

Report / Weaponised Landscapes: Mapping the Calais 'Jungle'

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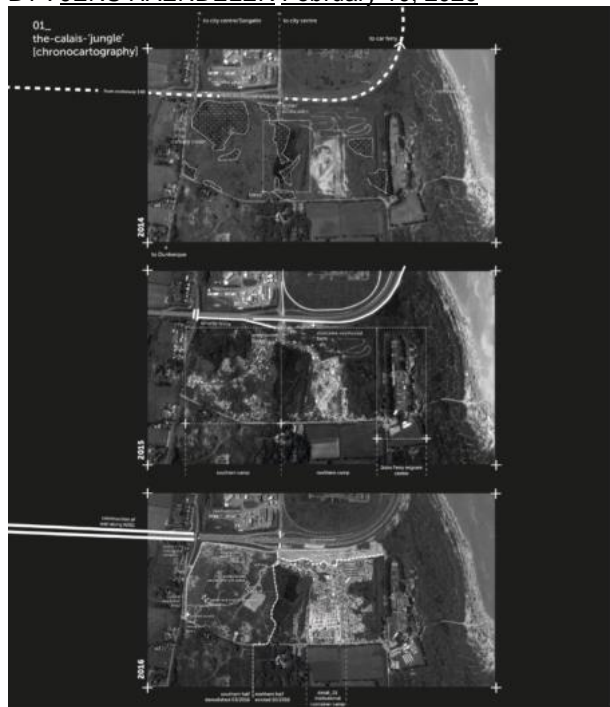


Figure 1 | A chronocartography of the Calais 'Jungle' and the surrounding area. Illustration of the camp's evolution by the year. Source: © Jens Haendeler, Alex Ioannou, Anushka Athique, 2019 to 2020.

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Weaponised Landscapes: Mapping the Calais 'Jungle'

by Jens Haendeler, Alex Ioannou and Anushka Athique

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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