of them said there are jobs for students and it was possible to work. We were satisfied with the answers we got. So I told my father what I found out, with that, my parents gave me their blessing as long as I was sure that I could support myself through work and studied my masters at the same time.

To our dismay, when we arrived in Sweden we quickly realised not only everything that we were told was untrue, but at times nothing but a lie. The “jobs” that the students mentioned were not really jobs but volunteer work. As such, they weren’t paid as a normal job. For the first six months after school, we went to the Nations to work for 120 SEK (equivalent to ~12 EUR) for 10-11 hours of work. Shuffling school and work for almost no pay was a constant struggle. To lower our expenses Kanan and I moved to a 30m² studio apartment with another friend. Kanan managed the hardship so much better than me. I guess he was more ready than I was. Recently when remising about the old days, he said to me: “I already suspected how the lifestyle would be in Sweden. So, my expectation was low from the beginning which somehow helped me to focus on the studies and not complain or worry about other stuffs”. The language barrier made it impossible to find any other work, and with school and the Nation work on the side, we struggled to keep up with our Swedish language courses. Living in such circumstances was not a viable choice to Kanan so he moved to Stockholm to a friend of his family so that he could only focus on his education.

The hardship in Sweden made us think about finding a way to move to the UK. Both of us are fluent in English so it was only logical to believe that life would be so much easier in the UK. Kanan had more reasons to go to the UK, as his two sisters and a younger brother were permanent residents living in London. But moving to the UK was easier said than done. At first,

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23 In 2010 tuition was free for all international student admitted to Swedish Universities but it was up to the student to cover their living expenses (accommodation, food and clothing etc.) if they have not received a scholarship.

24 The Nations are student organisations established so that students can socialise and enjoy life outside of the classroom. Most nations have a café, pub and restaurant, and popular nation activities include club nights, formal dinners, balls and musical events. The activities in the Nations are solely organized and run by student. Though students who work in the Nations can earn some cash while they are working, depending on the Nation, the ‘salary’ they receive is not comparable to the salary that one can earn outside of the Nations. The hourly pay in the Nations can be as low as 13 kr/hr or no payment at all. In a way, for us life in the Nations was a form of social torture, it was a form of subordinate inclusion of the self into society, where our struggles and suffering was known but dismissed and our strength and labour was always in demand.
Kanan tried to find an internship in London so that he could be close to his family. But a lack of cooperation from the institute that accepted him made it impossible for him to get a visa. It was also frustrating to see his Swedish classmates mainly from Sweden and E.U countries freely moving around to do their internships in the UK and all over the world. For them, borders did not exist.

After we met those Ethiopian students who told us about Calais, Kanan knew that going as an asylum seeker was the only and “easiest way” to get to the UK. Recalling his thought process before deciding to get smuggled:

“It was a very last minute thing for me. So everything was done in 2-3 weeks’ time. One of the reasons for going to the UK is I have family there plus if I stay in Sweden it is going to be hard for me to study the language. So, one major factor was language. I did not want to go to Germany and learn German!”

“I thought about going through the right process but I knew that they would not give me a visa”.

Kanan planned this journey very well. He utilised the internet to get as much information as he could, but at the end of the day, some knowledge’s can only be accessed through networks.

“One I decide to leave it was a friend who introduced me with someone in France to be my host for a day. They were also the ones who introduced me with the smugglers. The price is one and the same for everyone. So, I just paid what they asked me at the time and the rest is history”.

Kanan stayed in the Jungle of Isbergues and the streets of Calais vigorously trying to get smuggled day after day. After three months of persistently trying he finally made it to the UK. Within a month of being smuggled Kanan was eventually granted asylum. Two years later he came back to Sweden to finish his master’s education. Many researchers have documented the role social networks played in determining labour migration to Europe (Meeteren and Pereira 2013; Buechler 1987; Brettell 2003; Boyd 1989), and more specifically to the UK (van Liempt 2011; Jordan and Düvell 2003; Robinson and Segrott 2002), and also in the U.S (Dolfin and Genicot 2010; Massey and Espinosa 1997; Massey, Alarcon, and Durand 1990b). The general focus in network theory has been centred around three aspects of migration experiences namely the decision to migrate, the choice of destination by migrants and the adaptation of migrants in host societies (Koser and Pinkerton 2002, 594; Koser 1997). In this manner the focus of these
researches have been centred around on the three stages of migration namely, pre-flight, flight and exile or as it is referred by Koser (1997) “the asylum cycle”. As such in the following sections, the migration experience of my informants will be explored through the “asylum cycle”. One important aspect of the migration experience that is under-researched in these tests is that of transit zones. This research gap will also be addressed in the coming sections; in doing so, I will also explore how social networks are formed and utilised in transit. I believe that by focusing on this aspect of the migration experience, it will help us explore the impact of social networks in migrants choosing destination countries, while simultaneously discussing the “migration –asylum nexus”25 and unpack the rubric debates in migrant categorisations.

**Social Networks and the Decision to Migrate**

Social networks can stimulate the decision to migrate in two ways. Perhaps the most important would be sharing information about potential destination countries, and secondly, social networks can stimulate the decision to migrate by covering the cost of migration (Koser and Pinkerton 2002; Dolfin and Genicot 2010; Richmond 1994).

Information about a potential destination can be acquired either by contacting family and friends abroad like in the case of Kanan or information can also be gained when those networks return to their country of origin (see also Koser and Pinkerton 2002). When choosing a destination, for many of my informants the most crucial information was about asylum policy, followed by the availability of work and the opens of the society to refugees and asylum seekers. Generally, most people would like to know if they have a chance to be granted asylum or refugee status in the country where they have family members and friends but as their priority is mostly being granted a refugee or asylum status, as it will be further discussed in later sections having networks do not always motivate migrants to pick the geographical area where their social networks are located (see also Koser 2007b, 1997). Among most of my informants in the short run acquiring refugee or asylum status was a priority when deciding where to go. This was also apparent with other refugees and asylum seekers who I met on a daily basis during my fieldwork. I spent a few hours of my day listening to people’s stories or cases. These were not interviews in the traditional sense, instead, conversations when people approached me and told me their stories

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25 According to Castles (2007) the migration-asylum nexus is the “blurring of the distinction between economic and forced migration”.
in detail, hoping that I could tell them whether they had a chance to be granted asylum in Sweden or the UK or if “Swedes” or “Brits” liked refugees and asylum seekers. From these questions, it can be deduced that in the short run for refugees and asylum seekers receiving refugee or asylum status might be a priory, but at the same time, refugees and asylum seekers also considered the future and how they could effectively navigate and negotiate settlement in exile. Gathering information about possible destination countries was the only way they could meet their goals.

When it comes to practicality, information on the modes of border crossing is indispensable for any migrant that is forced to travel undocumented. The chance of a person completing their journey is predicated on their knowledge about border security and the border they are trying to cross. If one does not possess the knowledge or the means, they must depend on smugglers to cross the borders. For undocumented migrant, the cost for smugglers, the expense of buying forged documents and bribes to border and prison guards, make the cost of travelling much more expensive than the normal way of traveling. In this manner, access to funds can be directly related to the decision to migrate and successfully completing one’s journey.

For example, for a person trying to reach Europe from Eritrea, one must cross multiple borders to reach their destination. The longer the journey, the more expensive it gets. Mahmud, an informant from Eritrea, says he was “lucky” recalling this journey across the Sahara and the Mediterranean. He says he had to pay smugglers 1,200 EUR to cross the Sahara from Sudan to Libya and another 900 EUR to get smuggled to Italy. His friend, on the other hand, was not so lucky; caught by the Libyan border police multiple times he had to bribe his way out to reach Europe. Unlike Mahmud, the cost of his journey was around 17,000 EUR. When I asked him how they managed to pay all this money he said, he and his friend could not have made it to Europe without the help from their family and friends abroad. Similarly, for Kanan, his journey to the UK was made possible by the financial support from his family and the smugglers that were facilitated through family contacts. Sarah, another informant from Eritrea, spent a few years in a Libyan prison since she could not pay her way out of prison making her journey longer than she expected.
In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, the first move might be sudden and abrupt without prior planning. Political violence and war or natural disasters can be culprits for such kind of movement. Under such conditions, migrants might not have the chance to gather information or have access to financial support from their networks. So in this regards, the decision to migrate is exclusively circumstantial. Although networks might not influence the initial decision to migrate, already existing networks and newly formed networks\(^26\) might be instrumental in determining further movement from transit zones.

**Social network in transit**

For those who are not fortunate enough to have access to migration networks to help them make decisions, their migration experience is full of uncertainty and follows a “trajectory of wandering” (Khosravi 2011, 51). Under such circumstances, it is imperative that those who migrate form new networks along their journey to navigate the liminality of exile. Massey and colleagues (1990a) have stressed the importance of “Paisanaje”\(^27\) in the migratory experience among Mexicans trying to reach the U.S. They write, “In moving to a strange and often hostile land, migrants naturally draw upon these familiar bonds to share the hazards and hardships of life in exile” (Massey, Alarcon, and Durand 1990b, 140). Their observation has also reflected the manner by which social networks were constructed in Calais. Other researchers in different transit zone have also made similar observations, for example, Suter (2012) has written on the importance of cultural backgrounds in forming new networks among Nigerians in Istanbul. Papadopoulou-Kourkoula (2008) has also made similar observations among Kurds in Greece.

In Calais, people with the same origin and cultural background stayed close to each other. They depended on each other not only for emotional support but also for protection and most importantly, for information. Even when people have social networks in destination countries, it’s not always the case that migrants have the chance to consult them before departure as the departure might be sudden (see also Koser 1997). At the same time although information from family and friends are considered as the most trusted, they are not always the most accurate as people sometimes only focus on telling the good things about their geographical area (see also

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\(^26\) Networks built in transit  
\(^27\) “Paisanaje” means common origin, or being from the same place, and a "paisano" is someone from the same community of origin”(Massey, Alarcon, and Durand 1990b).
Koser 2007b; Koser and Pinkerton 2002). Transit zones provided more up-to-date information such as, which countries are considered suitable for refugees and asylum seekers, in terms of granting asylum and also more accurate information on border security and smuggling routes and prices can be easily accessed. Hence, information gathered in transit helps migrants to evaluate their situation and make a decision based on the new information.

A good example to draw from is a conversation I had with five asylum seekers from Ethiopia and Eritrea. All five men have passed through Greece and Italy like most asylum seekers in Calais. Three of the men had asylum papers from Italy, but the lack of opportunities and the difficulty to integrate into the Italian society, they decided to relocate to the UK. The 4th guy was guarded and did not want to say much about himself except that he was not trying to get smuggled, but as he professed he was on a “special mission”. His special mission was “accompanying” his friend’s sister in her journey from Italy to the Isbergues Jungle. The last guy was a younger Eritrean by the name of Kaleb. Kaleb arrived in Italy a few weeks ago hoping to seek asylum. As he mentioned, before his arrival he neither had any networks in Italy nor was he informed about the country, or any other country in Europe. Yet he was keen to ask asylum in Italy just because it was the first country he stepped into in Europe. But after meeting these people, he said he decided to go to the UK with them.

As he explains:

“I went to Italy but when I saw the people who have been there for five, ten years and they are still living on the streets and abandoned buildings, I understood there was nothing for me here. Most of them did not even have jobs. In Italy, there is no hope for job opportunities or education. There is a language barrier, and when you see how people are treated, it is scary. People told me that life in the UK is better, so I came to Calais”. (The conversation was recorded in Amharic, and it was translated by the Author)

While the guys with the “special mission” explained his insight into the situation in Italy:

“In Italy, a lot of people will tell you to leave without giving finger-prints, so people who have the chance to go somewhere else will move on to the other places like the UK. I have been in the UK before but I do not wish to
go back but I brought my friend’s sister to Isbergues so that she does not have to stay in Italy” (The conversation was recorded in Amharic, and it was translated by the Author)

The testimony from these two informants reaffirms the “step by step” movement of asylum seekers. Their statement challenges the Eurocentric notion that countries bordering Europe are the transit countries, while all European countries are destinations. For most, the journey is neither clear nor coherent or fixed. Instead, the journey is fraught and filled with uncertainty, since information and decisions are never absolute. In such environments, past decisions need to be negotiated and contested and as such a new destination needs to be charted.

In chapter three (Background chapter), I have discussed the disparities that exists in asylum policies around Europe, regarding receiving centres and housing and the availability of support or the lack of, for new refugees and asylum seekers. The reasons for the movement of people from Italy to the UK and elsewhere in Europe as explained by the two informants above, reflects how such differences in policy can influence migrant’s decision making.

Going back to our discussion surrounding social networks, what we can deduce from Kaleb’s experience is how new social networks are formed in transit and how those networks are utilised to gather information and make informed decisions. Few days after our initial meetings, in sheer coincidence, I met the girl that the man with the “special mission” mentioned, in the Isbergues Jungle. Her story was quite similar to Kaleb; she went to Italy thinking to seek asylum. She mentioned that she knew one person in Italy, and that was the reason that she decided to go there but the person never made her aware of the real situation that migrants face in Italy. As she pointed out, she was shocked by the conditions that people lived in, in Italy, and it was this negative experience that forced her to leave Italy and continue with her journey. The man with the “special mission” was not her initial contact as she made it clear; he was no relative of hers, but her smuggler. The man was part of the smuggling chain that stretched from Italy to Calais that brought people from Italy to be smuggled from the Isburgues Jungle.

Her experience also shows the influence of smugglers in the decision making of migrants destination. Some researchers have documented the increased impact of smugglers on migrants destinations (Koser 2007b; Jordan and Düvell 2003; Robinson and Segrott 2002; Koser and Pinkerton 2002; Koser 1997). At the same time, in my own research, it remains somewhat
difficult to clearly see the extent to which smugglers influenced the decision of my other informants to go to the UK.

The unique cultural grounds that formed and fuelled the Ethiopian and Eritrean smuggling routes, although they are far from being considered as humanitarian deeds, they are based on the idea that they are helping their “own people”, so that they can fulfil their journey. As such, these social networks are formed out of weak ties (Chapter 4). Indeed, from the above examples, it is clear that social networks impacted the decisions of Kaleb and the girl for picking the UK as a destination. Further, what is equivalently evident is that social networks alone cannot be singled out as the main reason for migrant’s decision to go to the UK. In some cases, migrants might choose a specific place just because they have a network, but in reality, the decision is made for a number of reasons. As it was reiterated in my informants’ testimonies, the combined influence of asylum policy, work opportunities and social conditions like the openness of the society to immigrants seem to be factors in migrant’s decision making. Other literatures focusing on the UK have also come to similar conclusions (Belfort 2012; van Liempt 2011; Jordan and Düvell 2003; Robinson and Segrott 2002; Koser and Pinkerton 2002; Böcker and Havinga 1998).

Social networks and migrants destinations

In regards to her research among migrants in Calais, Belfort (2012) notes how common it was to hear the phrase “I have a family in the UK”. It was a phrase I also came to hear time and time again. The underlying assumption in social network theory is that labour migrants migrate to places where they have social networks where they can draw social capital to find jobs, housing and integrate into the society. Such migration pattern is not exclusive to labour migrants; this pattern can also be seen among refugees and asylum seekers. My informant Iman’s journey to the UK illustrates such patterns.

His political activism and critical stance towards the government has made him a wanted man back in Tehran, as he explained to me. When we met, it had only been six weeks since he got smuggled out of Iran. Compared to others, six weeks to come to Calais was quite impressive. For most, the journey lasts at least few weeks, at times some months and in some instances even years. But his mental and physical state was worse than most people I knew. He seemed paranoid
at all times, and never seized to remind me that there were people there from the Iranian secret police sent to spy and kill political asylums.

He said his family paid well for him to get smuggled by car to Turkey and then to Greece. I asked him, why the UK? In reply, he answered:

“I have distant family members in the Netherlands who are talking for lawyers for me but I don’t want to go there. I am 29 and I can’t learn a new language after these. My brother lives in England and I have lots of friends from England so I won’t have to start over. I had lived in London for six months when I was an exchange student learning graphic design. I just want to go and work in the UK; I know people so it wouldn’t be a problem for me.”

Two conclusions can be made from the above quotation from Iman. First, it is clear that Iman’s decision is not made in a vacuum. Beyond the immediate desire of seeking safety in the short run, Iman had to think about the best way he could economically negotiate and navigate the uncertainties of settlement in the future. Second, it is clear how the existence of social networks impacted Iman’s decision to go to the UK irrespective of the social capital he can draw from his social network. As we will see later in the coming section, beyond the economic benefits, physical proximity to family provided the emotional support that most migrants need as they negotiate settlement in exile.

Whether Kanan is defined as a “bogus asylum seeker” and Iman a “genuine refugee”, there are similarities in their decision making that is irrefutable. For both men proximity to family was important, at the same time the availability of work and familiarity to the culture, for example knowledge of the language was essential in their decision to go to the UK. Policymakers see the availability of choices and options as a clear demarcation between economic migrants (“bogus asylum seekers”), and genuine asylum seekers. Just by looking at Kanan’s and Iman’s decision making, it is clear that parallel thought processes are visible in their decision making. The availability of choices and options by no means should imply that these people are not in need of protection, but around public debates and political discourse the above facts are used to make a case that asylum seekers are only economic migrants and are not in imminent need of protection (Havinga and Böcker 1999, 51). This assumption is somehow born out of a Eurocentric and romanticised perception of refugees and a lack of understanding of the journey that refugees and asylum seekers go through to come to Europe.
At the same time the information provided by networks about their own geographical area, might not always be positive. In a situation where social networks feel that the chances for their fellow migrants for receiving a refugee status or if they think there are no economic opportunities for them, they might direct them to other countries. This was the case for my informant Nasser.

I met Nasser in April of 2012 in the earlier days of my fieldwork. At the time he was 22 years- old, but he looked so much younger for his age. Nasser was born in a small town 20 km outside of Kabul. Once a week he went to the French Cultural Centre in Kabul to study French. His mullah disapproved of his education as he believed his language studies would clash with his religious studies, as the “French were Christian”. His mullah eventually suggested him to stop going to the French Cultural Centre. Also, his father who served as a police officer in the new Afghan regime was receiving death threats from the Taliban for being a “Western ally”. It was at this moment his father arranged for him to get smuggled to Iran, where his uncle resided. He stayed in Iran as an “illegal migrant” while awaiting an answer from the UNHCR concerning his refugee status. When he found out that he needed to wait at list two years to get an answer, he decided to come to Greece where his brother was a refugee. Considering the fact that his brother lived in Greece, I asked Nasser why he preferred the UK than Greece or any other country. He explained:

“My brother lived in Greece for 10 years but does not have passport and he has been married to a Greek girl for 4 years and they have a baby together. Greece has a problematic economy and lots of racism and I don’t want what happened to y brother, Greece is not a place for people like me” (Nasser, April 24th 2012).

“Why not stay in France? You speak French”. I added.

“Look at this”, he said, pointing at the people who were queuing for dinner at Salam. “France is a bad place; no one wants to stay here!”

Nasser further explained that his brother instructed him to go to the UK, insisting that it would be difficult for him to be granted asylum and also considering the economic situation in Greece, at that moment, it would be hard for him to find work. Contrary to Kanan’s and Iman’s
experience, in Nasser’s case his social network influenced his migration pattern and decision making divergent to the underlining assumption made by social network approach. Nasser was not the only one of my informants whose networks instructed him to go to a different geographical area than their own. But for the majority of my informants who had networks in the UK, their networks told them to come to the UK.

Khalid Koser (1997) has also made similar observations in his research among Iranian asylum seekers in the Netherlands. In a study conducted among 32 Iranian asylum seekers, 26 had 46 friends and family members in the UK, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands. Even though only 11 of these contacts were situated in the Netherlands, all 26 of the respondents decided to ask asylum in the Netherlands. For these respondents the most important factor for choosing to seek asylum in the Netherlands was attributed to the asylum policy, followed by smugglers selecting the Netherlands as their destination. When asked how they acquired information on asylum policy, most of the informants responded their contacts in UK and Germany told them that the Netherlands was better. From these findings Koser concluded that the presence of networks did not have bearing for the asylum seekers deciding to go to the Netherlands. To some extent, our findings are similar, but our interpretation is entirely different. There is a similarity in the way that networks push other migrants to places they think is more suitable for them but at the same time, in relation to the underlining assumptions in networks theory that migrants migrate to the geographical areas of their networks, my finding are mixed. What is evident from my informant’s testimony is that there is a delicate balance that they are striving for, a balance between, physical proximity to family, seeking safety and also securing a future where they can be economically stable, in a place where they can take care of their families and themselves, in a country where they can belong without feeling like outsiders.

The role of social networks in destination countries

The emotional support networks provided is an underappreciated topic in migration studies, as such, in these last few paragraphs I would like to expand on this matter and highlight on the importance of emotional support that social networks provide. In Kanan’s case, his family played the typical role that is expected from one’s social network. His success for easily acquiring asylum paper can also be attributed to his family. If it was not for his family, he would not have the privilege to lay low for two weeks while a lawyer explained what to say and what
not to say when the time came to ask for asylum. His family was also instrumental for him to find a job in a coffee place soon after he was granted his asylum papers. Even though the state provided him with housing in the suburbs of London, Kanan decided to stay with his sister, to have the emotional support of his family. In my findings, social networks play similar roles in the case of refugee and asylum seeker to which they provide access to jobs, housing and most importantly give the emotional support that is needed for most migrants in coping with exile and negotiating the ins and outs of settlement.

Other researchers have also made a similar observation, for example, Jordan and Düvell (2003) in their thorough examination of the migration strategies among Turkish asylum seekers in the UK have stressed the important role social networks play in both reasons for migrants choosing the UK and their significance in adaptation strategies in settlement. At the same time, they have also observed a “drawback” that is created by social networks in these communities as the new migrants only interact with the same people. As a result some find it difficult to assimilate and in the “long run, the migrants actually suffered from more unemployment and poverty (2003, 115–40). Another interesting finding was how some networks took advantage of the new migrants as they charged them more in rent than other people (2003, 140). Suter (2012), have also extensively documented how Nigerians stuck in transit in Istanbul were abused and taken advantage of by their own people. On the other hand, other studies have established the importance of social networks in reducing the sense of social exclusion that most new migrants experience in settlement (Helen Liebling et al. 2014; Spicer 2008). While some researchers have found how those without strong social ties to which they can emotionally depend on, “suffered to a far greater degree and developed stress, anxiety and depression” (Koser 1997, 603; see also Papadopoulos et al. 2004).

The violent experience of war or political persecution that involves torture, rape and long imprisonment leaves an everlasting mental and physical scar on those who had to endure it. Meanwhile, the journey to Europe for most migrants can equally be a violent experience and at times, even more so than what they have previously experienced. Pre-migration traumatic experiences coupled with negative settlement experiences such as the fear of deportation and asylum rejection is a cause for stress and anxiety (Helen Liebling et al. 2014) and in some situations even leading to migrant suicide (Rimkeviciene, O’Gorman, and Leo 2017;
Refugees and asylum seekers are often viewed as a threat (Khosravi 2011; Agamben 1998) and a burden to the receiving society (Capdevila and Callaghan 2008). Moreover, there is evidence to support that such preconceived notions often exposes refugees and asylum seekers to prejudice and racism which contributes to further psychological problems among the immigrant population in the UK (Rimkeviciene, O’Gorman, and Leo 2017; Helen Liebling et al. 2014; Papadopoulos et al. 2004). Social exclusion can inhibit refugees and asylum seekers from job opportunities hindering them from accessing social and economic capital which leads to poverty and homelessness and which also have been attributed to poor health among new migrants (Helen Liebling et al. 2014). Such experiences by migrants in destination the countries shows how being granted refugee status, or asylum does not equate to being accepted into the host society, rather it shows the continuation of social torture and the subordinate inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers and the permanent precariousness of their lives.

The impact of isolation and exclusion was never more evident on my informant Ramin. Isolated from his family since the age of 14, Ramin did not have access to strong networks when he first arrived in Europe. When we met he was already living as an “illegal migrant” for seven years. He often said “my head is broken” to describe his state of mind. At the end of my fieldwork the stress over his asylum application overwhelmed him, the suffering he had endured in Europe was finally weighing hard on him. He started drinking heavily and talked about suicide on a daily basis. Truth be told, I did not doubt in my mind that I would be attending his funeral before leaving Calais. Once his request for asylum was rejected a few other informants and I constantly watched over him, worrying that he might try to take his own life. Thankfully that day never came. Soon after receiving the rejection letter in which he was also notified him to leave the French territory, he finally decided to try his luck in the UK. But the depression and suicidal thoughts folded him. Though he was working in a carpet shop earning some money, he could not get any sense of settlement living as an “illegal”. Taking advantage of his undocumented status and his lack of rights, his employer paid him only 3£/hr, way below the minimum wage. All those facts added to his depression, and the suicidal thoughts continued for another two years. Whenever we talked he always mentioned not having a sense of direction and belonging, neither in the UK nor Afghanistan; he was “neither here nor there”, his life was in a constant limbo. He lost most of his family in tribal fighting, the only one left was his sister and he lost contact with
her soon after leaving Afghanistan. Even if he got deported “there was nothing to go back to” as he often said.

In the UK he stayed with a group of Afghans, one was by the name of Bola whom I also met in Calais. But Ramin never trusted Bola who he said was “a thief, who can never be trusted”. His relationship with the other Afghans whom he shared the apartment with, was also filled with mistrust. Even among his people, he struggled to find a sense of peace and belonging. Not having strong networks have obviously made things tough for Ramin. All the suffering over the years pushed Ramin to his limits, but he never broke. After two years in the UK, he was granted asylum status, it was nothing short of a miracle, since under the Dublin II regulation the chance to be granted asylum once another EU member has rejected you is very slim. As time went by, slowly but surely, Ramin started feeling good about his future, knowing that he could finally start over.

A critical approach to migrant categorisation

The central theme in distinguishing\textsuperscript{28} between forced (refugees) and voluntary (economic) or “real” and “bogus” refugees is the assumed availability of choice or lack of it that is present for each migrant in one’s own mobility or displacement. As it is evident, the life experiences of my informant’s challenges this preconceived notion of choice or lack of it and calls into question the validity of such “clear” cut distinctions in migration studies. I will argue that such distinctions are mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that are rooted in economic, political and ideological agendas of receiving Northern countries, rather than a product of an empirical study and scientific observation (see also Koser 2007b; Turton 2003). In light of this, the last section of this chapter will put forth the methodological as well as ethical reasons why an anthropological engagement in international migration should not accept such rigid categorisation without a critical examination of their consequences on real people that are mobile under different circumstances.

\textsuperscript{28} Here, I am talking about the distinctions made by policy makers and the media and at times, by academics in migration studies.
Who is a Refugee?

One approach to critically explore such categorisations would be by analysing the legal roots of the term refugee. In judicial terms, the definition of a refugee as it is stipulated in Article 1 of 1951 Refugees Convention and its 1967 protocol, is a person who:

"owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNHCR n.d.).

In this narrow definition, the experience and embodiment of violence is the cornerstone of this legal framework. The perception of violence that validates movement in the eyes of the European states on the receiving end of migration is political violence (Jansen and Löfving 2009), which only translates to the physical and bodily harm, neglecting the structural side of violence, poverty and natural disasters as a trigger for mobility. If one's life rhetoric does not fit in the realms of “political violence”, one is deemed to be labelled as an economic migrant. It is along this line, in everyday language that the legal meaning of what it means to be a refugee is transformed to a person who is forced to leaving one’s country, that the dichotomy between forced and voluntary migrants is created (Turton 2003, 13). The distinction between forced and voluntary migrants rests upon a legal framework that also creates a mirror effect of legitimate and illegitimate migrant, which in effect criminalises, dehumanises and persecutes the most vulnerable section of our society. Unfortunately, the realities that define the movement and displacement of millions of men and women across international borders certainly is not exclusively as a consequence of political violence but also natural disaster, famine and poverty.

In part, the Refugee Convention is a Eurocentric legal institution formed to litigate the realities of the WWII and the raging Cold War of the time (Khosravi 2011; Jansen and Löfving 2009; Castles 2007) and as such, incapable of grasping current realities of migration processes. But even in the past, the distinction between a refugee and an economic migrant were blurred, but as they served their political and ideological purposes, such clear demarcations were not drawn. For example, during the Cold War people who were fleeing communist East Germany to West Germany were greeted with celebration. Between 1961 and 1989 approximately 5,000
people escaped East Germany; all the 5,000 names were published on papers to embarrass and claim a moral victory over the former USSR. By definition, all these people who have fled can easily be considered as economic migrants as well as refugees. Castle (2007, 27) observation is spot on, “it seems that the concern with separating refugees and economic migrants only arises when receiving countries want to differentiate between those they consider to be desirable and undesirable”.

Instead of reforming the legal framework to fit the ever-changing realities of international migration, in reaction to the changing patterns of immigration from the 1970s onwards in terms of the number as well as cultural background of the migrant population, Western European countries including the UK resorted to measures that hinder and keep in check the flow of migrants in general. These measures consist of “safe” third countries and “safe” original countries where migrants can be deported back to, visa restrictions and airline sanctions (Neumayer 2005; Jordan and Düvell 2003). Without a doubt, Brexit is a continuation of such measures that define the current realities of migration policy in the UK. In light of this, people are forced, in one hand, to mould their life stories, and identities in a way that fits the general rhetoric of what it meant to be a refugee and on the other hand, some are forced to travel “illegally” (see also Khosravi 2011; Jansen and Löfving 2009).

Kanan’s decision to travel to the UK illegally was a direct consequence of such radical measures. For those policy-makers and tabloid that propagate the discourse that the majority of refugee and asylum seekers are economic migrants, would find Kanan’s life history as a smoking gun. Nonetheless, let’s pause here and observe Kanan’s decision within the context of his classmates that were mostly Europeans. If we carefully examine the rights and privileges of mobility bestowed for EU and UK citizens through the passport index we can clearly see how developed countries use their political and economic power to give their citizens access to global capital that entails wealth, education and the things we take for granted just the joy to travel freely. This reality can be summed up through Khosravi’s words, “We live in an era of ‘world apartheid’, where borders differentiate individuals […] Freedom of mobility for some is only possible through the organised exclusion of others” (Khosravi 62-64). This forces us to ask “what kind of politics is this?”

29 The number of international migrants grew from 82 million in the 1970 to 175 million in 2000.
On the other hand, informants like Ramin and many more who stereotypically qualify as “forced” migrants were smuggled in the UK and worked as undocumented migrants for years because of the fear of deportation. Another informant was Arman Habib, and he explained:

“My friend told me not to apply for asylum when I first arrived in the UK. So I hide and worked for three and a half years without being caught. After that I showed myself to Home Office, after six month they said Afghanistan was safe so they rejected my claim for asylum and deported me to Afghanistan”… There is no future in Afghanistan! I got to be a Taliban or a drunk or a junkie and die somewhere…. Everyone I know is dead there. They came to our country without papers to fight the Taliban; they tell us not to be Taliban. So we come here to be safe then they ask us for papers and tell us it is safe in Afghanistan. What kind of politics is this?”

Where is Ramin’s and Arman’s place in the ‘clearly’ cut categorisation between refugees and economic migrants? Arman’s testimony clearly shows the complex nature of migrant categorisation and the difficulties of applying them to real people. As I tried to explain through the social network approach, even “genuine” refugees and asylum seekers consider economic, social and political dimensions in their migration strategies, creating what Castles (2007) calls “migration –asylum nexus”. Nevertheless, government agencies still strive to count, code, classify and categorise migrants not because it is a meaningful way to do so but because it is an apparatus used by the state to reduce and manage the ever-growing migrant population arbitrarily. It is a population that they deem as culturally inferior and one that does not hold western economic interest at hand and can only be viewed as a threat to the nation-state. As Gill et al. (2011, 306) noted, “the work that these categories do in rending migrants calculable, separable, divisible over spatial units, and excludable and governable, can be understood as a “bio-political effect of the regulation of human mobility”. When Foucault said, “what follows is a kind of beastialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques. For the first time in history, the possibilities of the social sciences are made known, and at once it becomes possible both to protect life and to authorize a holocaust” (Foucault ; in Agamben 1998, 3), he might as well have been witnessing the thousands of migrants who are left to drawn in the Mediterranean and Aegean while fleeing from poverty, persecution and genocide. This brings us to the methodological as well as the ethical problem of migration categorisation.
From a methodological standpoint, I will argue that there is no meaningful way to categorise migrants neatly nor there is a methodological necessity to do so. As it is clearly shown through the daily life experiences and decision making of my informants the line is blurred. If we strive to understand all aspects of mobility of migrants, we ought to take migrants as individual actors “embedded in a particular social, political, and historical situation” (Turton 2003, 9). With that being said, this leaves us with the ethical problem of the present inquiry.

Ethically speaking numerous researchers (Koser 2007a; Turton 2003; Castles 2007; Khosravi 2011) have already touched on the dehumanisation nature of dichotomy between “forced” and “voluntary migrants”, as it strips “forced” migrants from their agency. What is lacking and what we should be focused on is how our engagement in such categorisation has/will attribute/d to the already heightened “culture of disbelief” that lingers on the discourse of refugees and asylum seekers. Strong researches are coming out of the UK that attribute the “culture of disbelief” as the main reason why the asylum rejection rates in the UK has been drastically increasing in the last few decades (Zimmermann 2011). As such, it can be argued that the discourse of culture of disbelief exposes refugee and asylum seekers in general to arbitrary detention and deportation. Other researchers have also attributed the culture of disbelief to the increasing hostility and social exclusion that migrants face in the UK. Gill (2011, 310) stressed that, “it is imperative to be aware of the dangers of becoming complicit in the systems of rule that make visible, and thereby expose, asylum-seeking population, especially in a situation of legal ambiguity or precariousness”. Although some researchers (see Turton 2003) might argue for the need to have migrant categorization for methodological and practical purposes, while acknowledging the problems of migrants categorizations, we should be careful as “there is a very real risk that well-meaning research can exacerbate the problems facing vulnerable communities” (Gill, Caletrío, and Mason 2011, 310). In a way, writing this thesis was an anthropological journey striving to strike a fine line that allows the production of knowledge, while giving voices to my informants without exposing and betraying their trust. Bringing Kanan’s story to the full front of the thesis was certainly an effort to strike this fine line. In this regards, Jansen’s and Löfving’s (2009, 10) thoughts come to heart:

“We all have a duty to save the claims to legitimacy of those who have been or might be able to get through by the current migration regime they are
experiencing [...] An anthropological analysis should not accept, not even temporarily, the naturalized categories of that regime and consequences of those categories, nor the moral judgments about the context of origin that such a regime entails”.

In Chapter 4 I have discussed how social torture is systematically used to create mobility from French territory. While in the present chapter, I have explained how social torture is “cross-generational” and how traumatic experiences go beyond the individual victim and seep into the collective memory of others and how such experiences affect other’s decision making. The following chapter focuses on how perceptions about the UK affect the decision of migrants for choosing the UK as a destination. The intention in this section is to present a counter-narrative to the common assumption that is put forth by politicians and the media that people want to go to the UK because the UK is “soft” on immigrants and immigrants come to “abuse the system”. I will argue that perceptions are the product of social torture and social networks as well as rumours.
Chapter 6: Perception of the UK

In everyday conversations talking with migrants in Calais, the phrase “good life” or sometimes “great life” is used to describe their perceptions of what the UK has to offer. The more time I spent on the field, the more I came to understand the “good life” as an extension of three broad perceptions that affirmed my informant’s decision to go to the UK. These perceptions are composed of asylum policy, job opportunities and the hospitality of the society towards immigrants. My intention in this section is to present a counter-narrative to the common assumption that is put forth by politicians and the media. The common narrative being, migrants come to the UK because the UK is “soft” on immigrants, and immigrants come to “abuse the system”. I will argue that the knowledge migrants possess about the UK is limited, and their decisions are mainly the consequence of the negative experiences they have encountered in other countries and because of the negative experiences of their social networks.

The “Good Life”

Every weekday in the afternoon, just after the soup kitchen at Salam had closed, the migrants lined-up by the road just outside of “White House” 30, waiting for the vans to take them to Secours Catholique compound. At the compound migrants spent their time playing games, the most popular being ping-pong. If the ping-pong table was crowded there were always multiple board games that one could choose from. If one was not in the mood to socialise, one could always pick up a newspaper or a book to pass the time, until it was time to go back to Salam for dinner. Beyond the fun things that were available for the migrants, Secours Catholique also provided legal advice to those who were considering asking asylum in France. It was also a place where migrants with young children spent most of the time as it was considerably safer than any other place in Calais.

30 The “White House” was a white abandoned building near the port in Calais where some migrants slept at the back of the building and it was also the place where migrants queue waiting for the van to take them to the showers.
Some of the rooms were decorated with the kids’ drawings, most of which were drawings of flags of their home countries, or themselves and their parents. One afternoon as I was skimming over the board full of paintings, my informant Farid came and pointed at a drawing (figure 5). “Do you know what this is, Ismael?” he asked. With some doubt in my voice, not knowing what he expected from me, “an ancient city” I replied. “Yes, it is! We Persians are great people; we used to rule the world once. We are not these poor people or beggars as we are treated here”. Farid had great deal of pride in his history and culture, in a way, for him, the past was the only way he made sense of the present and negotiate his future in a meaningful way.

As I kept looking through the drawing, a drawing on to the edge of the board caught my eye (figure 6). The drawing shows a group of migrants packed in the back of the truck about to get smuggled to the UK that much was clear. The drawing depicts the everyday sad realities of the migrant experience in Calais and what they have to endure to navigate and negotiate their exile in search of a settlement. The composition of the colours and the smile on the face of one of the migrant gives it a sense of a joyful ride. Of course, the drawing shows the “reality” of the migrant experience from a child’s perspective who might not fully grasp the predicaments in their life; one might foolishly conclude. We adults at times do not give enough credit to children in their ability to grasp complex realities of life. In the drawing, I saw hope and the longing for a better life and yes joy! In writes of displacement and exile there is dearth of depictions of moments of joy and happiness; though these may not frequent or long-lived, they do exist. In our effort to report and analyse the somber calamities that displace and exile millions all over the globe we forget to capture the small but yet important moments of their journey.

In my understanding, the essence of the drawing in part was about such a moment and also of hope and the journey ahead as well as the expectations in settlement. I wondered what Farid thought about the drawing. “How about this, what does this one mean?”, I ask Farid. For a
few seconds, he stared at it in silence. “It is obvious Ismael; it shows what we must do to go to the UK, the good life, you know”. From his tone, I felt like I asked a stupid question but I still wanted his interpretations, so I pressed him further. “What does the “good life” mean?”, I added. “You know, they say the UK is a good place it is not like France. In the UK I do not have to sleep on the street, there they will treat you like a human. I can also work and start my life again”.

Asylum Policy

In 2015, the former UK Immigration and Border Minster Phil Woolas, was quoted saying “the mess in Calais is down to years of soft-minded liberalism and utter naivety […] Migrants’ paid money to people traffickers in the hope of the good life. That’s not political asylum” (The Daily Mail 2015). In a previous statement, Woolas had also claimed that “most asylum seekers, it appears, are economic migrants” (The Guardian 2008). His stance is perfectly aligned with the discourse that is perpetuated by the anti-immigration political parties in the UK and the media that constantly claim that asylum seekers and refugees come to the UK to “play the system” (ibid.). Such lines of argument have been used to question the legitimacy of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and to push for tighter immigration policies, with the primary purpose being lowering acceptance rates and increasing deportation rates. What Phil Woolas is implying is that, asylum seekers have in-depth knowledge of UK’s immigration policy and as such strategies to manipulate the welfare system.

In reality, this could not be further from the truth. However, it is important to note that within the UK there have been incidents where a refugee or an asylum seeker has been found illegally misusing the system but this is not prevalent, or a systemic situation as Woolas and the tabloids have us believe. And of course, there are people like Kanan who use the asylum system to circumnavigate the restrictive immigration policy that infringes the movement of certain types of people. As it will be demonstrated in the coming section, in most cases people have limited knowledge about asylum policy and social life in the UK. This finding is aligned with the majority of literature conducted on the UK (Koser 2007b; Gilbert and Koser 2006; Collyer 2004;

31 Like the British National Party (BNP), National Front (NF) and British Movement (BM)
32 Media outlets like the Daily Express and Daily Mail notoriously run exaggerated and at times false stories about immigrants.
33 Jordan and Düvell (2003) have documented how Turkish and Kurdish asylum seekers work in the black market while taking benefits.
Zetter et al. 2003; Robinson and Segrott 2002; Koser and Pinkerton 2002; Havinga and Böcker 1999; Böcker and Havinga 1998; Koser 1997) with the exceptions of the finding by (Vink and Meijerink 2003; Thielemann 2003) that assumes refugees and asylum seekers have some understanding of policy and that that knowledge influences their decision on where to seek asylum.

Usually, when informants claim how the UK asylum system is humane, they are neither referring to the intricate details of the legal framework nor the benefits of the welfare state regarding housing and the monthly allowances. Of course, some more than others have a better understanding of immigration policies in Europe. As I have shown in chapter five, migrants who have social networks in the UK have more access to information and hence a better understanding of the situation in the UK. At the same time, those who have been in Europe longer, especially those who have been rejected asylum or who are waiting to hear if they have been granted asylum in France or any other European country have some general knowledge about the asylum system. In my observations, their knowledge is still limited, and in some instances when they claim to know something, it is more like a myth (a false knowledge) than the reality. For those without anyone to lean on or without any information are in a constant mode of desperation and wondering. For these people, at times decisions are based on rumours rather than facts. Böcker and Havinga’s (1998, 83–84) findings also support this observation; they write: “it is often not the asylum policy as such but rumours about the policy that lead asylum seekers to go to a particular country of destination.” Robinson and Segrott also share this conclusion (2002, 52) they write: “expectations relating to welfare benefits and housing did not play a major role in shaping the decision to seek asylum in the UK[…]Knowledge of the assistance asylum seekers received was limited and characterized by general expectations rather than information on particular entitlements”.

In all my interviews not even a single person mentioned how the benefits are in the UK. In some instances, people did not even know about benefits. Perhaps one exception can be the case of Mostafa, a teenager from Egypt who was an emphatic fan of Arsenal football club, who thought there was free entrance to the stadiums and also presumed the UK was a great country because of it. On top of that, he also assumed that all citizens in the UK got money every month from the government just because they were citizens, regardless of their economic situation.
According to Mostafa, the reason he chose to come to the UK was because he loved Arsenal and the UK was the only country that he was familiar with. But even in this case, the “benefits” of the welfare state was not the underlining reason. Mustafa did not know housing or asylum benefits, for him everybody receives benefits and this “knowledge” about the UK was nothing but an illusion, a false perception. As he further explains, on one hand; his positive perceptions were built upon what he saw on the media. While on the other hand, his perception was built upon the rumours he heard from other migrants, that Egyptian’s could get asylum in the UK. A lot of migrants had false perceptions of Europe that it was a place where they would be welcomed, a place where they could live in peace and prosperity. Sadly most migrants get confronted with a different reality. The police brutality, the detention and the daily racism as well as the social and economic exclusion that they were confronted with, shattered their preconceived notion of Europe. Those without a social network come to Europe without a specific destination in mind. The decision to seek asylum in the first country they enter or to continue their journey inside of Europe is made in regard to the everyday experience of that first country and the information they get from other migrants and smugglers. If their experience or the information they receive is negative, it is only natural they move to another country and this type of decision making is embodied by most of my informant’s.

My informant Habib described his state of being after coming to Europe as “I am nothing, not a man, a woman, an animal or human, I am nothing. There is not democracy or freedom only in the movies”. This is what Agamben meant when he said refugees and asylum seekers were the Homo Sacers of our time. Yet, Habib was adamant that the asylum system in the UK was more humane than other European countries. For a short time, he had lived in Austria, Greece, France, and Italy where he had received his asylum papers. As Habib rationalised his decision, “I got a document from Italy, after they gave me the documents they kick me in the ass and said “go”. If I am sleeping on the street, they come say go. I came to France the same thing”. When I asked Habib why he thought the UK was better, he simply replied: “people told me”. As I mentioned earlier, like most, Habib did not have an intrinsic knowledge about asylum policy; it came as a shock to him when I told him that he was not allowed to seek asylum twice and he would be deported to Italy if he asked asylum in the UK.
Another Afghani refugee who was 16 when he first came to Europe told me, he told the asylum officer who was interviewing him that he was 22, because someone told him that he could not apply for asylum if he were younger than 22. The informant’s asylum claim in the Netherlands was rejected, “they did not believe my story”, he said. The rejection was not necessarily because of the lie he told about his age, but it is a fact that as a minor he would have a better chance of getting asylum if he did not lie. This testimony is further evidence of the lack of knowledge among migrants about basic asylum policy in general.

One thing that became apparent in this research was that, the perceptions that migrants hold about the UK are also the product of negative lived experiences of migrants in other European countries rather than the knowledge that one possesses about the UK. This can further be demonstrated through the testimony of one Iranian informant, who was waiting for his asylum decision in France, described his living conditions in France as “atrocious”.

“They gave me a place to stay with drug addicts and mental patients. People scream and shout all night long, there are fights every day, and some even do drugs there. I rather sleep outside. This would not happen in the UK”.

In our conversations, the informant’s knowledge was extremely limited about the UK, but he made it clear that if someone asked him he would not tell them to come to France but rather advise them to go to the UK or somewhere else.

This was similar to Habib’s experience that forced him to move from Italy to France and finally to the UK. This was also the case with the group of Eritrean migrants who came from Italy to go to the UK in chapter 5, as well as Nassers’ story in the same chapter. In his research among Algerian asylum seekers in the UK, Michael Collyer (2004) had reached a similar observation. Although in 1998 and 1999 the recognition rates for Algerian asylum seekers in the UK was 60% and 70% respectively, the largest spike in asylum application by Algerians happened five years earlier. In 1998 and 1999 the application rate in the UK was slower compared to France. In an interview conducted with 30 Algerians in 2000 and 2001 it was clear that none of his informants knew about the high recognition rates during that time, and the reason they applied for asylum in the UK was because they feared they could easily be deported to Algeria from France because of the deep political relationship between the two countries as well as the rumours that Algerians were treated badly in France. For many of my informants,
their patterns of movement can be described as wondering, as they moved from one country to the other because of the lack of tangible knowledge about a specific country and also the exclusion from social and economic spheres of society in other European countries that forced them to be mobile time and time again. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 4 and 5, this is achieved through in one hand from the inability or unwillingness of other European countries to accommodate and integrate new refugees and asylum seeker into the society and also at times because of abuse, violence, racism and social exclusion that has been systematically employed to create further movement of migrants to neighbouring countries.

**Economic Opportunities**

The perception that the UK is a country that offers refugees and asylum seekers the opportunity to work and support oneself is an idea shared by many, though there is also some truth to it, like asylum policy this idea is driven by rumours rather than intrinsic knowledge of the UK’s economic system. If we analyse this perception from a policy perspective, the UK is one of the worst countries in Europe for refugees and asylum seekers, since they are not allowed to work until a decision has been made on their application. Depending on the complex nature of one’s case, it might take months or years before one is allowed to work. Under special circumstances, some people might be allowed to work, but the specific conditions make it no less than a ban on working (Helen Liebling et al. 2014). Considering the policy in countries like, Germany and Belgium who grant permission to work after three and six months of application respectively, logic would dictate that the UK should not be one of the most favoured places for refugees and asylum seekers from an economic standpoint. Despite this fact refugee and asylum seekers are still attracted to the UK. According to Jordan and Düvell (2003), from an economic standpoint, what makes the UK more unique than other European countries is the ease to which one has access to jobs on the black market. As Jordan and Düvell (2003, 126) further explain, the availability of the excess national insurance numbers than the actual workforce is one of the reasons why irregular migrants can work undocumented in the UK compared to rest of the EU.35 Jordan and Düvell also attribute this phenomenon to the lack of internal control “since officials

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34 “As a general rule, asylum seekers are not allowed to work in the UK. However, they can apply for a permission to fill a shortage vacancy if they have been waiting over 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum claim” (Gower 2016; See also Home Office 2014).

35 In the wake of Brexit it is difficult to conclude how the observation made by Jordan and Düvell still holds or if the current situation has drastically changed what they have observed.
who were supposed to enforce rules that did apply to this system were so thin on the ground, and the police were willing to turn a blind eye to their presence and their activities” (2003, 123). A similar observation was also made by Collyer (2004, 393) in his investigation of the motivation of Algerian asylum seeker moving from France to the UK. Although there is a hint of truth to this logic, I will argue that the perceptions that the UK as a place of economic opportunities do not emanate directly from the knowledge Jordan and Düvell detailed; rather, it follows the same logic as asylum policy which is hinged on rumours. Of course for people with strong social networks this information might be available and as we have seen in chapter 5 (in the case of Kanan, Iman and many more) economic opportunities was considered before these informants decided to go to the UK. As I have stressed in the previous chapters, the perception that one can get a refugee status was the most important factor that influenced my informant's decision to go to the UK. As I have demonstrated, in most circumstances their decisions are the product of a multitude of reasons whether that may be social networks, policy, economic opportunities or a reaction to the governmentally of migration in other countries. What was apparent in most of my conversations with my informants was that there was desperation in every one of them to find stability in their life which meant getting refugee or asylum status and start working as soon as possible so that they can support themselves. As I have mentioned earlier, none of my informants talked about benefits and financial support from the government; rather, they wanted to support themselves. In most cases, they did not even know about benefits. Robinson and Segrott (2002, 53–54) have also made a similar observation. Their informants in most cases did not know benefits and as such had no interest in financial support from the government and stressed that “finding a job was important because it enabled [them] to rebuild their lives after what had often been traumatic and disruptive experiences” (ibid.). The determination to work and support oneself, counters the argument that was laid by Phil Woolas that refugees and asylum seekers come to the UK to “play the system”, meaning manipulate the welfare system (The Guardian 2008).

Although, it was only relevant to a small group of informants, the ability to speak the English language had some influence on their decision to go to the UK. As the ability to speak the language give migrants a better chance to find jobs and integrate, to some extent it partly influenced their decision. As we have seen from Kanan’s case to some extent the ability to speak the language was what influenced his decision to go to the UK. This was also certainly the case
with Iman, a 29 years old asylum seeker from Tehran. The importance of language as a catalyst for the decision making of refugees and asylum seekers have also been pointed out by other researchers (Robinson and Segrott 2002; Koser and Pinkerton 2002; Havinga and Böcker 1999; Böcker and Havinga 1998) though most of the researchers approached the impact of language from a perspective of cultural ties rooted in political and colonial history.

As I have argued throughout this thesis refugees and asylum seekers are “purposive actors” (Turton 2003) actively making decisions in adverse and constraining circumstances. Keeping that in mind, my finding is that economic opportunities become a sole factor for deciding to go to the UK among distinct groups. Groups such as rejected refugees and asylum seekers and also other refugees and asylum seekers from other European countries who already have refugee or asylum status, but have found themselves excluded from the social and economic sphere of the host society (a good example would be the group of Eritrean and Ethiopian migrants in chapter 5). What this entails is that most refugees and asylum seekers do not come with a specific country in mind rather they come to Europe with the sole intention of finding safety. Even among those who migrated solely for economic reasons mostly the destination is Europe, not a specific country. The decision to stay or move from the first European country to another European country is predicated on the daily life experience of the individual migrant. Through my informant Ramin’s journey in exile, I can further demonstrate the “stepwise movement” of refugees and asylum seekers.

Ramin

Tuesday the 17th of April I woke up to a cold and rainy day; it seemed like a typical spring day in Northern France. I did not want to leave the warm comfort of the bed for chasing informants, but the slow progress of my fieldwork stressed me, so I dragged myself anyways. Every Tuesday’s one of the NGOs served hot tea and some pastries in the morning, so I knew where to find potential informants. When I arrived, there were not a lot of people; I guess the weather had the same effect on everybody. I grabbed a hot tea and stood with a couple of guys to have a chat. As we stood there, a journalist started taking our pictures without asking any permission what so-ever, which made everybody feel uneasy. Almost all walked away expect another guy and me. Soon after, the journalist walked towards us and asked if we spoke English. The journalist was oblivious to the fact that she was not welcomed. Both of us responded by
shaking our heads. Disappointed, the journalist left us alone. “Bitch!” the young man standing next to me murmured, in frustration. For some reason, I did not think he spoke English, so I asked him if he understood any English. “Of course, he said”. That was how I met Ramin. At the time I did not realise how instrumental he would be to my research and also the way I experienced the field.

Ramin’s journey started in 1999 when tribal fighting in Afghanistan led to the death of his father and two brothers which forced him to flee abruptly to Pakistan and then to Iran. Ramin stayed in Iran for two years, but his status as an undocumented migrant made him vulnerable and an easy target. A refugee is “in a space of lawlessness, outside the protection of the law” (Khosravi 2011, 27), like the Homo Sacer before them their body is left abandoned for anyone to abuse. “In Tehran the police arrested me. You know when Iranian police take an Afghani they say it is like taking an egg from chicken”, he said. The saying is referring to ease at which the police rob Afghani refugees. “They tied me upside down and beat me for days, but when they realise that I had no money, they let me go”. After this ordeal, for Ramin the hope of settlement in Iran was over. Ramin stayed in Tehran for three more weeks and when he met a group of Afghans who were travelling to Europe he decided to join them. After spending six months in Turkey, with two months of his stay being in jail, he finally managed to take a boat to Greece. “In Greece, they took my figure print and told me to leave. They said no asylum here”. The next few years Ramin stayed in Greece without papers, working in construction sites in Athens for 35 Euros a day and picking oranges and potatoes when the construction work was over. “The police were bad in Greece, you should see” he said, while taking off his shoe to show me the missing nail on his left foot. “A soldier kicked me on the foot in Greece”. After three years in Greece “I was tired […] I wanted to leave. My friend was in the Netherlands, so I wanted to go there”. With three other Afghani migrants, Ramin was once more on the road. Their journey took them through Macedonia, Serbia, Hungry, Austria, Italy, France and finally to Belgium before reaching the Netherlands. But when he reached the Netherlands, things did not go as he planned. “In Holland, they put me in the detention centre for one year and five months, and after that finished they came and said we are going to deport you to Greece so I jumped from the second-floor window and escaped”. Ramin stayed for another few months hiding from the police before deciding to leave the Netherlands. When I asked him why he did not try to work illegally in the Netherlands, he made it clear that it was more difficult than Greece to work without paper in the
Netherlands. For a few more years, Ramin wondered around in other European countries before ending up in France. When we met in Calais in 2012, he had already been living in France for more than a year. But it was not until the day his application in France was rejected, that he thought about going to the UK. With the rejection letter, he was informed to leave France within the next 30 days. He always said, “What will I do in the UK? I do not want to live without papers anymore”. But there was no other choice for Ramin, except for moving forward. On the 2nd of July, he crawled under a truck and smuggled himself to the UK. Within a week he was working in the carpet shop. The UK offered him what France or the other EU countries could not provide, a job, but for Ramin, having a legal status was the most important thing, jobs were just a consolation price.

Ramin’s journey was by no means unique. In fact, many of the migrants in Calais were failed refugees and asylum seekers who have wondered for years within Europe before deciding to head to the UK. My argument is that the perception that the UK is a good place regarding economic opportunities is not a preconceived idea that refugees and asylum seekers have before arriving in Europe, rather it is knowledge that is acquired from the daily life experience of exile within Europe. As such, it can be argued that what mobilises migrants like Ramin is not “pull factor” such as welfare benefits and job opportunities, instead, it is the conscious policy of neglect, violence, racism, xenophobia and prejudice that pushes migrants from one EU country to the other.

The culture of hospitality and hostility

In his auto-ethnographic book about his journey as a stateless person, the Swedish Anthropologist Shahram Khosravi (2011, 125), professed: “To write about borders is to talk about dichotomies: assimilating/ ejecting, acceptance/rejection, and reception/expulsion”, it is about experiences of hospitality and hostility”. Indeed, the journey of my informants in Europe can also be mapped through acts of hospitality and hostility that determines whether they feel welcomed or rejected or if they can settle or remain in exile.

“In Gaza, I used to teach kids since schools were closed for most of the time. The children always asked, “where is the country with no war”? So I said, that is Switzerland and England. So always after class, they asked me to tell them about
Switzerland and England. I talked about Switzerland and England all the time. The things I told them were from my imagination and from what I knew. But when I went to Swizz, I found a bullshit country. They took me like an animal; they put me in a bunker, underground.”

“They stop you everywhere, in the bus, train in the mall or walking they don’t have any problem. There is no humanity if you are black or you are an immigrant you don’t have any privacy. They will open the doors and just come in; they will just open the doors and say control. I couldn’t stand it there; people would come to check on me 4 to 5 times a day sometimes in the middle of the night while I am sleeping, I couldn’t stand it. On the first interview there were five people asking me military questions, where is the secret commander of Hamas? Where is the home for Ismail Haniyeh the President of Hamas? I said I don’t know this is military. I am a normal person, and I am an engineer I am not a fighter, I am not a commander. I said I don’t want to answer anymore. From that time I knew they were not going to give me paper. After three interviews they said they wouldn’t give me paper and gave me a paper that says leave Swizz in 30 days. So I left without appealing my case I could not take it anymore.36

The above quote is an extract from a testimony of a Palestinian informant, Marae. It elucidates the daily experiences of living as an asylum seeker in Switzerland. I met Marae in May of 2012 few weeks into my fieldwork. Our meeting in Calais was soon after his asylum claims had been rejected in Switzerland. Marae’s decision to abruptly leave Switzerland was prompted by the daily exposure to systematic acts of abuse and racism, as well as intentional exclusion and dehumanisation practices by the Swiss government.

Marae aspired to go to the UK in hopes of a “humane” treatment where he would have a safe place for him and his family. The perception that the UK was a “humane” country was an idea that was widely accepted by many of my informants. It was also a common perception that Sweden was a “humane” country and that the people were companionate to refugees and asylum seekers. Normally when informants say “humane”, they are referring to the feeling of hospitality.

36 The interview took place in May of 2012. The interview was recorded and as such it is written here word by word with some minor grammatical corrections without diluting the content.
in the everyday interaction that they are expecting in the UK, opposed to the racism, xenophobia, and prejudice and in some cases the violence that they have experienced in other countries. In their study of the decision making of migrants going to the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands, Havinga and Böcker (1999, 53) have also made similar observations. Their informants’ perception of these countries as democratic and tolerant was in part a reason for them to seek asylum in these countries.

The idea of a humane treatment also extended to the treatment they experienced in detention centres. For those who have applied for asylum, it also meant the reception conditions such as access to housing, social welfare and integration programmers such as vocational training and language courses that allow a faster integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the society. The testimony of Ramin (in this chapter) about Greece and Habib’s experience in Italy and of course Marae’s experience in Switzerland are perfect examples how policies of neglect, marginalisation, and exclusion create further mobility of migrants once they have arrived in Europe. Tells of negative experiences are transmitted from one migrant to the other, at the same time social networks that have settled in these countries are conduits of information that creates the perception of these countries. Depending on the positive or negative depiction they get, migrants will decide to stay or continue their journey further into Europe. Before concluding this chapter, I would like to say a few words on the reasons why refugees and asylum seekers have limited knowledge about European countries.

**Why the lack of knowledge?**

As it is demonstrated; the perception that the UK is a good country for refugees and Asylum seekers are not based on facts or in-depth knowledge, on the contrary, they are based on rumours that are passed on from one migrant to the other and smugglers. In my understanding, the lack of knowledge can be attributed to the absence of the networks to inform migrants about certain geographical location, lack of education and hence, lack in awareness of the world outside of their own. Interestingly misinformation that is transmitted by other migrants and the mistrust that people have to formal organisations such as the UNHCR, also contribute to the lack of information that one has about a destination country\(^\text{37}\) (see also Gilbert and Koser 2006, 37).
In my observation, the false perceptions that one holds about a particular country was not only because of the lack of knowledge, rather it was a coping mechanism that one adopts to make sense of their precarious situation and to negotiate the future positively. This can only be achieved if one believes there is a better place where one does not have to suffer anymore.

When a migrant in Calais did not show up at Selam soup kitchen for lunch or dinner, it meant one of two things. Either the person was in the detention centre, or they managed to get smuggled. The latter was most of the time confirmed when the person called their co-travellers who were still in Calais. These calls were important so that one’s co-travellers knew you were safe, at the same time these calls helped migrants inform their friends on how things were on the other side, if they had asked asylum, how the police were treating them, if they were sleeping on the streets or if they were in a shelter but nothing that detailed asylum policy. This kind of communication could go on for months and sometimes years if the other person was stuck in transit. These communications could be informative, but they could also be misleading. One rainy and dark afternoon in Early June, I sat under the shade of the “White House” to pass the harsh weather with a group of migrants. While the rain was pouring, my informant Marae was on the phone talking passionately. I was not eavesdropping on his conversation, but I could not avoid listening to his conversation. At some point, he was describing where we were and what we were doing, but there was no truth in any of it. We were not sitting in a French hotel by the pool nor were we drinking wine.

Later that night when we were alone, I confronted Marae about the call and why he was lying to the person on the other side of the phone. Marae’s answer was short; “I did not want them to worry, there is no need for them to know that I am sleeping on the streets”. Marae’s false information was not ill-intentioned, the purpose was so that his family and friends did not get worried and also to paint a good picture of his wellbeing. After all, migration is supposed to be a success story (see also Koser and Pinkerton 2002, 17). Such misinformation has a dire consequence if the person on the other side decides to migrate under such condition and in many

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38 “There seem to be five major reasons why the respondents appeared to know so little: many did not decide on their own destination, relatively few had family or friends in the UK, some had been given limited or even misleading information, some had left their own country in a hurry, and many were not very well educated” (See also Gilbert and Koser 2006, 1215).
39 The “White House” was a white abandoned building near the port in Calais where some migrants slept at the back of the building and it was also the place where migrants queue waiting for the van to take them to the shower.
40 Implying to his family
occasions, I met people who felt that they had been misled and everything they heard about Europe was false. Formal institutions such as the UNHCR and NGOs are the most credible ways one can get information, but the mistrusts in these institutions stopped people from doing so. One of my informants with deep mistrust in the UNHCR was Ramin. “Useless,” said Ramin, describing this feeling towards the UNHCR, “When I arrived in Turkey I wanted to go to the UNHCR, but the smugglers told me not to, because if I register with the UNHCR I have to wait two years to get to Europe, so I decided to get smuggled instead”. Nasser, another informant from Afghanistan, gave me a similar explanation why he decided not to go to the UNHCR in Iran. The negative perception of the UNHCR was shared by many, and despite the valuable work that is done by the UNHCR this criticism was valid. For a person who wants to ask asylum or get refugee status in Europe, if they apply through the UNHCR while they are outside of Europe, they had to wait in transit for a long time. Meanwhile, if they get smuggled they can go where ever they want to go and if they have networks they can be with family and friends. As Koser and Pinkerton (2002, 16) have found out, the most “trustworthy” information are considered to come from networks, “the principal reasons why asylum seekers seem unlikely to attach weight to information disseminated by formal institutions, is that they are not trusted.

Interestingly, this does not appear to arise from a concern that institutions in destination countries will provide misinformation to deter asylum seekers, rather the issue is a lack of trust of any formal institution”(ibid.). Though their informants did not believe that the governments or institutions actively provided misinformation, some governments do actively participate in misinformation. For example, the Danish government had run negative ads in the Lebanese newspapers in ten different languages with the aim of deterring migrants from coming to Denmark (The Local 2015). Part of the ad reads, “The Danish Parliament has just passed a regulation to: reduce the social benefits significantly. The social benefits for newly arrived refugees will be reduced by up to 50 percent”. Although the majority of the migration literature including this one clearly shows the lack of knowledge migrants have about policy, this ad clearly shows how European policy towards refugees and asylum seekers is dominated by the “culture of disbelief” that assumes that they are coming to abuse the welfare state.

In this chapter, I have tried to show how important, perception about a particular destination can be for the decision making of refugees and asylum seekers. This chapter is also
the last ethnographic chapter directly connected to the first purpose of the study. The next chapter takes the reader back to the field and explores in detail the liminal experience of fieldwork.
Chapter 7: Breaking the Ritual: Field Identity and the Rites of Passage in Ethnographic Research

“The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another [...] a man cannot pass from one to the other without going through an intermediate stage”, writes Van Gennep (1960, 2–3). In the discipline of anthropology, fieldwork has long been considered as a necessary ordeal or a *rite de passage* that a “student of culture” ought to pass before becoming an anthropologist. As Morris Freilich writes, “fieldwork proclaims manhood and generates a major transformation [when] a student of culture becomes an anthropologist” (1970, 16).

As Van Gennep delineated, all rites of passage are marked by three phases of ritual: separation, transition (liminal), and incorporation. According to Van Gennep, for the ethnographer who is about to embark on to the field, this means: on the separation phase(s) he is detached from once-held social status and culture. Soon after, when the ethnographer steps on the field (s)he enters into a liminal state, they face “cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past” (Turner 1995, 94), making them a stranger or a foreigner to the host society. As Van Gennep further notes, for the individual to pass the liminal phase and gain access to the host society, they must pass through four “unchanging sequences”. The individual must stop, wait, go through a transitional period, enter and be incorporated (Gennep 1960, 28).

Using Van Gennep’s Sequence, Norris Brock Johnson (2007), in his article “Sex, Color, and Rites of Passage in Ethnographic Research”, tries to explore the latent patterns in ethnographic research. Johnson finds similarities between the ethnographer’s passage to incorporation and the transition the youth’s from childhood to Adulthood. He writes:

“In passing from the status of child to adult, youth must succeed in tasks they themselves not completely understand and customarily have no part in defining [...] In attempting to access another socio-cultural system, ethnographic researchers do become little children [...] Much like classic initiations; ethnographic research involves non-negotiated tests for greater permitted access to socio-cultural information.” (Johnson 2007, 89)
Further, in his analysis, he draws special attention to the ethnographers’ identity, regarding sex and colour. Johnson demonstrates how the ethnographer’s identity affects the length and intricacy of the passage. However, he argues that, whatever the identity of the ethnographer might be, the sequence remains unchanged; hence the ethnographer must stop, wait, go through a transition period and be incorporated. Johnson’s description is quite troubling; he formulates an understanding that treats ethnographic research as an organised sequence of stages that are lived through, rather than enacted (Johnson 2007).

This type of rigid use of the life stage model has been strongly criticised by many. For example, anthropologist Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002), in her writing on Beti motherhood, sees motherhood as a fluid status rather than a stable one, she illustrates how “women who have borne children are not necessarily mothers, at least not all the time. Motherhood, instead, constitutes a temporary social status, an agent position that can be inhabited in specific forms of social action” (Johnson-Hanks 2002, 865). In a similar tone, Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh (2006), argue that youth is neither naturally constituted, nor is a fixed and stable category, rather it’s “manifestations arise in relation to specific social process, cultural understandings and historical influences” (Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh 2006, 10). Thus, it can be said that the conceptual approach of the life stage model obscures, concepts like youth, motherhood and in our case fieldwork (Johnson-Hanks 2002).

As a substitute for the life stage model, Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002) offers the concept of “vital conjecture”. Johnson-Hanks (2002, 871) defines vital conjuncture as “socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of potential transformation in life or lives. It is a temporary configuration of possible change, duration of uncertainty and potential”. She borrows the term “conjuncture” from Bourdieu (1977), who employs the concept to express conditions that reveal the social structure and serve as an environment for social action. While, “vital” is taken from the demographic term “vital events” that refer to transitions leading to status change such as birth, marriage, and death (Johnson-Hanks 2002, 872).

Thus, I too consider fieldwork as a vital event in the discipline of anthropology where the student of culture comes of age. I will argue that the liminal passage into incorporation is neither clear nor coherent or produces fixed statuses. Instead, statuses are negotiable and contested, fraught with uncertainty, innovation, and ambivalence, and to a great extent, our ability to
negotiate and navigate liminal “fields” (Bourdieu 1977) is heavily influenced by one's identity. In this manner, this chapter, by drawing from my own experiences in Isbergues and Calais illustrates how the ethnographer’s identity in terms of colour, nationality, gender, and religion, affects the length and sequence of the liminal experience. To deconstruct the life stage model, I will keep the original sequence titles as Van Gennep proposed them. They will be presented as I experienced them on the field, out of sequence and at times, overlapping.

The first step

For the ethnographic researcher venturing to the field means she/he is psychologically separated from her/his native culture, that is the first step of the ritual (Johnson 2007). At the same time, for those who are forced to travel “illegally”, border crossing has its own ritual process. Before going to the field, for three straight months, I was in contact with my friend and informant Kanan. While he was in the Isbergues Jungle, I noticed that he was wearing the same clothes for a long period. This was also true for most of the people I met in Calais and the surrounding areas. Most refugees and asylum seekers leave all their material belongings behind, including clothes, shoes, bags and most importantly their identification cards and passports, except their mobile phone and if they are lucky, money, which is the most important thing for survival in this treacherous journey. Like most travellers, Kanan went to Isbergues with only the clothing on his back, a mobile phone and the money for the smugglers. He also brought some extra cash to buy petty things he might need, such as phone credit to call family and friends to let them ease their worries and most importantly to get information from people who were already in the UK.

At this phase, for those who must travel “illegally”, it is not enough to separate oneself psychologically and geographically from one’s home and culture. People go to the extent of literally trying to separate themselves from their biopolitical bodies. Most achieved this by cutting their fingertips with sharp razors, or burning them on a hot pan or spoon so that their fingerprints would not be recognised on the EURODAC database. This ritual was done among people who have been denied asylum in other European countries. Indeed, if they were caught by the French, or by the British authorities after crossing to the UK, and if their fingerprints had showed up on EURODAC, it is almost certain that they would be deported to the countries where their fingerprints were first taken. On the separation level of the ritual, beyond the obvious
purpose of leaving one's belonging because of physical impossibilities of getting smuggled with them, the destruction of identification cards and passports on the one hand and of damaging one’s fingerprints on the other mirrored a ritual where initiates, get purified from their past life.

From discussions and informal interviews I had with Kanan, it was obvious that material belongings did not have any use in this field. Even if I was going for a long time, I chose to take only a couple of clothes to change and just one pair of shoes. In my effort not to stand out on the field I also grew my bread before I traveled to France.

**The town of Isbergues**

**Entry and Stopping**

It is a scary thing, being alone, in a country where the language is foreign to you, especially if you are a young anthropologist and a migrant. I felt a sense of ease knowing that Louise (my informant and host) was waiting for me at the airport. At the time, Louise was a 25-year-old social worker, volunteering in her spare time for France Terre d’Errances. While heading to her home in the small town of Béthune, Louise asked if I was tired and in need of a rest or if I was interested in visiting the Isbergues Jungle. Despite the hint of insecurity I felt in my belly from my lack of fieldwork experience, the opportunity to be on the field on the first day was overwhelmingly exciting, so we dropped my luggage and headed straight to the Jungle.

The Isbergues Jungle was the same place that Kanan had previously stayed for three months before making his way into the UK. The place was only for migrants that come from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan. The Jungle consisted of three- or four-rooms made from wood and plastic canvases. The jungle was located in the middle of a field, on the outskirts of town. When I arrived, the NGO had moved all the undocumented migrants into a soon-to-be-demolished building. When we reached the place, Louise mentioned that an Ethiopian migrant was killed the night before by an Eritrean migrant. She told me that people were on edge, scared and grieving, and suggested that I took it easy for today, which made perfect sense.

As the car moved slowly into the parking lot, I could see some of the migrants playing football outside an old, crumbling building. Others were standing in a circle chatting, while a group of women sat under the shade weaving each other’s hair. As if I was not nervous enough,
all of their gazes were upon me as I got out of the car. Walking into the building, I remember the place being warm, and the air filled by the aroma of tea that was boiling on the stove.

Just a few steps into the building, a guy in his early 30s rushed up to me, said “selam” (which means hello in Amharic⁴¹), and asked if I was “new”. Before I had the chance to respond, he added, “do not worry; everything will be ok. You will be in the UK in no-time”. What he said was really interesting, but I was not completely surprised; after all, it was partly an Ethiopian Jungle. His assumption was valid; there was no reason for him to think I was an anthropology student from Sweden. But what was surprising was his response when I told him who I was and my reason for being there.

He responded with more questions and doubt: “Are you kidding me?” he added, with confusion in his eyes. In his confusion, he asked again, “Are you serious?” and shouted, “There is another one!” At that moment, I couldn’t understand what he meant. Suddenly, a tall, young Ethiopian guy appeared through the swinging door, which I later came to know as Biniam. Later I found out that before he arrived in Isbergues, Biniam was admitted to Gothenburg University. Suddenly, the other man’s doubts about my claim made sense.

With a cup of tea in my hand, I was invited into the next room. Though the room was crumbling like the outside of the building, I could still see that it was a theatre in its better days. There were 25 mattresses on each side were the theatre seats used to be. Blankets and pillows were scattered everywhere. I was introduced to a group of people, who were friendlier than I expected. I sensed they were more excited to see me than I was to see them. They started making jokes about how they were going to be studied, but not in a bad way. Some even suggested that they should write a book together about their experience on the road. We talked about what I was interested in researching and what I was looking for, and the people thought it was a good idea, some even suggested that I also write my research in Amharic, so that people back home could know the true stories of the road to Europe.

On the first day, I was expecting to meet resistance at least from some people, but their openness and comfort surprised me. Although they understood that I was a research student, they still made me feel like I was one of them. Whenever they explain something, they ended the sentence with, “you know how it is,” which I understood as an assumption of shared experience.

⁴¹ Official language of Ethiopia
on my part. As Johnson noted, “deep access to another sociocultural system depends on people feeling that you share something with them as a fellow human being” (2007, 89).

Swiftly, the discussions changed to Mulgeta’s murder that happened the night before. They started talking about how Mulgeta and the Eritrean guy were friend’s and the times they had spent in Libya. Though I had a multitude of questions lingering in the back of my head, I knew I had to restrain myself; I was cautious not to come off too snoopy. In my silence, they kept talking. What led to Mulgeta’s murder was his friend’s paranoia, as the Eritrean guy was convinced that Mulgeta was an informant for the police. In later investigations, I found no evidence of Mulgeta’s involvement with the police; rather, most people actually spoke highly of him. As they continued speaking candidly, I kept wondering if they would have spoken with a sense of ease and candour if I was not Ethiopian. It did not take time for my curiosity to be answered.

Their candidness did not go well with everybody, especially with the smugglers. This became apparent when one of the smugglers asked if we could talk outside. In that instant, I knew what was coming; it was time to be “stopped”. “You can’t talk to these people”, he said, explaining that it would had not been possible for me to get access to these people if I was “white” and, with a sharp and antagonising voice, told me to go to Calais. The smuggler’s reaction elucidates how the ethnographer’s identity (in this case, of culture, nationality and, most importantly, of skin colour) can be of use to obtain knowledge that is unavailable to those with a different identity. The confrontation terrified me, but at the same time, weirdly, I found comfort in it, knowing there was a privilege in my identity. Despite my momentary “stopping”, hours later I still managed to conduct my first interview with an undocumented migrant and ex-smuggler from the same jungle.

Later that night, Louise was furious upon hearing of my confrontation with the smuggler. She told me not to worry and promised to talk to them in the morning, promising that, if it happened again, she would make sure that they were thrown out of the Jungle. As I mentioned in chapter four, the Jungle exists within a sphere of understanding between the smugglers and the NGO, on the role each plays in relation to helping the undocumented migrants and that one does not hinder the others activities. This power relation made the smugglers depend on the NGO to
conduct their business, making them obedient to the NGO staff. This power relation made my job easier, and the smugglers left me alone.

The following days, though people were still willing to talk to me outside of the Jungle and far from the gaze of the smugglers, while in the jungle, I sensed a shift in some people’s way of conducting themselves. Somehow, people who were willing to talk on the first day became guarded. That was the case with Biniam. He was reluctant to give me an interview since he feared that the smugglers would not smuggle him if they see him giving an interview. At the same time, others remained candid.

Although my identity put me in a privileged position to acquire “guarded knowledge”, the power the smugglers had over the migrants troubled me, thus hindering me from searching for more informants. I plunged into an ethical conundrum. On the one hand, I knew I had to gather information that was my job. On the other hand, I was not prepared to jeopardise anyone’s dream or worse, for the sake of my research. Once more I decided to restrain myself from snooping. In four months of fieldwork, I visited Isbergues a dozen times, and with each visit, I struggled to hold a fixed status. One minute I was one of them and the next I was a stranger, “neither here nor there”, I remained “betwixt and between”, stuck in double liminality (Turner 1995, 95).

Calais: Entry

On the 14th of April, Louise and I left Isbergues and headed to Calais. Considering the confrontation I had with the smugglers, I felt comfortable going to Calais knowing that, unlike the undocumented migrants in the Isbergues Jungle, the undocumented migrants in Calais were dispersed all over the city, making them free and approachable. The only place they all came together was at SALAM. At SALAM food was distributed every day, at 1 p.m. for lunch, 6 p.m. for dinner and twice a week at 10 a.m. for breakfast. SALAM was named after an NGO bearing the same name which was responsible for distributing dinner. Based on a discussion I had with Kanan before going to the field, I knew it was the ideal place to meet people and to conduct participant observation. Almost every day I went for lunch and dinner; I constantly and eagerly listened to what my informants and others around us were saying. Like everybody else, I queued

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42 In Calais the migrants are not housed in one place, instead they are scattered all over the city sleeping under bridges and sidewalks so they are not controlled by any NGO or smugglers.
and ate whatever was offered by the NGOs. Most of the time it was rice mixed with slimy meat that we all hated. And who can forget the “funky macaroni”, giant macaroni filled with meat. Friday’s were the best; we waited eagerly for the chicken feast which was too good to be true.

On my first day in Calais, I spent the whole day at the food distribution. My sole purpose was to look for people who could speak English and were friendly and outspoken enough to be my informants. That is when I met Iman, a 20-year-old Iranian from Tehran, who later became my Farsi teacher. Like most, he too was surprised to find out that I was an anthropologist from Sweden; it was déjà vu all over again. Most people did not mind that I was an anthropologist; instead, they took an interest in the fact that I was an Ethiopian from Sweden, which baffled me. At first, I could not figure out why Sweden was such a point of interest for many. Later I realised that, second to the UK, most people wanted to seek asylum in Sweden. In their minds, I was a success story; “a young Ethiopian man who suffered through the perilous journey to Europe to finally succeed in Sweden by obtaining asylum”. For the first couple of weeks, the most common occurrence was a person walking up to me with a map in his hand eagerly awaiting the details of my journey. They wanted to know what method of transportation I used, how much time it took me to travel from one place to another and most importantly, if the police had caught me and if they had taken my fingerprints. Even after they knew my identity, whether they figured out that I was just an Ethiopian anthropologist, or still thought I was once an asylum seeker it did not matter at all. Similar to the experience I had in Isbergues, my nationality and colour were telling their own story that people in Calais toned. The fact of the matter was, whichever role I took, in their heads I was considered to be “knowledgeable”. Before I knew it, I found myself in unfamiliar territory; suddenly I was playing the role of an informant. Ethnographic fieldwork is certainly unpredictable; in various situations, the ethnographer can easily find one’s self in a position where he/she has no control over the flow of information, in a position where the “relationships of power become blurred and even reversed” (Loftsdóttir 2002, 315).

After a long day of confused identities, I decided to go to my host’s apartment which was located across the street from the SALAM. I shared the two bedroom apartment with my host Laurent, an astronomer and one of the founding members of SALAM, who kindly offered his sofa. And Mariam and her husband, Said, an old Afghan couple who were trying to reunite with their three children in the UK. Besides a couple of words, they did not understand any English, so often we found ourselves lost in translation. Later that night, while I was unpacking, Mariam
came up to me and said, “You England”. Although she did not say much, it was enough for me to understand that she was asking me if I was going to England. I responded by saying no while shaking my head from side to side, which made no sense to her. While pointing her finger at my dirty shoes she said, “not good, England no good” and quickly run back to the bedroom, only to return minutes later, with a big smile on her face, holding a green pair of shoes, saying, “England good”. With no way of understanding each other Mariam firmly believed that I was stuck in Calais like everybody else. She cared for me like I was her son; she used to make me tea as soon as she saw me waking up, which made me feel bad for most of the time. I tried to tell her that she did not need to care for me, but with the language barrier, it was difficult to explain how I felt. But at the same time, I felt that what she was doing gave her a sense of purpose and a glimpse of her past life back in Afghanistan.

As per gender, I must say, for most of the time I remained blinded to gender power relations on the field. Almost all my informants were male, and the similarity in gender made the gender power relation existing between the ethnographer and informants almost invisible. In four months I stayed in Calais, only a handful of woman stayed permanently in Calais, and those who stayed were always under the protection of the NGO staff. Since they presumed it was unsafe for these women to stay on the streets by themselves, special accommodations were arranged for them; thus, I had minimal contact with female migrants. In my own experience, I was not in a position where I can observe power relation permeating from gender. It was not until my then girlfriend who was also a researcher joined me in the field that I started to observe gender power relations. In “A Woman Going Native”, Hortense Powdermaker (1967) stresses the influence her gender had on her research. Powdermaker did her fieldwork among the Lesu on the island of New Ireland in Melanesia, where strict gender roles were assigned to men and woman. As expected, naturally her role in the community drifted towards the women. Though she faced some resistance while doing her research among the men, Powdermaker was not fully considered a woman by the Lesu, as she had not gone through the ritual process, allowing her to cross gender barriers and do her research. Powdermaker concluded her remarks by claiming that female anthropologists seem to have easier access to both sexes. Her observation was completely reversed in Calais, while I moved around with little or no resistance, my girlfriend experienced constant verbal and physical harassment. A day would not pass without her being asked for
sexual favours or her hand in marriage (see also Loftsdóttir 2002). In desperation, she started wearing a wedding ring and clothes that covered most of her body.

Albeit not as strong as skin colour, nationality or gender, religion played a major role in my incorporation. Since the majority of the population were Muslim, upon hearing my name most people would say, “Ma sha’ Allah”, which is a sign of joy, praise, and excitement among Muslims when hearing good news. At the same time, it serves as a reminder that the will of Allah achieves all accomplishments. My religious identity brought me a step closer to the migrants and a step away from the “others”, predominantly French Catholic and European population.

Waiting

“Vital conjunctures are experiential knots during which potential futures are under debate,” Johnson-Hanks calls this imagined futures “the horizons of the conjuncture” (2002, 872). These potential futures, these structured possibilities, orient and motivate the forms of action. Since I was already allowed entry, the “waiting” period was a methodological choice in relation to horizons on the field. I created a “waiting” period to distance myself from the undocumented migrant label I had on me and to establish myself, more as an anthropologist. Establishing myself as an anthropologist was important in three ways. First, it was important to have control over the field and the flow of information, which I struggled to acquire at the beginning of my research. Secondly, although I was getting all the information I needed with my early entry, I felt like it would be unethical for me to gather information when some people did not know who I was. At the same time, it was very dangerous for me to collect information while people thought I was a migrant like them. This is so because a lot of people thought there were informants among the migrants who were either working for the police, or agents working for their own government, sent to kill them or gather intelligence on them. Paranoia was the order of the day. I witnessed the danger of fear and paranoia first hand. One afternoon, while having an informal interview with Iman, he suddenly covered his face and started shouting at a man standing across from us. He told him to put his phone away and stop recording us, as more people ganged up on the man, in fear, the man put his phone in his pocket and walked away. Iman’s paranoia was understandable, but I felt he was overreacting. Two months later, the incident I dismissed as an act of paranoia came to be a reality. The man we all knew as Hakim,
who claimed to be a Chadian refugee, turned out to be an informant for the French police. Thus, in ethnographic fieldwork, if we wish to acquire data in an ethical, efficient and safe manner, it is imperative that the anthropologist makes his/her identity and intentions known as quickly as possible.

So, I isolated myself by sitting in the middle of the pavement with a paper and pen in my hands, pretending that I was writing my observations. I did this quite often, at least for the first ten days when everyone came together at SALAM. By doing so, I was trying to draw attention to myself so that people would approach and ask what I was doing. The first person who approached me was a staff from one of the NGOs, wondering if I was writing a letter to my family in Ethiopia. Although this was another instance of mistaken identity, the method served its purpose; it drew people’s attention and within a short period of time all the migrants knew who I was.

**Stopping**

According to Van Gennep (1960) and later Johanson (2007), all strangers who wish to be incorporated into a host society eventually get stopped before they can be incorporated. Contrary to this claim, by incorporation into the host community without being stopped shows how influential one’s identity can be on fieldwork. In this case, with the host community consisting of undocumented migrants, I would say I waited rather than being stopped. Nevertheless, eventually I was stopped, but this would come from a completely different direction, one that wouldn’t have been foreseen by Van Gennep or even me, for that matter.

The first of many stops came after my second week in the field. One afternoon, I sat on the pavement of the road leading to the port with a couple of my informants for a game of cards. The moment I started dealing the cards, I saw two police cars drawing to a halt. Soon after, a couple of police officers came out off one of the vehicles and asked if we had papers. Not surprisingly, I was the only with a passport, so the policemen put all of my informants in the van to be taken to a detention centre located 3 km outside of Calais. Even though I had a passport and a valid visa, I was also told to join my informants in the van. In my anger I refused to go into the van. I was told to stand next to the car while an officer checked my passport. After 20 minutes of abuse, I was told to go. This kind of abuse continued throughout the fieldwork; the same police officers stopped me again and again to check the same passport they saw the day before.
The daily police harassment was the only a fraction of my ordeal. The racism I was receiving from the local community was overwhelming; it ranged from my neighbour pulling a gun out on me, to the restaurants and bars refusing to accommodate me. Halfway into the fieldwork, it became impossible for me to walk into a restaurant and order food, the only place I felt comfortable and safe enough to eat was in a kebab shop where the owners were Iranians. Most of the uncomfortable incidents took place in the presence of my informants, and it helped to create a better rapport. If I have not made it clear yet, I should perhaps stress once more that this is not a claim for an insider’s view but to point out, the fact that this incidents helped to open doors which I might otherwise not have access.

As time went by sleeping on the streets or queuing for food like everybody, stopped to be participant observation and became a mode of being. In the end the only place I truly felt like a normal human being was among my informants. For the first time in my life, I became conscious of my skin colour and my race. I had always been and remain proud of my identity and roots. Sadly, my experience in Calais remains as a rude awakening and even now, sitting here trying to finalise this thesis, and the passport on my shelf says I am “Swedish/ European”, I would not help but feel that there is no place for a black, “Muslim” man in fortress Europe. Regardless of my experiences, I was always in a privileged position, my liminal experience will eventually die down upon my return to Sweden, but the same cannot be said for my informants. For them, the liminal experience was a permanent mode of being.

Summary

Contrary to the assumption made in the life stage model, the ethnographer’s passage on the field is neither clear nor coherent or fixed. Instead, statuses are negotiable and contested and fraught with uncertainty, innovation, and ambivalence. Borders and boundaries are “colourbars” (Balibar 2002, 78), they operate “through social sorting that involves sexual, gender, racial and class inequalities” (Khosravi 2011, 4). The anthropologist working at the borders is no different; the anthropologist like everyone else operates under the shadow of borders. A quick look at my identity and it’s not so hard to see why I am the typical “illegal” migrant, simply put, I am Ethiopian and black like most of the Africans, Muslim like most Middle Eastern migrants, and a young male in his 20s. As I illustrated, my ability to navigate and negotiate the social field was greatly affected by my identity. For most of the time, my identity has allowed me to morph into
the migrant community, which intern gave me a privileged access. It is crucial to keep in mind that, privileged access is not synonyms with authentic ethnography or a claim for an insider’s view.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

In a way, this thesis has been experimental, a departure from the “normal way” of writing a Masters’ thesis. In this thesis, I sought out to accomplish two things. First, the thesis is written in a reflexive and even an auto-ethnographic manner. It invites the reader to follow the ethnographer through the metamorphosis of the study, from the point of conception, through the ethnographic fieldwork to the interpretation and, finally, to the presentation of the result. Doing so was an attempt to give the reader a vivid understanding of the process of making an ethnographic text. Secondly, it strives to answer a simple question: why the UK? The genesis of the question finds its roots in the departure of my friend Kanan, and it was by tracing Kanan’s journey that I found myself in Calais. By focusing on a transit zone like Calais, my aim has been to depart from a dualist approach of migration theories that only focus on destination and origin countries as their analytical points of reference and to present the everyday experiences of exile and statelessness as a continuous journey. In this section, I will focus on the latter and, by drawing on arguments presented throughout the thesis; I will point out five interconnected factors that affected the decision of my informants to strive to go to the UK.

Throughout the thesis, a key analytical concept has been social torture, which I borrow from Chris Dolan. Social torture was an important analytical tool for understanding the movement of refugees and asylum seekers from one country to another. The majority of the migrants I have met in Calais, Isbergues and Paris during the three-and-a-half months of fieldwork have been in multiple countries. From the point of exile until they reached Calais, in most of these cases their journeys have taken years. For example, when I met my informant Ramins in 2012, he had been in exile since 1999. During those thirteen years, Ramin, abandoned by multiple states, has wandered in half a dozen countries in Europe. His journey was not unique; rather, it reflected the journey that many have taken before reaching Calais. Without a doubt, the journey in exile is neither clear nor coherent or fixed; instead, the journey is fraught and filled with uncertainty – information and decisions are never absolute. In such environments, past decisions need to be negotiable and contested and, as such, new destinations have to be charted. My finding in this regard is that the ambiguity and liminality that defined my informants’ daily life experiences and made settlement impossible and mobility a necessity had to do with the violent treatment and systematic abuse, which bears similarities with torture,
which they had to endure. As such, striving to go to the UK for most was something they had to negotiate and navigate along their journey rather than a decision that was made from the point of departure. As I have pointed out, social torture was systematically deployed in various forms, whether through physical violence, sleep deprivation, humiliation or the exposure of the refugees and asylum seekers to the elements by systematically demolishing abandoned buildings as well as the jungles. In all aspects, social torture was an apparatus used to force unwanted populations from French territory and into the UK and other European countries. In fact, my findings suggest that the use of social torture to create mobility from one territory was not unique to France; rather, as I have tried to show throughout the thesis, it was an apparatus shared by many European countries.

One important aspect of the application of social torture that differs from torture is that it is low intensity and has a wider reach. As I alluded to earlier, that means “while in individual torture only a minority are directly affected, in Social Torture only minority will escape the impact” (Dolan 2009, 13). This also means that the impact of social torture is not solely directed to the individual that is in physical reach of the perpetrator (in this case the particular nation-state), but also reverberates through social networks to stop others from coming to a particular country. In this regard, my observation suggests that the experiences of social networks impact the decisions of other refugees and asylum seekers significantly.

As I pointed out in Chapter 5, the phrase “I have a family in the UK” was a frequent statement that migrants used to justify their ambition to reach the UK. Both strong ties (family members and friends) and weak ties (other migrants, community organisations, and smugglers) were instrumental for migrants in selecting a destination. These complex webs of shifting social relations are conduits of social capital in the forms of material goods, credit and information regarding modes of crossing and living conditions. The information social networks pass, is also important for refugees and asylum seekers to know if they have any chance of getting refuge or asylum. Although such information lacks the detailed workings of policy, they certainly can influence the decisions of those who are seeking refuge. Upon arrival, they also provide the necessary information migrants need to find work and assimilate more easily in the destination country or in transit. In addition, the emotional support refugees and asylum seekers can receive from their networks can be instrumental in their decisions to go to the UK. In some cases, it
might be the only reason they have decided to go to the UK. For a person who has witnessed the horrors of war and the dangers as well as the loneliness of exile, the only thing they need is someone they can trust and lean on. For most of my informants with networks in the UK, the reasons listed above definitely influenced their decisions to go to the UK.

At the same time, contrary to the assumptions made in networks theory, in my observation social networks, in the case of refugees and asylum seekers, do not always pull migrants towards their geographic area. It is not always the case that the information provided by networks about their own geographical area is positive. In a situation where networks feel that the chances for their fellow migrants to receive refugee status or asylum, or if they think that there are no economic opportunities for them, they might direct them to other countries. As we have seen in the cases of some of my informants, the decision to go to the UK was made after their networks suggested they avoid their geographical area (mainly Greece and Italy) and head to the UK or somewhere else. In this context, contrary to the assumptions made by social networks theory, social networks push migrants to other destinations rather than pulling them towards their geographical location. The daily life experiences of refugees and asylum seekers certainly reflect an interlinked web of macro and microstructural conditions that forms and shapes their experiences and the way they negotiate and navigate them. Through the experiences of social torture and information that is passed on through social networks as well as the “knowledge” that one possesses, perceptions about particular countries are made and decisions are acted upon.

The perceptions of a country can be very influential in the decision-making process for many refugees or asylum seekers. In most instances, as I have professed in the above paragraph, for the most part, social networks are responsible for creating the perception of a country that resides in the minds of migrants. At the same time, those perceptions can emanate from the direct experiences of migrants who have been in those countries in the past or from the daily experiences they had after arriving in a country. In some instances, it can also be from what they have perceived from the media. As we have seen from the testimonies of my informants, countries like Greece and Italy had very negative reputations among refugees and asylum seekers and also smugglers who have settled and operated there. Such negative perceptions are influential for migrants’ decisions to continue their journey further into Europe. In the meantime,
countries like Germany, Sweden and the UK were viewed in high regards and as such the perceptions that migrants had about them have been generally positive. When it comes to the UK, three different, but interlinked, views under the expression of “the good life” constructed the perception they had about the UK in terms of asylum policy, economic opportunities and the hospitality of the society.

By far one of the most important factors for my informants when deciding to go to the UK was the perception that the asylum policy in the UK was “humane”. As I discussed in chapter six, normally when informants claim the UK asylum system is humane they are neither referring to the intricate details of the legal framework, nor the benefits of a welfare state regarding housing and monthly allowance, rather the chance of getting accepted. Of course, some more than others have a better understanding of immigration policies in Europe. As I have shown in chapter five, migrants who had social networks in the UK, like Kanan, had more access to information and hence a better understanding of the situation in the UK. At the same time, those who had been in Europe longer, especially those who were rejected asylum or are waiting to hear if they have been granted asylum in France or any other European country might have some general knowledge about the asylum system. Regardless, in my observation the knowledge they possessed about the UK was limited. In such situations where information is limited, rumours about a country can be the most influential driving forces in a migrant’s decision to go to the UK.

Although for many of my informants the perception that they will get asylum or refugee status as well as the existence of established social networks might be the primary reasons for the decision to go to the UK, to some extent the economic opportunities in the UK have influenced their decision making. Keeping that in mind, my finding is that economic opportunities become the sole factor for deciding to go to the UK among distinct groups. Groups such as rejected refugees and asylum seekers, and also other refugees and asylum seekers from other European countries who already have refugee or asylum status but have found themselves excluded from the social and economic sphere of the host society (a good example would be the group of Eritrean and Ethiopian migrants in chapter 4 who have asylum status in Italy but are trying to get smuggled to the UK).
The last piece that forms the concept of the “good life” is the presumed hospitality of the UK society to refugees and asylum seekers. The ethnography of borders is certainly about hospitality and hostility of the everyday interactions of the stateless with the host society. Among migrants in Calais, the common assumption was that the UK was a “humane” country, opposed to the other countries like Greece, Italy and France. Normally, when informants say “humane”, they are referring to the absence of hostility in the form of racism, xenophobia, prejudice and abuse, as well as the physical violence they have encountered throughout their journey in Europe. Though it might not be the most important factor, certainly the perception that the UK is a “humane” country has influenced the decision making of many of my informants. All in all, as I have alluded to previously, my informants’ journeys have been about striking a delicate balance, a balance among seeking safety, physical proximity to family, and securing a future where they can be economically be stable in a place where they can take care of their families and themselves.
Post-face: Face off (Leaving the Field)

Walking into the field, my lungs were full, and my head was clear. I was full of energy and excitement. Each day, page after page I wrote. I was meticulous putting my thoughts, observations and experiences in ink. My field notes witnessed everything and nothing. For two and a half months things went relatively well. By the beginning of June things started to change; after witnessing idly my informants’ adverse situations, I could not help but feel powerless knowing that there was nothing immediate I could do to alleviate their pain, sorrow and suffering. Each day started feeling like a déjà vu, like I was living yesterday all over again. I saw the same tired, sad faces again and again. Even when their faces were different, I listened to the same stories, stories of structural violence, dehumanisation and police brutality. The feeling of powerlessness combined with all the racism I was experiencing myself put me in a dark place; first came despondency, then depression. As each day passed, my daily notes got reduced to small paragraphs, then to mere scruples of lines until there was nothing at all. Somehow there was nothing new happening in Calais or Isbergues, and I was no longer in the state of mind to continue with this research. Margaret Mead once said, “The way to do fieldwork is never to come up for air until it is all over” (1901-78; in Sluka and Robben 2007, 10). Well I was suffocating in the field, and it was time to “come up for air”; it was time to leave the field.

Fieldwork is unpredictable. Most of the time things unfold in a manner that is out of sync from our plans and imagination of what it means to be in the field. When I designed the research, it was supposed to be a multi-cited research; I was to follow my informants along their journeys from Calais to the UK. The plan was to wait until my informants were smuggled into the UK and, once they found their footing in the UK, to take a break from the field, clear my head and continue with the research. By mid-June, almost all of my informants were already smuggled. But with each sunset, it became apparent that accomplishing one’s research design without any compromise was all but impossible.

Since I am Ethiopian, I needed two sets of visas to implement my research. As a student in Sweden, I already had a one-year visa that allowed me to travel within the Schengen area, but I still needed to acquire another visa to enter the UK. Earlier in May, I sent my passport and documentation to the British consulate in Paris, requesting a visa to complete my study. More than a month passed without hearing anything. In desperation, I contacted the consulate to find
out the status of my application. In an unfortunate event I was told my passport got misplaced, and consequently, it became impossible to process any visa application until the passport had been recovered.

To make matters worse, my Swedish visa was about to expire at the end of June. I got nervous knowing that I would not be able to renew my visa without a passport. I immediately contacted the Ethiopian embassy to resolve this situation. Sadly, the only solution was to issue a new passport for me, which could take anywhere from one to three months. This meant staying illegally in France, which was not an option. I left all my hopes on the British consulate, hoping that they would locate my passport before my visa expired. Two weeks passed, on the 1st of July my fears came true – my visa expired and I became an “illegal” myself. I locked myself in the apartment for two more weeks to avoid the “random” police stops I had experienced throughout the fieldwork. I knew if I was to get caught, detention and deportation was the only thing that waited for me.

A little too late, but on the 11th of July I finally received the call I eagerly awaited from the British consulate – my passport was recovered, and my application had been processed. Wasting no time, the following morning I made my way to the British consulate. What awaited me made me feel empty and worthless. Although I had provided all the necessary documentation proving my intent to be in the UK and the means to see those intents to the end, my request for a visa was denied. The reason for my rejection was that, since I am Ethiopian, the case officer was under the suspicion that once I got to the UK I would seek asylum. The moment was a dark enlightenment where I found myself as a second-class human being, an animal caged by his own identity, a prisoner of colour, race and citizenship.

After hours of disorientation, I picked up the phone and called the Swedish embassy to see if I could receive my renewed visa in Paris. Sadly, since I applied in Sweden before leaving for France, I was told that I could only receive my visa in Sweden. Naturally, the next question was how I would return to Sweden when I was stranded in France without a visa. The embassy’s reply took me by surprise. The lady with the gentle voice on the other end of the line said that boarding a plane would be impossible since emigration would check the validity of the visa, so the only way to come back to Sweden was to take the bus or train. She stressed that this
recommendation was her own and not the embassy’s. I took the woman’s advice and decided to take the bus to return to Sweden.

Things turned from bad to worse upon realising that I did not have the money to buy the ticket to return to Sweden. Overstaying on the field had depleted all the money I had in the bank. Despite my informant Marae’s offer to cover my travel expenses, I borrowed 3000 SEK from a friend and booked my ticket for the 18th of July.

On the eve of my departure, I went to say goodbye to Marae not knowing if I would ever see him again. Saying goodbye was harder than I thought. My eyes filled with tears knowing that I broke a promise. Marae was the last of my informants who had not crossed the English Channel. The promise was that I would stay with him until he made it to the UK but so much had changed since that promise. Standing next to each other by the docks we both knew I was not the same person that made him that promise. We had an understanding that the promise could no longer be fulfilled. “You are one of us,” he said with sadness in his voice. “Now that you know what it means to be an illegal migrant you can go and write about it.” Tears started rolling down his cheeks as he hugged me to say goodbye. In doing reflexive ethnography, as I found out the hard way, depending on the topic of study, attachment and detachment from your subject of study is not the easiest thing to do.

As I walked away, I could not hold back my emotions, and regret consumed me. Not only had I regretted that I made a promise that I could not hold but I also kept thinking that I would have been better off taking Kanan’s offer to get smuggled. At that moment, Kanan was on the other side with a five-year residence permit on his hands and a British citizenship on the horizon, which along the line that would give him the power to pass through borders with ease and give him a social, economic and political advantage over others. When I made the decision not to join Kanan, I knew I was closing doors that would have provided me with the freedom of movement and other opportunities but at the same time, I knew that the journey to freedom was tainted with grave dangers. There is more certainty in losing one’s identity and humanity on the road than successfully getting refugee or asylum status. Violence, detention and deportation, even death, are the lived realities of an “irregular” migrant. When I decided not to join Kanan, I was scared and not ready for that kind of hardship. This was not the first time that someone close to me had made such a risky decision. My uncle stood at the shores of Calais more than two decades ago.
before I barely knew how to walk. In the late 1980s, he received a scholarship to study geology in Bulgaria. At the time, Bulgaria was a communist country which had a bilateral study programme with its fellow communist Derg regime in Ethiopia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, most communist countries were going through rapid political and economic changes. By 1990, the bilateral arrangement between the two countries was disconnected and all Ethiopian students were recalled. Seeing the political turmoil looming back home, my uncle and his friends decided to go to Italy. After staying in Italy for a few months, my uncle realised that Italy could not offer him a bright future, so he decided to go to the UK. To this day nobody in my family really knows what happened to him in the UK or how his life really was. All we know is it took him more than a decade to finally get his papers. He still refuses to talk about his life in the UK. When I first met my uncle, I was 15 years old. I cannot imagine how hard it was for him being separated from his family and friends for that long. In all honesty, I was scared to join Kanan; I was not willing to walk in my uncle’s shoes, for his shoes were too big for me. “Illegal’ migration can mean a lifelong separation from family, friends and home” (Khosravi 2011, 14), and separation is equally hard for the person that is migrating and those left behind. Growing up, I saw how hard it was for our family, particularly my grandmother, who did not see her son for 15 years or really know how he was. This consumed her with an agony that permeated her life. To this fact, I was not willing to put that on my family. After beating myself up for hours over what I thought was a doubtful decision that leads me to this point, I finally came to my senses. I knew I made the right decision. Even if I could go back knowing what I knew then, I still would have made the same choice. Dwelling on the past was only going to make the twenty-nine-hour journey ahead even harder.

On the 18\textsuperscript{th} of June 2012, I woke up earlier than usual to get ready to return to Sweden. Waking up might not have been the right recollection since I literally stayed up all night staring at the ceiling, wondering if I would be able to board the bus without a valid visa. By 8 a.m. I gathered my belongings and left Calais, headed for Lille. After running around the city for about 20 minutes, I finally found a bus stop which I presumed to be the right one. The emptiness of the stop made me unsure. The departure was in 15 minutes and the only person beside me was an old lady with a giant pink bag. A few minutes later more people started coming and before I knew it, I was surrounded by people. Soon the bus arrived, and hearing the driver shouting the destination gave me the assurance I needed. As people started to queue, I fell behind on purpose. I tried to
notice keenly as others boarded the bus; it was true what some of the migrants in Calais had told me – the driver was only checking tickets and IDs. I was relieved. I too made my way onto the bus, and the twenty-nine-hour journey started.

Three countries stood between me and Sweden. Passing through Belgium and Denmark felt relatively safe, but Germany was a different story. “Germany bad! Very bad!” That’s what Ali, a 22-year-old informant from Uzbekistan, used to say. Like many before him, Ali had tried to reach Sweden, but his journey was cut short, as he was caught by the German police close to the Belgian border. Though internal borders were a thing of the past in the EU, since the Schengen zone was brought into effect, Germany was infamous among “illegal” migrants in Calais for being the place where so many got caught at its borders. According to another informant, Tawab, the way to elude the police was to avoid using buses and trains and a take a taxi instead. Taxis are the best form of travel since the authorities hardly stop and check if there are “illegal” migrants on board.

The clock ticked away and within a few hours we were already deep inside Belgium. The lack of sleep from the previous night started to catch-up on me; I kept drifting in and out of sleep. By the time I woke up again, we were in a gas station and it was obvious where we were. From the writings at the station I knew we were in Germany. I followed the other passengers who were going off the bus to stretch their legs. I sat down on a concrete block at the gas station and started replaying the conversation I had with Tawab. I knew I should have taken a taxi, but that option was not really there for me. I spent all the 3,000 SEK I borrowed to purchase the bus ticket. The only thing left in my pocket was 15 Euros, another 150 SEK in cash and also an extra 200 SEK on my debit card. This was my chance to get off the bus but the lack of funds put me back in my seat.

Once more I crossed my fingers and we went back on the road. I stuck my head against the window and let my eyes wander outside. As the bus picked up speed, the lines on the asphalt disappeared. At first, the cars from the opposite side of the road seemed to travel so fast, but after a few kilometres the cars were not moving as fast as before – we were slowing down. As the bus slowly came to a halt, fear and regret consumed me once more, though from where I was sitting it was difficult to see what was happening. I could hear the driver talking with someone outside the bus. I knew what was coming! Even though I was quite aware that my options were limited
back in the gas station, I still managed to regret my decision. And for the fear, it was not so much the fear of being detained or even deported that gave my heart an ache; rather, it was the shame – the shame of being separated from others (people with rights) like a criminal and taken off the bus that weighed heavy on me. “Border crossing can be experienced in terms of honour and shame ... A legal traveller crosses the border gloriously and, in so doing, enhances his or her social status, whereas the border transgressor is antithetical, being seen as shamed and anti-ethical (they are called ‘illegal’ and depicted as unprivileged, poor and useless victims)” (Khosravi 2011, 66).

As one of the police stood by the door, the other two passed me and went further into the bus. The remaining police officer came straight to me ignoring the other eight passengers who were seated in front of me. He approached with his eyes fixed on me as if the others vanished in thin air. “Passport and visa,” he said. Without hesitation, I put my passport and my expired residence permit in his hands. For a brief moment he pulled his radio and started talking in German while staring at my passport. German was foreign to me. “This is it”, I thought, preparing myself mentally to be taken off the bus. But nothing happened. He nodded his head in what seemed like an approval while folding my passport in the process, then placed it back into my hands. As he walked away I followed his movement with the corner of my eyes, each step took him away from me, but my heart still ached. I anxiously waited for him to come back and ask me to leave the bus. I waited and waited but nothing happened. Each minute felt like an eternity. It took me a while to accept the fact that I was free. In fact, it was not until the last of the police officers had left the bus and we went back on the road that I truly realised that I managed to slip through. It was hard to believe what had happened. To this day, it remains a mystery exactly why the police officer did not pull me off of the bus. The only logical explanation that I can deduce goes back to the rituals of the “illegal” migrant. Most illegals neither possessed passports nor other forms of identification. Most who are “illegal” simply throw away their passport and IDs, while some give them to the people they trust for safekeeping or sell them on the black market to earn some money. For most, the rationality behind this act is to impede the authorities from identifying their country of origin, in the process making their chances of deportation a little bit harder. As such, the only thing I can presume is that the officer was not keen enough to read my permit thoroughly. I was lucky, but others were not.
Once back on the road, I became relaxed and collected. Though long stretches of asphalt and sea still waited ahead, the most stressful part of the journey was over. It was then that I started recalling and processing what has happened earlier on the bus. What made me ponder more than my luck was the way the police were conducting their search. It was clear that racial profiling was the method of choice employed by the police. If one did not resemble the common physical traits of a European, one was obligated to prove their belongingness in Germany. Once more the borders were “colour bars” (Balibar 2002:78). Putting it bluntly, the passengers in front of me were all white; it was as if the colour of their skin was simply proof by itself of their right to be in Germany. In so many ways, this fieldwork was a rude awakening! For the first time in my life, I realised that I am black before anything else, in a white man’s world. Eventually, the twenty-nine-hour bus ride was over and I was finally in Sweden. If this fieldwork was my rite of passage and I was to transform at the end of it, the feeling is not that I had turned into an anthropologist, but rather a lesser being.
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