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## **Sounds of the Jungle: Rehumanizing the Migrant**

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## Abstract

This article examines the cross-border tensions over migrant settlements dubbed 'The Jungle' in Calais, France. 'The Jungle', which was strongly associated with the unauthorized movement of migrants, became a physical entity enmeshed in discourses of illegality and the violation of white suburbia. The British mainstream media have rendered the migrants either voiceless or faceless, appropriating them into discourses of immigration policy and the violent transgression of borders, while silencing the human trauma of migration through the distancing of the human subject in media discourses. Through the Calais Migrant Solidarity (CMS) case study we highlight how new media spaces can rehumanize migrants, enabling them to tell their stories through their own narratives, images and vantage points not shown in the mainstream media. This reconstruction of the migrant is an important device in enabling proximity and reconstituting the migrant as real and human. This sharply contrasts with the distance-framing techniques of the mainstream media, which dehumanize the migrant, locating the phenomenon of migration as a disruptive contaminant in civilized and ordered societies.

## Contributor Notes

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## Introduction

Helen MacGill Hughes (1940: 212-3) observed some decades ago that news can connect the reader to a 'universal humanity', providing a glimpse into personal emotions and experiences; a reminder that we are all 'just human beings subject to the same sensations'. This notion of universal humanity has come under scrutiny in the ambit of news reporting by the mainstream media and their construction of the human in migrant discourses (Howarth and Ibrahim 2009; Ibrahim 2011). This article explores how migrants can be constructed as non-human in cross-border conflicts and how new media spaces can function as counter-sites to rehumanize the migrants and to challenge the construction of migrants by Britain's online mid-market newspapers.

The town of Calais in France has a particular significance in debates about illegal migration. The European Union (EU) as a whole has seen surges in irregular migration, especially during or after violent conflict in Europe, the break-up of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Yugoslavia (Geddes 2005; Thomas 2013) and more recently the conflict in North Africa. One of the preferred destinations of many refugees and migrants is Britain, and as a result Calais has become the site of cross-border tensions, especially after the 1994 opening of the Channel Tunnel and the United Kingdom's (UK's) opt-out of the 1995 Schengen Agreement on the free movement of people and goods across the EU (Thomas 2013). The Tunnel has rendered Calais a major point of transit where migrants seek to stow away on vehicles headed across the English Channel and a major point of congregation as border controls attempt

to restrict or prevent this. The consequence is that French authorities are constantly grappling with the issue of how to manage migration, including the pressure it exerts on local resources and the humanitarian concerns that arise with large numbers of congregating migrants. So acute has the problem become that in 2009 the United Nations (UN) opened its first-ever office in Calais to deal with what it sees as a humanitarian crisis. Meanwhile, the attitudes of British politicians and the British public have hardened against any increase in migration; there is renewed determination not to allow these migrants in, and recent governments have invested heavily in tighter border controls and surveillance technology to ensure migrants are denied access to the country (Mulvey 2010; Bosworth 2008).

It was in this context of heightened tensions that Britain's mid-market newspapers reported on the emergence of informal migrant camps, labelled 'The Jungle', between 2007 and 2010. As a liminal space, the Jungle is constantly associated with degradation, barbarism and illegality in newspaper representations. The Jungle, as a physical space loaded with metaphorical allusions, was portrayed as encroaching on and threatening white suburbia. These media discourses of transgressions served to justify and legitimize its violent demolition in September 2009, which was repeated when a 'new jungle' in a village near Dunkirk emerged two years later. These pseudo-rational discourses of immigration policy failure and the transgression of boundaries were instrumental in newspaper portrayals of migrants as deviants, thereby deliberately disentangling them from the human-interest dimension of reporting (Howarth and Ibrahim 2009). Invariably, it

became a discursive device to create distance between the readers and the migrants who were 'invading' their lands. Mid-market papers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* avoided framing media reports from a human-interest angle in terms of human rights and suffering, and instead portrayed the migrant as a failure of immigration policy, thus constructing barriers against an understanding of migrants as human beings.

In contrast to mid-market newspapers' construction of the migrant, new media offer spaces that have sought to resurrect migrants as humans by sharing their intimate and personal narratives, where they can be named and remembered as opposed to being unnamed casualties in their plight to cross the border or to escape their predicament as illegal corporeal bodies. This paper explores how one civil society organization, the Calais Migrant Solidarity (CMS), employs new media platforms to re-humanize the migrant with the wider public and to counter dehumanizing newspaper constructions of the migrant.

### **The humanized 'other' in the news**

How we enact people in news coverage through the human-interest story or frame has been debated over time in media literature (Park 1923; Hughes 1940; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000; Fine and White 2002; Neuman 1992). We present this as a contentious device that can transcend temporality and distance, but more importantly, its significance lies in its potential for the acquisition of social power in forming affective communities, through the negotiation and acknowledgement of who is human and who is the other. The Janus-faced construction of the human as one of us

or of the other is a device the media often employ depending on their ideological stance and context, but it does not negate the fluidity within the construct where the other can acquire a human face and where the human face can equally be defaced. Here the agency of the audience cannot be downplayed; nevertheless, the human-interest story entails a process of transcendence in which the sub-human is either resurrected as human or defaced by denying them their rights or existence.

The human-interest story is a familiar and common frame, particularly in the mid- and mass-market media, which specialize in more sensationalist coverage (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). When the personal is privileged and presented in a way that is accessible and interesting to ordinary readers (Hughes 1940; Park 1923; 1938) and when it 'brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem' (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000: 94), it takes the form of the human-interest story or frame. This nebulous description then encompasses the quaint or comic 'believe-it-or-not type of stories', gossip about celebrities, and the triumphs and tragedies of ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary situations (Stephens 2007). This means that large-scale catastrophes and suffering can be given a 'human face', and vignettes can provide insights into how the individual experienced the almost unimaginable trauma that sometimes arises as a consequence of politics and policies (Harbers and Broersma 2014; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). The narrative may be dramatized (Park 1938) and evoke archetypal themes of triumph and tragedy found in romances and myths that are familiar to readers through popular culture (Bent 1927; Fine and

White 2002). Apparently inconsequential details of everyday life at a death scene may be graphically recited (Hughes 1940; Mather 1934), and the 'atmosphere and symbolic detail' of momentous political events can be portrayed in such a way that readers can visualize it and link affairs of state to their impact on the individual (Harbers and Broersma 2014: 643).

The success of this type of reporting ensured the 'survival' and flourishing of the independent, mass-circulation press (Greenslade 2004; Innis 1942; Park 1923). However, overemphasizing the role the human-interest story played in the commodification of news (see Curran and Douglas 1980) at the expense of its social implications would be to underplay its potential social power. The muckraking and social reformist press of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries discovered a powerful formula (Winfield and Hume 1998; Streitmatter 2012; Broussard 2003) that was appropriated by other campaigners and continues to be used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The human-interest story or frame used in this way not only constructs proximity but can also transcend the traditional divides and distance more commonly associated with class, race and deviance or criminality. Park (1938) noted how 'our incorrigible provincialism' manifests in affording less importance to an earthquake in China than 'a funeral in our village', creating a social distance. Such distancing can be transformed into proximity where the foreign other is constructed as a victim of 'monstrous persecution', when the cause is 'personal and epic' and the suffering is something 'that any human being would naturally want to prevent' (Hughes 1937: 77-8). The human-interest story or frame can

also be used to challenge dominant portrayals of the accused, the deviant and the enemy other as well. An analysis of the trial of Lizzie Borden, who was accused of hacking her parents to death in 1892, found that some reporting served to 'remind readers of the human interest in crime and counter the public tendency to demonize the criminal and transform her into a stock monstrosity fit for public consumption' (Roggenkamp 1998: 65). Borden became a symbol of the marginalized, vulnerable woman in New England society, and the readers of other newspapers 'who devoured [her] as a dehumanized object ... [were] complicit in framing this modern American tragedy' (Roggenkamp 1998: 66).

Studies of coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have highlighted how earlier dehumanizing discourses of the enemy other can become over time at least partially re-humanized. During the 1976 conflict in Israel, Arab victims were anonymized by having their 'names, ages, occupations and other identity markers' omitted from news accounts. During the more recent protests in the year 2000, however, some participants had become 'human' subjects, as their biographical details had been included in news accounts; in contrast, the 'victims remained anonymous at least during the first days of the events' (Avraham and First 2010: 494). Other research has found a similar pattern between the first and second intifadas, where during the latter, 'despite the higher level of violence, the Israeli public were exposed to their human side' including those deemed to be terrorists, while others were 'presented as ordinary people living under occupation, often as direct victims of the Israeli military' (Liebes and Kampf 2009: 434). The depiction of the human in a human-interest story can be an

unstable and fluid device, particularly in long-running stories such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Dehumanizing the migrant**

Conversely, the media can depersonalize the human by using a 'dispassionate' style of reporting (Preston 1996: 112) to 'create an emotional distance between the audience and the people suffering' (Robinson 2002: 29; Neveu 2002). While the human-interest story or frame is common, it is neither inevitable nor axiomatic that it will be used to cover an event or issue. On immigration issues, newspapers have a choice. Some American and Canadian newspapers have used the proximity framing of refugees and migrants, humanizing them as 'people ... suffering violence, torture or physical abuse' and who experienced 'threats and narrow escapes' in their home country (Steimel 2010: 237). These stories provide readers with a 'human face to a far-away tragedy' and 'an important moment of connection with people very different from themselves' (Robins 2003: 29, 44). Alternatively, the media can use distance framing in ways that parallel the dehumanizing of terrorists in American newspapers. Both the migrant and the terrorist are reduced to the 'animal or aggressor' other (Papacharissi and De Fatima Oliveira 2008) or in Canadian newspapers as the 'enemy-as-animal' or the 'enemy-as-insect' (Steuter and Wills 2009). For example, Calais is presented as a town under 'siege' from migrants who 'swarm' into vehicles headed across the Channel (Mail on Sunday Reporter 2009).

Such insect and animalistic discourses, which reduce the other to the sub-human, are reinforced by displacing the suffering to a distant locale, the 'war-torn'

countries from which the migrants fled (Allen 2008); or the suffering is delegitimized because of their assumed complicity in it. In fleeing their home country, migrants are assumed to have been complicit with the people traffickers who moved them across Europe (Fernandes 2009) and who hide from the police in the Jungle (Fagge 2009a). The suffering of the migrants in Calais at the hands of the police is not mentioned; instead, their displacement and their physical defacement, including burning off the tips of their fingers so their fingerprints cannot be used to identify and therefore deport them, is seen as self-inflicted (Bracchi 2009).

The Calais migrants are equally reduced by newspapers to non-human status through the de-recognition of the basic human need for shelter, as evidenced by the overt support of the press for the demolition of the Jungle and their opposition to any form of replacement (Fagge 2009a). The repeated demolition of visible shelters by the police served to render the migrant presence illegal and intolerable as they sought alternatives in 'hideaways' to avoid detection by the police (Giannangeli 2009). Unable to openly cross the border, migrants had to be 'hidden' on trucks or 'smuggled' aboard trains headed for Britain (Sparks 2009). The constant destruction of the camps and efforts to eradicate their existence in white suburbia by the authorities meant that the migrants of Calais occupied a liminal space, with shelters erected on discarded industrial sites. These temporary shelters became a 'waiting room' (Fagge 2009b) used by migrants for a 'chance' to smuggle aboard a vehicle headed for Britain, a 'waiting game' that could go on for months (Sparks 2012). Their existence in these temporary spaces is one that hovers between life and death, where

their desperate struggle for a new life in Britain may entail risking death from suffocation or toxic chemicals (Allen 2009c) while they are smuggled across the border.

The construction of migrants and migration as deviance becomes a distance-framing device that depersonalizes, dehumanizes and delegitimizes their suffering. Their trauma is obfuscated or reduced to that of the sub-human through animalistic or insect-type discourses, or through the avoidance of discussing their basic needs, rendering them invisible or thrusting them into a temporary no man's land.

### **The civil society organizations in Calais**

In contrast to the mainstream media, interest groups, NGOs and civil society organizations have a long history of using the media to underline the human suffering of the marginalized and disenfranchised in society. In recent years online media have provided spaces to present a counter-discourse and disrupt the hegemony of the mainstream media (Ibrahim 2006; 2007). These counter-sites do not completely displace the power of the mainstream or mass media's ability to court and dominate the public's attention on controversial issues such as immigration; nevertheless, they potentially disrupt the media's hegemony through both their accessibility online and the possibility of reframing mainstream discourses by narrating the perspective of the other. Their existence demonstrates that there are possibilities for counter-narratives and alternative voices as well as powerful media voices in the public sphere. Their presence is symbolically if not instrumentally

significant for the resistance it offers to mainstream media narrations. The attempts by CMS to rehumanize the migrant need to be located within the context of better utilizing new media technologies for social activism and remediating social reality through different forms of content, including the testimonies of witnesses and survivors, which can bring proximity to events (Douglas 2006).

In terms of its activism in Calais, CMS sought to respond to the growing police brutality against any individuals or groups seeking to help the migrants. UN initiatives in the late 1990s sought to strengthen the international fight against people trafficking and transnational criminal gangs. When the French legislature enacted laws with these imperatives in 2003 and 2005, it tightened controls on migrant entry and applications for asylum, and increased police powers, making it possible for the police to restrict and arrest any local resident, activist or NGO from assisting migrants (such as by recharging their mobile telephones, employing or housing them or protesting against deportations). After one such high-profile conviction of an activist for 'contempt of police', local NGOs and charities accused the French authorities of creating a 'climate of intimidation' and criminalizing assistance (Allsopp 2012: 16).

CMS is part of the anarchist No Borders Network, a radical left-wing movement that is anti-capitalist, anti-statist, anti-nationalist and anti-colonialist (Gill 2009: 111; Alldred 2003). Members of No Borders believe that the abuses and adverse effects of capitalism and the borders that support it generate and reinforce the inequalities that give rise to migration. They also believe that human mobility, particularly the free movement

of people across territorial borders, is a human right, and that any controls that violate this cause unnecessary suffering. Their definition of borders is broad, encompassing the 'physical, political, ideological, linguistic and social' (cited in Millner 2011: 325). They are concerned with the militarization of political borders, and constantly document migrant deaths, particularly at the Mexico–America and EU borders, that directly or indirectly result from the use of expensive, sophisticated surveillance technology and armed police; they describe such measures as 'brutal and disproportionate', inhumane and unethical (Gill 2009: 112).

This anarchist group is not the only organization working to help migrants in Calais. Other groups are primarily aimed at providing humanitarian relief such as food, blankets and clothing (for example, Salam and La Belle Étoile), access to hot showers (Le Secours Catholique) and medical support (Médecins du Monde and the PASS clinic). These organizations do speak out against the violence levelled against migrants but their primary function is to provide humanitarian relief. In contrast, CMS is primarily an activist organisation. It was founded in 2009 at the height of newspaper criticism of the French authorities for failing to demolish the Jungle, and just after a No-Borders 'camp' of social activists, charities and NGOs had met in Calais to discuss migrant issues. Activists found that the migrants 'took responsibility themselves for directing discussions' and so decided to set up a permanent CMS base in Calais, which would operate on the basis of 'solidarity activism', valorizing the migrants' wishes and agency (Millner 2011: 324). As such, CMS 'take their directions from the border struggles of the migrants themselves', an approach

that seeks to empower the migrants, particularly as their voices had been reduced to 'whispers in the courts' and their individual 'struggles to survive ignored' due to media depictions of migrants and asylum seekers (Millner 2011: 326). CMS not only seeks to prevent arrests of migrants and the demolition of their shelters, but also monitors police activity and documents arrests, deaths and different forms of harassment (Rigby and Schlembach 2013: 169). This 'production of testimony' since 2009 has challenged media framing and public understanding of migration and human struggles at the border, marking a shift 'from the politics of sanctuary to the politics of spectacle' (Millner 2011: 327). CMS as a transnational entity focuses on catering to a wide community of migrants from different parts of the world and embracing an 'acultural' perspective in which it seeks to involve a wider public beyond it that can use the 'borders of France or the UK' to raise awareness of the plight of people in migrant camps across the world. Hence CMS is not just 'European' in construction, but transnational in terms of its resistance and ideology being communicated through new media platforms.

### **The self-construction of an anarchist group**

The anarchist ideology espoused on the CMS website locates the Calais border regime within a wider architecture of control: a 'totalitarian world' of policing, detention centres and deportation systems. The controls include an apparatus designed to obstruct the movement of people, expel those deemed by the authorities to be there illegitimately and, at the local level, to persecute migrants on a daily basis (CMS



n.d.a.). The organisation's response to this situation is through a vision of building a strong transnational movement capable of resisting migration controls. CMS seeks to realize this by using its website to update the public on events in Calais from the vantage point of the migrants, which are presented in a way that evokes audience proximity to the suffering of the other and offers a counter-discourse to that of officials and the mainstream media. The website, conceived with both a local and global audiences in mind and with a view to transcending geographical boundaries, utilizes the potential of social media platforms to appeal for public participation, often inviting individuals to take action from wherever they are. CMS activists also use a mix of online media (such as Twitter, blogs, websites and emails) to maximize, entwine and sustain online and offline engagements, which are aimed at mobilizing readers and restoring dignity and identity to the migrants of Calais. Social media platforms have a global reach, and although most CMS content is focused on events in and around Calais, the blogroll links to the websites of other organizations that share its radical ideology and do similar work at key transit points through which many of the migrants have travelled to reach Calais. The blogroll thus draws attention to the CMS's position within a wider network of activist groups and to migration 'hotspots' across Europe including the Balkans, Greece, the North African border and the Mediterranean. The site thereby contextualizes Calais within the politics of transcontinental migrant movements, presenting events and activism in the town as a microcosm of what is happening across Europe. Appeals to the public become more than just about ameliorating conditions on the ground; they are enmeshed in a wider

agenda of resistance to the border controls of 'Fortress Europe'.

Notwithstanding this wider agenda, the priority of CMS is the narration of events in Calais from the vantage point of the migrants. One technique they use is the documenting of police brutality as evidence of the excesses of the 'border regime' (CMS n.d-a), a dimension largely ignored by the British media but held up for public scrutiny on the CMS website, thereby challenging journalistic silences. Such challenges are reinforced by telling the 'real' story of the intentional perversities in immigration policies, and revealing their consequences for migrants. CMS highlights the British policy that offers migrants the right to apply for asylum while at the same time refusing permission for them to do so from outside the country and banning their entry into Britain without a visa. The legislation thereby 'necessitates' illegal entry by asylum seekers, who have no choice but to risk their lives crossing the Channel; this has prompted CMS to question the possibility of the government's culpability for migrant suffering across the Channel in Calais (CMS n.d-a). The perversities in French policy are seen to lie in 'carefully orchestrated' psychological operations in which migrants are 'hunted down' (CMS n.d-a.) like animals, then harassed and toyed with in an endless cycle of arrest, release and brutalization (CMS 2013a). The intention behind the strategy, according to CMS, is to meet police arrest targets and to 'emotionally exhaust' migrants, thus deterring them from crossing the Channel and encouraging them to return to their country of origin (CMS n.d-a). These stories told by CMS present a different reality from that presented by British media accounts of the border police as valiant but failing to contain a flood of

feral aliens or intruders (Howarth and Ibrahim 2012). The alternative account offered on the CMS website constructs the migrants as victims of capricious border controls, and in this context these human-interest stories become a critique of the 'border regime' and are seen as legitimizing the resistance activities of CMS.

The website defines borders as encompassing any constraint on people's rights to free movement or any imposing of divides between people; the anarchist group translates this at a local level into particular forms of activism that include working with local charities and residents to transport migrants displaced by the police back to town, and a campaign to collect discarded bikes and parts that can be used by migrants to aid their mobility in and around Calais (CMS 2012e; 2014a). The activists also invite the public to donate a range of objects to replace those destroyed by the police during raids, to provide replacement materials for demolished shelters (CMS 2013c) and to work with local groups to identify empty houses in which migrant women and children can 'squat' (CMS 2013c). These forms of activism reassert migrants' rights to free movement and to shelter, which are denied by British and French policies. The CMS is constrained in its activism by its size, as it is a relatively small organisation, and so it tends to work with local charities such as Salam, Médecins du Monde and the PASS clinic to meet the basic needs of the migrants and to corroborate reports of police brutality. However, the CMS is highly critical of the 'big NGOs' such as Oxfam and Amnesty, which are seen as conspicuously absent from Calais (CMS 2009f).

## Restoring the migrant voice

Another technique used by CMS is the recounting of life stories, which is an attempt to restore the migrant voice, providing proximity through personal narratives that are constructed as archetypal of the adversities faced in journeying to Calais. 'Abdul's story' is just such a narrative, presented by CMS as a 'macabre example' of the tragic consequences of border controls that deny protection for migrants or refugees and contribute to 'forced wandering' that in some cases lasts for years (CMS 2009a). The story, 'gathered' in the camps of Calais, reads as if different narratives were synthesized into a single dramatic account of an arduous journey from Afghanistan to incarceration in Turkish jails, of escaping police dogs and evading gangs on the Iranian-Turkish border that kidnap migrants and hold them to ransom and mutilate or deface them if their family does not pay in time, before eventually making it to the seaport (CMS 2009a). Whether or not the story is an amalgam of several others, it is, in many ways, a traditional human-interest story; an epic tale of personal endurance and of the obstacles in crossing continents that invites the audience to appreciate the hardships and dangers that were overcome in coming to Calais. However, in another sense it is an atypical human-interest story in that it is related in the migrant camps, whose occupants inhabit a space somewhere between their country of origin and their destination in Britain but where, as yet, there is no happy ending in the form of a final triumph over adversity. The future for 'Abdul' remains uncertain, and his unresolved story is deeply symbolic of the liminal status of these migrants.

The website also recounts vignettes of

suffering in Calais, presented as archetypal of the experiences of many migrants at the hands of the border police. One of the most prominent accounts on the website is written by Seydou Niang, a Senegalese man who at the time was living in London and working as a consultant for a French organization, and who wanted to share his story of 'injustice' to show that 'these things still happen today' (Niang 2010). He recounts being stopped at the Calais border by five policemen who, insisting that the photographs in his visa documents were not of him, forced him to get off the bus, accused him of carrying illegal documentation and arrested him. Niang describes his incarceration as being in a 'cage' with no privacy from the surveillance cameras and where the guards threw his breakfast on the floor 'just as you would toss scraps to a stray dog'. The next day he was interrogated by five policemen and examined by a physiognomist who declared that Niang was in fact the person in his visa photographs. However, he was released only on the order of the prosecutor and even then the police demeaned him, suggesting that his hair made him unrecognizable and that he should shave it off to avoid mistaken identity in the future. For Niang, this is a 'simple story of scorned human dignity', of his hurt and disgust at the way the police treat migrants; for CMS 'Seydou's story' is typical of the 'persecution' experienced by any foreigner 'who isn't white', irrespective of whether or not they have documentation establishing their legal right to be in Calais (CMS n.d-c.). Fortunately for Niang he had the documentation attesting to his legal right to be in Calais; some of the most powerful migrant voices challenging the dehumanizing of migrants come in the form of letters written by those who are not so lucky and are awaiting

deportation. These letters are posted on the CMS website and accuse Western politicians of having double standards by going on television to speak about human rights and denouncing abuses in the migrants' countries of origin, yet at the same time allowing refugees to be criminalized in their own countries (CMS 20102a). They recount experiences in prison in which 'we black people are not treated as human' and ask why, if their right to live is recognized, migrants are treated like animals; their answer is that Western talk of rights is 'just lies'; their illusions have been shattered and the reality is a 'nightmare' (CMS 2012a; CMS 2012b; 2012c).

Although these very powerful and evocative voices are freely available online on the CMS website, they are rarely heard in the British media, where the vantage point of the migrants is discredited by virtue of an ascribed status of illegality, so they are more deserving of deportation than a hearing. These voices do, however, present a powerful indictment of Western policies on immigration, exposing the superficiality or duplicity of Western rhetoric and inviting the reader to rethink a construction that sees migrants as being like us, rehumanizing them through a proximity to their experiences, emotions and vantage points.

### **Migrant life in Calais: brutality, precariousness and death**

Although the narratives of Abdul, Niang and the anonymous deportees are the most dramatic, it is the documenting of daily brutality that most graphically captures the conditions of migrants' lives and the atmosphere of fear in Calais. CMS argues that the police use intimidation and violence as a 'deliberate

weapon' with the intention of making the lives of migrants so 'unbearable' that they leave the area and return home (CMS 2011). One of the key techniques used by CMS in response to this strategy has been to catalogue incidents of brutality and post updates and comments on patterns of intense police activities and different forms of it (CMS 2015). Examples of the brutality captured on the website include destroying 'essential possessions' such as cooking utensils and sleeping bags; repeatedly demolishing shelters and forcibly evicting women and children from squats; contaminating scarce water points with chemicals that burn the throat and chest; and using pepper spray on food to make it inedible, and on tents and blankets to render them unusable. CMS claims that recently there has been a disturbing escalation in the frequency and severity of intimidation of migrants, suggesting the ability of the police to operate away from the 'eyes of the local Calais population', their destruction of activist cameras that capture wrongdoing, and the lack of prosecutions for police brutality have supported a perception that they are 'untouchable' (CMS 2015). Migrants have thus become victims both of the laws that criminalize and deport them and of a police force that can confidently act capriciously, callously and brutally. These forms of gratuitous brutality not only corroborate the dehumanizing claims of deportees; they also draw attention to the perilousness of life in Calais.

The precariousness is captured in one of the distinctive features of the CMS website: a page dedicated to detailing migrant deaths since 2002 (CMS 2014). Unlike the depersonalized accounts of deaths in the newspapers and unlike the anonymized accounts in CMS posts of police violations of living migrants, this

page, wherever possible, provides identity markers in the form of the name and/or the place of origin of the dead migrants, in addition to the manner of their death. In affording an identity in death that was not possible in life, this rehumanizes the migrants. There are a variety of causes of death cited, ranging from gang violence to accidents such as falling off trucks and 'mysterious circumstances'. Some, the police claim, were 'suicide' – verdicts disputed by family and friends – yet the authorities refused autopsies or further investigations. In one case, the 28-year old Sudanese Nouredin Mohamed, who had been in Calais for four years, supposedly killed himself metres away from where he had recently been granted leave to remain in France as a refugee (CMS 2012d). The unwillingness of the authorities to investigate suspicious deaths raises questions about how far the police strategy of 'psych-ops' extends and what, if any, rights the migrants have.

Overall, the picture painted is of a border regime that 'kills', with 'no accurate count' of fatalities, and where many 'deaths are ignored, the facts covered up or altogether unreported' (CMS 2014). The nameless, faceless deaths are depersonalized; they are victims 'without vigils or protests', but the CMS refuses to 'let these deaths be silenced' and its web page lists what little information is held (CMS 2014). It serves as a memorial site to those who died before crossing the border, allowing the public to form connections with migrants as protagonists in a narrative of death, rather than just as victims; it is a community site allowing migrants and the public to grieve and come to terms with the trauma as it evolves. The site thus offers a space to mark these events, in sharp contrast to mainstream media reporting, which largely frames such

narratives as immigration and border patrol failures (see Douglas 2006).

### **Dealing with journalists: mobilizing the public**

While CMS 'unequivocally' refuses to have any 'dialogue' with journalists from the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* because they have 'repeatedly misrepresented migrants and their situation' (CMS n.d.c), it is open to dealing with other journalists, recognizing that sympathetic coverage can personalize the migrant cause and bring events seen from their vantage point to the attention of a global audience. However, the CMS website clearly lays out the terms for 'responsible' engagement, drawing attention to the personal risks for migrants if they are identified in the press. Images of living migrants have, in particular, become a sensitive issue not only because they can alienate those captured, but also because they can make the identified individual vulnerable to police targeting. Sensitive filming, however, can provide powerful photo-reportage as demonstrated in 'Life in the jungle and port of Calais' (Prestianni 2009) and 'City of the faceless - living illegally in Calais' (Grodzki 2012), both of which are hosted on Flickr but linked to from the CMS site. Yet none of the images quite captures the graphic violence that migrant voices recount, highlighting the difficulties of photographic documentation, and in particular the necessarily covert nature of much of it.

While most of the brutality of migrants is police-orchestrated, there is also a growing threat posed by far-right groups, which CMS label as 'fascist'. In the last couple of years, CMS has sought to mobilize public opposition to

demonstrations organized by extremist groups such as Sauvons Calais, which aims to 'save Calais' from migrants and which includes speakers from organizations that have been banned in the past on the grounds of racism and anti-Semitism (Chazan 2014). In response to one such demonstration organized in April 2014, CMS sought to mobilize support from the ground through social networking sites such as Facebook and blogs, which asked the public to look for all 'possibilities for resistance'. These protests are becoming increasingly antagonistic, and in September 2014 the riot police were forced to disperse one which turned into a riot after right- and left-wing activists clashed on the streets of Calais (Chazan 2014). CMS has also taken the struggle against these groups online, urging Facebook users to draw public attention to the activities of Sauvons Calais and lobbying for the removal of its page (although Facebook has refused to do this thus far).

### **Conclusion**

The counter-discourses of organisations such as CMS play a vital role in representing 'The Jungle' within a wider ideological framing beyond issues surrounding the failure of immigration policy. They reinstate the need to take humanitarian and human rights perspectives on migration seriously, and underline the issues and dilemmas these present to European national governments today. The depiction of the EU as a fortress standing against the rest of the world and the inherent justification to prevent 'others' from transgressing the ever-expanding borders of the EU raises questions about the impracticality of this 'fortress's' construction and the human consequences it may inevitably unleash.

Wider processes such as globalization and unequal social and economic development, as well as the malleable interpretation of human rights in cross-border conflicts and migration are also highlighted as exacerbating factors. The CMS's solidarity activism has to be located within the wider transnational processes of migration, where 'The Jungle' serves as a metaphor for a phenomenon that extends beyond Europe. In assessing the CMS's online activism as a counter-site, it needs to be juxtaposed with the representation of

immigration issues in the mainstream media where the 'migrant' is constructed as a deviant corporeal being devoid of human rights. The migrants are largely voiceless and accounts of their trauma are silenced; counter-sites such as those run by CMS seek to reframe migrants first and foremost as humans rather than merely as statistics or casualties crossing the Calais border. Such framing invites the public to empathize with the suffering and trauma of the migrant, and to form connections, which the mainstream media truncate.

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