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**International Solidarity and people-on-the-move in the French  
Calais region**

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## List of Acronyms

CESEDA	<i>Code d'Entree et du Sejour des Etrangers et du Droit d'Asile</i>
CSA	Civil Society Actors
CITS	Calais Informal Transit Camp
EU	European Union
MDM	<i>Medecins du Monde</i>
MRS	Mobile Refugee Support
MSF	<i>Medecins Sans Frontières</i>
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UK	United Kingdom

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## **Abstract**

The situation of people in transit to the UK in the Calais region (Northern France) has persisted for decades. As a direct result of the inaction of the French and British governments, these people have been surviving until their departure thanks to the help of local citizens' initiatives and humanitarian organisations. Since the destruction of the 2015-2016 CITS, a broader solidarity network of actors ranging from grassroots movements to international organisations has developed and managed the area by providing aid to the communities on the ground. This research emphasizes these new movements as being part of volunteer humanitarianism, thus challenging the traditional humanitarian aid model. This paper focuses on the internal and external functioning of these newly created organisations. Hence, this research proposes the following question: How and why do NGOs practices in the Calais region support people in transit since the dismantling of the 2015 Calais Informal Transit Settlement (CITS)? Drawing from participatory observation and informal interviewing during the summer 2023 within two new British-founded volunteer-run organisations, Care4Calais and Mobile Refugee Support, this paper provides critical insights on this new model of aid. Findings highlight the double-standards of the new independence in tension with the dependence feature of volunteer-based functioning, and its possible impact for both NGOs and people-on-the-move needs. Indeed, this paper emphasizes that this model of help is dependent on these organisations' abilities to be part of a strong and trusted network of actors. Further, this research highlights, through their discourses and practices, how NGOs participate in enabling the redrawing of imaginary and physical borders. Thus, it shows the new politicisation feature of NGOs against current border politics and poses the question of whether this new type of aid, despite its professionalisation and structuration is to be more regarded as humanitarian aid or activism?

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

The Calais region, in Northern France constitutes because of its unique geopolitical and legal context a particularly interesting case for the study of migration. This paper focuses on the crucial role of bottom-up NGOs in providing aid to people-on-the-move since the dismantling of the Calais Informal Transit Camp (CITS) in 2016 in the region. Taking the stance that NGOs are challenging established borders through apparent volunteer humanitarianism and de-bordering practices, this paper provides new interpretations of humanitarianism by framing aid as resistance to migration policies. Further, it provides critical insights for further researches on the efficiency of volunteer humanitarianism in the context of professionalised solidarity movements.

## **Keywords**

Solidarity, Non-Governmental Organisations, People-on-the-Move, Borderwork, Volunteer Humanitarianism, De-Bordering Solidarity

# Chapter 1. Introduction and Methodology

## 1.1 What is this research about?

This research focuses on the practices of non-governmental organizations (NGO) to support asylum-seekers in transit on their way to the United Kingdom in the Calais region, Northern France. This region, over the last twenty years, has been a “staging-post on a trajectory of migration” where people on the move often choose to settle in their journey to reach the UK (Haralambous, 2020, p.7). Indeed, the Calais region has been welcoming people on the move since the 1990s Kosovo War Conflict. From that moment, Northern France became a transit site thanks to its extremely close geographic proximity to the UK coast, only 31 kilometers away (Fox, 2016). Migrants have lived up to this day in informal transit settlements in the perimeter along the coast, from Sangatte beach located 7.4km from Calais center to the South, to Grande-Synthe, located 6.9 km from Dunkirk on to the North (see Figure 1). Therefore, the “Calais region” is the term used in this research. This particular setting led France to become a transit country, defined by the European Commission as “a country through which migration flows either by regular or irregular means” (EU Migration and Home Affairs, 2023). Most of these communities’ mobilities and aims correspond to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) labelling of mixed migration defined as “flows of people travelling together, in an irregular manner over the same routes and using the same means of transport but for different reasons” (UNHCR, 2023). Motives for leaving their home countries are emphasized as forced decisions because of conflict or persecution or motivated by a search for a better life (UNCHR, 2023). This paper uses the general term *people on the move* to refer to the different legal groups of migrants in the area. Despite the dramatic increase in the number of people on the move stuck at the borders in the last decades, French authorities have always denied the need to recognize CITS as official refugee camps, therefore negating any permission for action by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHRC) to settle in the region and provide humanitarian aid and protection under the status of a refugee camp (McGee & Pelham,



Figure 1

This is a map taken from *Le Parisien* (2021) showing the extent of the Calais region, where people-on-the-move are mainly living in CITSs.

settlements in the perimeter along the coast, from Sangatte beach located 7.4km from Calais center to the South, to Grande-Synthe, located 6.9 km from Dunkirk on to the North (see Figure 1). Therefore, the “Calais region” is the term used in this research. This particular setting led France to become a transit country, defined by the European Commission as “a country through which migration flows either by regular or irregular means” (EU Migration and Home Affairs, 2023). Most of these communities’ mobilities and aims correspond to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) labelling of mixed migration defined as “flows of people travelling together, in an irregular manner over the same routes and using the same means of transport but for different reasons” (UNHCR, 2023). Motives for leaving their home countries are emphasized as forced decisions because of conflict or persecution or motivated by a search for a better life (UNCHR, 2023). This paper uses the general term *people on the move* to refer to the different legal groups of migrants in the area. Despite the dramatic increase in the number of people on the move stuck at the borders in the last decades, French authorities have always denied the need to recognize CITS as official refugee camps, therefore negating any permission for action by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHRC) to settle in the region and provide humanitarian aid and protection under the status of a refugee camp (McGee & Pelham,



2018). Thus, aid provision in the area constitutes since the 1990s a complex dilemma and triggered a push and pull relationship between UK and France authorities and NGO aid providers.

Since 2009 the term “jungle” was used by Afghan nationals to refer to the informal settlements (Le Défenseur des Droits, 2015, p.5). The term “jungle” derives from the Patsho word “*dzangal*” meaning forests and woods, and was used to refer to the informal settlement nature environment and the extreme harshness of the living conditions around Calais (Ticktin, 2023). The term became widespread with the emergence of the 2015 CITS and was introduced into the French vocabulary through media attention, the UK and French authorities, as well as by migrants and NGO workers themselves. Nonetheless, for ethical matters, the term will be replaced by the term “Calais Informal Transit Settlement” (CITS).<sup>1</sup> This term will be used to refer to all informal settlements in the region mentioned in this paper. The 2015 CITS and most specifically the unprecedented mediatisation of people-on-the move living conditions in the area brought about a new phenomenon of “internationalization and professionalization of new modes of humanitarian aid” in the Calais region. Beforehand, aid was mainly brought about by local French NGOs (Demuynuck, 2022). The situation at the time made Calais a crossroad of solidarities encompassing a large range of actors, from grassroots movements and civil-led initiatives to international non-governmental organisations with different sizes, budgets and influences (Demuynuck, 2022). These new solidarity movements and their aid support is the main focus of the paper. More specifically, drawing from fieldwork within two newly UK based-organisations which appeared out of a solidarity movement following the 2015-2016 CITS period, the paper aims to analyse and provide insights on these new types of organisations’ function and practices in Northern France.

## 1.2 Justification

For over two decades, research has shown the complex character of the Calais region and people on the move until the dismantling of the CITS in 2016. More specifically, the literature focused on the consequences of securitization practices on people moving from the area (Thiel, 2022). Notably, findings show how exhaustion policies in practice constitute human rights violations by involving inappropriate violence against the communities on the ground. Specifically, the most recent literature provides insights into authorities’ perpetration and legitimization of Calais’ suffering until 2017 (Rygiel, 2011; Keen, 2020). Most of this literature applies this frame to the 2009 and 2015-2016 CITS periods (Panzone, n-d). Only a few researches take the NGOs’ analysis stance. The literature provides insights into the role of NGOs in supporting aid to people on the

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<sup>1</sup> This term is the author’s creation and will be used throughout this research to describe not only the 2015-2016 Calais settlement but more broadly, all informal camps that ever existed in the region.

move since 2015-2016 CITS explicitly using the term "solidarity on the move" (Patteri, 2022, p.1). Patteri (2022) shows how civil society organizations and grassroots organizations have challenged French deterrence and especially no-fixation policies put in place by the French government in the aftermath. Further, these actors changed their mode of operations and became mobile as a means to continue providing (Ambrosini et al., 2022). More papers offer insights into these regional actors' importance to compensate for government support's failure in meeting people-on-the-move's fundamental human rights (Ambrosini et al., 2022). Interestingly, research on Calais has demonstrated a novelty character of aid support nature with the 2015 CITS. Indeed, it shows the area's unprecedented level of mobilization characterized this period. The emerging solidarity movement featured international grassroots solidarity movements and inexperienced citizen-led initiatives motivated by a combination of humanitarian and militantism reasoning (Sandri, 2018). Sandri framed this new type of aid actors in the context of the 2015 CITS (2018). Nevertheless, research has provided little insight into the aid actors since 2017. The latest research focusing on NGOs' work in the region frames actors demonstrates how actors in the region act in the name of solidarity because of the failure of traditional humanitarianism and opens the debate of "solidarity politics" in the grassroots movement setting (Harrington, 2023, p.45). Nonetheless, it does not provide insights into concrete advantages and disadvantages of newly installed organizations and their alternative modes of functioning. It stands as an interpretation of solidarity as a motivation for aid. In turn, this paper will add to this theme. Further, borders have been in the Calais literature regarding migrant activism 2009 (Rygiel, 2011). However, more recently, borderwork, traditional humanitarian work provided at borders has been contested increasingly, especially with the rise of citizen-led organizations and alternative humanitarianism. Drawing on the notion of de-bordering solidarity, this research will expand on applying and providing a new interpretation of borderwork as resistance to border policies in the Calais region and simultaneously providing concrete and practical insights on the functioning of newly founded organizations, initially grassroots movements established in the region between 2015 and 2017 (Ambozzini, 2021). In other words, this paper focuses on professionalizing these movements over the years in Calais. Lastly, this paper mainly focuses on UK-based organizations as being the most established since 2015 in the region and are particularly representative of the recent internalization of the aid network in the Calais region (Bouagga, 2018). Thus, the central aim of this research is to update the analysis of actors' nature and functioning in the Calais region since the dismantling of the 2015 CITS.

### 1.3 Research Question

With the objective of providing critical insights on the post 2015-CITS organisations internal and external organisation and functioning in the Calais region, I propose the following research question:

- How and why do NGOs practices in the Calais region support people in transit since the dismantling of the 2015 Calais Informal Transit Settlement (CITS)?

### 1.4 Sub-questions

- What are the motivations of NGOs on the ground since the dismantling of the 2015 CITS?
- How and why are NGOs' activities constrained?
- Why can NGOs practices be regarded as de-bordering solidarity?

### 1.5 Data Collection

This research was conducted with two main qualitative methods. Throughout the fieldwork time, the first qualitative method used for the data collection was participatory observation and the second informal interviews.

In the ethnographic field, participatory observation is a research method where the researcher is immersed in the participants' day-to-day activities (University of Toronto, 2019). Further, the latter differs from other naturalistic observations involving interactions between the researcher and participants (Ibid, 2019). Historically, this method features long periods within which the researcher is immersed in a particular community and can work in various settings (University of Toronto, 2019). Additionally, the latter method is very labor- and time-consuming. Nonetheless, it also enables a close-up view of a particular phenomenon (Conrad, 2001). Lastly, the choice of this research also implies that the researcher can communicate with the community members in their native language (Wilson, 2005).

Accordingly, to this description, my fieldwork was realized over the Summer within two different UK-based INGOs, the NGO Care4Calais from the 19th to 30th of July 2023, and the INGO Mobile Refugee Support (MRS) from the 27<sup>th</sup> of August to the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. Considering there was no guarantee for me to be able to conduct interviews in the field, participatory observation was the most relevant and helpful method. To achieve so, I volunteered within these aforementioned NGOs. Volunteering with these NGOs consisted of participating in the organization's daily routine, mainly handling donations and preparing services (Care4Calais)

and items (MRS) to the various distribution sites in the afternoons. This first method was chosen based on constraints regarding direct access to migrants and asylum seekers on sites otherwise, but also, to understand the practical functioning of these NGOs and volunteering practices on the ground. Additionally, it benefited by increasing my awareness of area dynamics. Within the time spent on the ground, the sample of informal interviewees was estimated to be at least 30 asylum-seekers and migrants, mainly adult men as women were less visible on distribution sites. These people were ethnically from Eritrea, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iran. However, in a few isolated cases, people were also from Tchad and Congo. The second part of the volunteers consisted of Care4Calais and MRS staff and volunteer workers. With both NGOs being United Kingdom (UK) based, most people I was in contact with were British natives, thus, speaking English.

Secondly, informal interviews were the second research method intended as a complementary feature of participatory observation. Russell Bernard (2013) defines informal interviews as a total lack of structure or control over one's response (Dohrenwend and Richardson, 1965, p.156). The latter is regarded as the method of choice at the beginning of participant observation fieldwork and during ethnographic fieldwork as it allows for topics' unpacking that could have been overlooked during the pre-fieldwork research (Russell Bernard, 2013, p.156). This method is not lightweight because it primarily relies on unburning the researcher's memory and developing field notes during daily sessions before one's computer or paper (Russell Bernard, 2013, p.156). This method's aim' was to find out about volunteer NGO structures, interactions and relations with migrants, and other actors like local authorities. Throughout the fieldwork duration, informal interviews took place with NGO workers to understand their work dynamics ( see Appendix 1). This method was chosen when acknowledging in the field the challenging feature of conducting semi and structured interviews with migrants on the ground as well as for organizational matters (Hovy et al., 2005). Indeed, to get access to interviews, the best option was to contact NGOs and trade help with any tasks on the ground with information and access to the move. After contacting different NGOs, I scheduled an interview with the vice-president, Claire Millot of the local French NGO Salam, a migrant aid NGO providing emergency aid (food, place to sleep, medical services) and administrative services to asylum-seekers in Calais and around Dunkirk (Salam, 2023). This was also informal. Findings will be completed by the gathering of secondary data when necessary. This paper used online interviews, documentaries, NGO social networks and websites, legal documents, and reports from Human Rights associations and NGOs MRS, Care4Calais, Salam to support the primary data collection methods.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitations

This research focuses on the migration situation in the Calais region because of its unique legal and international geopolitical frame between France and United Kingdom management. The prior is of interest for two main reasons. First, as not being recognized as a humanitarian site, it does not benefit from international aid humanitarianism, thus leaving civil society actors in charge of humanitarian emergency assistance and services. Moreover, this space constitutes a transit space, meaning that communities on the ground are not willing to stay there for an undetermined period, nor are they willing to be reinserted into French society. Further, the focus on the French borders of this immigration route, as a French citizen speaking fluently in English, provided me with a language advantage. As a French researcher speaking English, it made it easier to contact and communicate with British NGOs on sites, thus shortening my adaptation period. Moreover, this region remains the preferred crossing route to reach England despite the increase of crossings for the lower region of Normandy and the reinforcement of border measures. Lastly, this research focused on two main volunteer-run NGOs, both UK-based and providing complementary services on the ground and born from solidarity movements during (Care4Calais) and after (Mobile Refugee Support) the CITS dismantlement.

Because of the adopted scope of analysis, the paper comes with some limitations. Indeed, whilst focusing on NGO functioning and practices in the Calais region, no insights will be provided on the efficiency of these practices on the different communities in transit. This is a consequence of a research purposely chosen to take NGOs insider viewpoint and not the asylum-seekers and migrants one. More generally, the idea of not focusing on the efficiency per se is a consequence of the research time frame. On the one hand, fieldwork could only be conducted for a month and does not allow for measuring the long-term impact of such practices of given NGOs. On the other hand, measuring the efficiency of such practices would have implied taking the stance of asylum-seekers and migrants', thus staying on the ground for longer as requiring an adaptation and familiarization period. Lastly, this angle for research was chosen despite the limited amount of material NGO resources: official administrative reports and a few academic papers focusing on specific NGOs.

## **1.7 Ethical considerations**

Conducting participatory observation and informal interviews is challenging and poses ethical dilemmas. Firstly, there are the possible asymmetries of power going on sites, especially when approaching people on the move (Edwards et al., 2013). Indeed, this community has been oppressed and marginalized on many occasions. Therefore, coming along being a white French citizen in total legality could have had possibly complicated any form of dialogue. On top of that, the possible dynamic of insider/outsider, was the most difficult to tackle. (Edwards et al., 2013) Going as a volunteer was intended to close this potential gap and ease the reciprocal trust-building process as well as accountability. My fieldwork confirmed the effectiveness of this decision. Volunteering meant I was perceived in a positive manner. I was never considered as an insider, and as such was afforded the opportunity to build trust and have meaningful conversations with these communities on distribution sites.

This dynamic, particularly in communities on distribution sites is a potentially enhancing quality factor. Similarly, when contacting NGOs, I explained my personal and academic purpose for coming to the sites to avoid any misconceptions about the duality of researcher/volunteer worker. In reaching out, this paper was built to provide awareness of NGOs' efforts to handle the Calais situation and would constitute constructive feedback on their works and practices. This discourse surely enhanced and developed the trust-building and answers rate to emails. Out of five, three NGOs replied. This very consideration appeared when I chose informal interviewing and participatory observations as the two main research methods. However, as an outsider, NGO workers and communities on the ground took time to open up and share relevant and constructive information for the paper (Edwards et al., 2013). Lastly, the question of photographs and informed consent arises. Due to confidentiality and security measures on sites as well as age-related issues, all pictures of people-on-the-move presented in this paper from asylum-seekers and migrants and those involving NGO workers on sites are taken directly from websites and social networks. The only pictures in this research from my resources are those born in both warehouses without any faces or people present.

## **1.8 Positionality**

Being a 22-year-old French white middle-class woman, conducting fieldwork within different communities implied many things. Firstly, it indicated that I have never lacked material resources or access to goods and services. Nonetheless, I have witnessed these social inequalities

between my close surroundings and frequentations. Being from a relatively wealthy social class put me in a relation of power over the less privileged social classes of French society. The latter constituted a bias during my fieldwork and resulted in me being empathic and sometimes even emotional when confronted with Calais's situation and their life experiences, which I often considered unfair. From a young age, I have cultivated a genuine and deep interest in these communities' struggles, often reaching a safer and envisioned better place to build their lives. The hardships they are going through, especially with regards to police violence and lack of support from French authorities. Sustain a decent lifestyle on their soil when arriving in France, has always represented for me one of the biggest social injustices. It is one which I have been continuously educating myself on and have focused upon throughout my academic studies. My opinions on the debate have always been divergent from my relatives and family, putting me in a more complex positionality setting as perceived as a defendant of these people's rights. This passive activism also led me to write on this specific topic, which I recognize as a significant failure from international and national authorities and institutions to handle migration flows. Additionally, as a French and white woman, my gender identity as a female has always prevailed on the privileged part of my identity. I have not lived racism in France nor had any interactions with French local or national police, unlike most of the people on the move which I met between Calais and Dunkirk. The latter constituted another bias in understanding the depth of refugees' and migrants' struggles. However, these people's struggles, hardships, and experiences with authorities since their arrival on the French territory can potentially complicate my interactions with them. Nonetheless, I have often been the victim of machismo, among other inappropriate behaviours. The latter constituted another bias as a young modern woman conducting fieldwork for the first time in a traditional male-dominant environment. The last surely biased my interactions with older men (30 and above) raised in communities from the Middle East, who may often hold alternative perceptions of the women's role in society. I have been confronted with uncomfortable situations and received some inappropriate comments. This intersectionality point made me reconsider my legitimacy to be there and sometimes limited my interactions with them.

## Chapter 2. Conceptualizing Aid as Solidarity in the Calais region

### 2.1 Humanitarianism in the Calais region ?

#### 2.1.1 A Critique of traditional humanitarianism

Ticktin (2011) shapes upon the case of the *Sans-papiers* Movement in France, the political repercussions of humanitarianism in France. In the latter, *Sans-papiers* are regarded by traditional humanitarian aid as "suffering bodies" rather than marginalized political actors, thus, implying that the model of humanitarian assistance is a "regime of care" (Ticktin, 2011, p.58). This regime of care refers to humanitarian organizations practices, which only address the suffering of undocumented migrants rather than the deeply-rooted historical context causing their suffering. According to Ticktin (2011), these "regimes of care" results in the reproducing of a "racialized postcolonial nation-state, rendering immigrants visible in French society primarily in the form of gendered and racialized victims" (Ticktin, 2011, p.24). Thus, it denies the recognition of providers and receivers on an equal footing (Ibid, p.24). Consequently, traditional aid organizations are perpetuating "anti-politics" conflating with the social, political, and economic contexts of struggle onto the present suffering of individual bodies. Further, the underlying idea is that humanitarian cannot possibly be "apolitical", rather because it perpetrates the savior/victim binary, traditional humanitarian aid is an accomplice to the current political system by humanitarian organizations insert themselves into the specific, historical, and geographical political contexts they assist (Harrington, 2023, p.32). As opposed to this vision, Ticktin (2011) recognises the Sans-Papiers movement as a new humanitarian model, thus, centered on caring for a universally "morally legitimate suffering body" (Ticktin, 2011, p.3). *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) and *Médecins du Monde* (MDM) are taken as central organizations of this humanitarian model as representing the 1980s and aid political ideology of "*sans frontières*." (Ticktin, 2011, p.4). Despite the novelty of the movement, the author takes the stance that by engaging in care rather than contention, it invalidates any prospect of the "suffering" becoming an independent political actor. Sharing the same critique views, Sinatti (2023) describes with "borderwork" NGOs and civil actors' practices and involvement towards migrants in border spaces. Framing of the traditional understanding of "borderwork" defined by Pallister et al. (2017) as "work conducted by humanitarian principles and focusing on relieving the suffering of migrants at borders," similarly criticized by Ticktin (2011) "regime of care" terminology (Ticktin, 2011, p.58). More, traditional borderwork is regarded by Gerard and Weber (2019) to imply the "support of a securitized agenda and behold to meeting



actual obligations, arguably off their humanitarian objectives.” Contradicting this idea, Sinatti (2022) proposes an alternative and modernised understanding of borderwork actors. Traditionally envisaged as the humanitarian aid, borderwork and migrants assistance is defined by an increased participation of “ordinary people in processes of production, reproduction, and transformation of the border have traditionally been the domain of nation-states” (Sinatti, 2023, p.14). Differently put, borderwork has become actors’ means to constantly renegotiate, challenge, confirm, and transform physical borders, thus implying a certain politicisation of borders. These actions are rooted in deservingness principles put forward by Bonizzoni and Hajer (2021). Lastly, Sinatti (2023) found that borderwork is characterized by the messiness and contradictions inherent in civil society initiatives assisting migrants and the coexisting opposites, respectively, care and control, empowerment and protection, legality and illegality of crime and solidarity, hospitality, and hostility (Sinatti, 2023). Haralambous (2020) also criticizes the humanitarian model of "care" based on Palestinian refugee camps (Harrington, 2023, p.14). In her view, humanitarianism neutralizes the space of the camp as a "political exception" (Haralambous, 2020, p.185). Further, humanitarianism within is regarded as "tangential" to the State and the capitalist system (Ibid, p.193). Thus, humanitarian organizations follow the corporate models, inherently restricting decision-making in charge. This phenomenon led to a new type of politics by European leftists identifying as "antistatist, antiracist, and anticapitalist" mobilizing behind refugees/migrants as a new subject of political action (Haralambous, 2020, p.193). This is the "humanitarianization of politics and the politicization of humanitarianism," characterizing the Left's present theoretical fixation with the refugee (Haralambous, 2020, p.193). Despite the novelty of the movement, Haralambous recognises new solidarity movements and NGOs tendency to associate migrants as “revolutionary vanguard”, thus, shifting away the assistance model from inclusion to fetishization (Ibid, p.195).

### **2.1.2 Volunteer Humanitarianism**

Sandri (2018) developed the term “volunteer humanitarianism” in the context of Calais 2015-2016 CITS to analyze the unprecedented solidarity levels witnessed. This concept directly challenges traditional humanitarianism. Sandri's definition entails several criteria explaining how and why "volunteer humanitarianism" alters the humanitarian aid model. Firstly, this new type of aid is "not supervised or funded by international aid agencies or governments but based entirely on the work of volunteers and financed by donations from the public"(Sandri, 2018, p.66). Secondly, it relies on actors, most of the time, unexperienced and untrained, engaging in a "humanitarian emergency" context. Thus, it leads to "improvisation" (Sandri, 2018, p.77). Thirdly, the informality of the camp and proximity to the U.K. bring about a "local" and "flexible" engagement style of

volunteering. Consequently, "volunteer humanitarianism" defining elements are improvisation, informality, geographical proximity, sociality and activism. Further, these organisations are categorized by their position "at the local or regional level for specified limited goals, and they usually have a restricted supply of internal organizational resources" (Kivel et al., 2020, p.133). Kivel and INCITE! (2020) categorization of grassroots organizations relevant to frame potential advantages and limits of new alternative organisations in the Calais region. Further, these organisations are categorized by "having a restricted supply of internal organizational resources" (Kivel et al., 2020, p.133). Denniston (n.d) argues similarly by proposing how "citizen-led humanitarianism" organizational accountability towards people on the move is contradictory and, at times, problematic. Thus, it suggests that organisations success in Calais depend on their ability to form alliances with other groups. More, Denniston expands Sandri's concept of "volunteer humanitarianism" to highlight how the "heterogeneous citizen-led activities in Calais" are better at prioritizing a "downstream" model of accountability (Denniston, n-d, p.68).

The activism feature is especially relevant in analysing current NGOs functioning in the Calais region. Indeed, as opposed to the "anti-politics" humanitarianism frame, volunteer humanitarianism stands as a symbol against the strict and violent migration policies across Europe. In this paper, volunteer humanitarianism is viewed as a direct and politicized form of humanitarianism. More, it leads to a disruption of the relationship between humanitarianism and forms of neoliberal governance as grassroots movements and civil-led society initiatives are, in this context the main actors and assume the role of humanitarian organizations but yet unsettle governmentality by contesting the State and its practices at the border. Volunteer humanitarianism is political *per se* as being responsible for creating new social spaces where volunteers engage in sociality and affectivity, also demonstrating that the neoliberal system does not just lead to utilitarian and rational subjectivities but more, to compassion, empathy, and other modes of social relations (Muehlebach, 2012). Most precisely, the underlying logic of volunteer humanitarianism is that these grassroots movements are "responding to local needs or shared interests rather than policy directives" (Ishkanian et al., 2021, p.2). Thus, volunteer humanitarianism reflects a certain resistance to the conventional aid architecture (Bonizzoni et al., 2020, p.7)

Throughout this research, the attempt is to show how definition can be applied current NGOs in the Calais region and thus challenges volunteer humanitarianism actors framing. Volunteer humanitarianism actors are referred to as "volunteers" and more, encompass a range from "ordinary citizens" to new aid actors who lack professional training in relief work but take "independent initiative to resolve the needs of refugees" (Sandri, 2018, p.77). In other words, they are civil society actors (CSA). Further, taking on the same framing, this range of actors is regarded

as the formal and informal social institutions standing between the state, the economy and the private sector and filling for public authorities, unresolved needs (Dimitriadis et al., 2021, p.4).

## **2.2 Solidarity as resistance?**

### **2.2.1 NGOs practices and solidarity**

Ishkanian and Shutes (2021) frame solidarity in the context of Greece's experience of autonomous volunteering during the migration crisis (Ishkanian et al., 2021, p.1). Its main features are relevant in framing NGO solidarity in the Calais region nowadays. Assisting refugees is described as a "form of solidarity," which became over time a "highly politicized model" of solidarity and came to represent a new "array of progressive and anti-systemic action" (Ishkanian et al, 2021, p.2). In the context of Calais, solidarity is understood as the motivation of these new organisations Ticktin's regime of care characteristic of humanitarian aid model. Sinatti (2023) in framing civil-led assistance starts from taking Cantat (2016) view on solidarity which is related to struggles opposing a state's logic of exclusion and subordinate inclusion (Ibid, p.17). In other words, solidarity are emphasised as a mean to fight against systemic and politically -related discrimination.

More, solidarity practices is represented by "linking refugees and activists" and to allow the "emergence of discourses and identities that challenge the status and bordered accounts of belonging" (Cantat, 2016, p.17). In the same logic, Sinatti (2023) proposes that solidarity practices enable a redrawing of the lines between inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, the idea is to analyse how much it applies to NGOs practices in the Calais region nowadays. To further understand solidarity, this RP draws on Spade's (2020) definition of "mutual aid" as "by creating spaces where people come together based on some shared need or concern but encounter work closely with people whose lives and experiences differ from their own, cultivate solidarity" (Spade, 2020, p.137). According to the author, to cultivate solidarity, mutual aid projects should follow move away from the "charity model" based on three main classifications necessary for the NGO to move away from the charity model: "a) work to dismantle existing harmful systems and beat back their expansion; b) work to provide for people targeted by such systems and institutions directly, and c) work to build alternative infrastructure through which people can get their needs met" (Spade, 2020, p.134). In contrast, Spade (2020) defends the idea that "mutual aid" is achieved based on the completion of all three criteria (Spade, 2020, p.137). This paper will add on this idea by analyzing the extent to which solidarity is achieved through NGOs contributing to "mutual aid" in the Calais region. According to Spade's classification words like "charity, aid, and services" denote the provision of support for survival to poor people where wealthy people and government govern that support. Shutes's (2021) conceptualization of

international volunteering motivations in alternative humanitarianism approaches, the author state that its focal aim is to make "visible" and "meet the needs of all migrants" regardless of their status of "refugee" or lack thereof. Further, in this conceptualization of "solidarity," the practical results are of "prioritizing dignity, respect, and solidarity" rather than "expediency" (Ishkanian et al. 2020, p.2)

### **2.2.2 NGOs practices in Calais as de-bordering solidarity?**

Recently, Dimitriadis et al. (2021) conceptualized the term "de-bordering solidarity" (Dimitriadis et al., 2021, p.2). De-bordering solidarity as the "various actions of help towards immigrants undertaken by actors in civil society in contesting asylum seekers and borders in practice through activities that challenge border closure and exclusion of irregular immigrants from social services" (Dimitriadis et al., 2021, p.2). Later, Ambrosini (2022) to analyse the political meaning of citizen-led society actors' involvement in the reception of asylum seekers. In this paper, the aim will be to use the concept to analyze the extent to which current NGO practices are politically motivated in providing aid in the post-2015 CITS. According to the authors, de-bordering solidarity practices imply that civil society actors do not have as a primary aim to achieve political transformation nor, at least, declare it openly (Ambrosini, 2022, p.2). It implies that, generally, actors do not aim to subvert the social and political order but establish human rights fulfillment as a focal point of commitment by opposing xenophobic impulses and increasing the political and cultural spaces of the settlements of immigrants to achieve so (Schwieritz and Schewenken, 2020). Thus, de-bordering practices indicate more than a direct political engagement, a politicization by default. In its latest definition, Ambrosini (2022) add that mobilizations of civil society actors to support asylum-seekers, however not being their primary motive, contest to some extent policies of asylum and borders in practice (Schwieritz & Schwenken, 2020). De-bordering solidarity practices are often related to volunteer humanitarianism practices an aid understood as initially motivated by humanitarian concerns, however rapidly engaging in political considerations, and connected with political activism. This idea is central in analyzing NGO practices in the context of Calais and border politics since 2015 in the Calais region. Further, an interesting de-bordering feature of de-bordering solidarity is its inner link to "civil disobedience" (Ambrosini, 2022, p.7). Indeed, because civil actors engage politically by providing aid to asylum-seekers in the name of human rights, their actions are legally described as civil disobedience. Nonetheless, because of their humanitarian motives, civil disobedience is a consequence of a "morally justified protest" for these actors. It is defined as a "premeditated transgression of legal norms without calling into question obedience to the rule of law as a whole" (Ambrosini, 2022, p.8). Differently put, these actors play on legality

but not willingly, only because they must. In the same logic, their practices are not a direct resistance to politics or leaders in place but an indirect one. Nonetheless, this conceptualization also puts in perspective the possibility of a political instrumentalization of aid for political ends. Lastly, according to Ambrosini (2022), in de-bordering practices, borders are changed and redefined, and two main de-bordering practices can be distinguished. The first one is external de-bordering solidarity. It implies rescuing people from the sea and directly going against border closure. The internal-de-bordering practices involve providing various help to enable people to remain on the territory (Ambrosini, 2022). In the research paper, both dimensions are interesting in understanding the ultimate political meaning of NGOs involvement in borderwork.

## Chapter 3. Background into The Study

### 3.1 The UK-French border Regime

Over the last twenty years, the Calais region has become an international geographical and geopolitical border. In this region, people are “trapped on the borders” (Panzone, N-A, p.7). Since the 1988 construction of the Eurotunnel, France and the United Kingdom have continuously been intertwined and have collaborated on affairs regarding the Calais border zone. Simultaneously, this period marks, at a European level, the creation of the European Schengen zone in 1985; the materialization of the European will to offer “free circulation for some and not others” within Europe (Tickin, 2005, p.351). The UK and France were member states of the European Union (EU) until 2018. Nonetheless, the UK chose not to abide by the Schengen Convention, which organized the border opening between participating European countries (Le Défenseur des Droits, 2015, p.7). In 1991, with the ratification of the Sangatte Protocol, the town of the Eurotunnel was formed between the two countries (Timberlake, 2023). The latter Protocol established frontier controls and cooperation in criminal justice, public safety, and mutual assistance between the UK and France about the Calais border zone (Ibid, 2023). Complementary to these first border externalization measures, 2003 was the year of increased control of internal borders and criminalization of migrant movement within Europe and the Calais region border zone. Andersson (2014) states that border externalization is the management of migrants at the border of one country to another subcontracting country. This process refers to this externalization process between European states as “internal externalization” (Welander, 2020, p.30). Externalisation of border controls are the subordinate relations between a country in the Global North and a counterpart from the Global South (Welander, 2020, p.30). In the case of Calais, the externalization of the UK border made France UK's migration containment country (Ibid, 2021, p.30). Further, externalization measures redefine borders by creating virtual borders and contradicting the traditional understanding of nation-states contained within territorial boundaries (Andersson, 2014). These first measures participated in border control strengthening. Simultaneously, the creation of the EU Schengen zone created an organized mechanism of European citizenship through “differential inclusion” (Rygiel, 2011, p.1). Practically, through the externalisation practices, pathways of exclusion have been drawn (Rygiel, 2011, p.4). At the European level, the 2003 Dublin Regulation criminalized movement by forcing arrivals in the European Union (EU) to claim asylum in the first country of arrival, thus increasing surveillance technology and tracking which restricted migrants' routes across Europe (Walia, 2021, p.3). Consequently, the European border cities like Calais experienced political, structural, and geographical transformations over

that time (Harrington, 2023, p.4). The Dublin Regulation translates into an increased control process with the centralization and informatization of data (SIS, SIVE), demanding fingerprints of asylum seekers for identification matters, the so-called EURODAC mechanism and the implementation of European private surveillance police at every European border, FRONTEX (Thales Group 2023). The UK is not a party to the Schengen Zone, but is to the Dublin III Regulation of 26 June 2013, under the terms of which a state is responsible for the examination of an asylum seeker application, is the first country, and thus, has access to the EURODAC information system (Le Défenseur des Droits, 2015, p.7). The same year, the *Touquet* treaty was signed in 2003 between the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy and UK Home Secretary David Blunket, finalizing the creation of a geopolitical border in Calais (Harrington, 2023, p.4) This border zone by a "British-operated and funded security, surveillance and policing across the Northern France border region" as well as implying the creation of "zero points of fixation" (Ibid, p.4). Finally, Article 9 demands the removal all UK asylum seeker offices in France despite being established as part of the Sangatte Protocol in 1991 (GOV.UK, 2023). These arrangements between both countries mean that safe and legal routes are next to non-existent and caused to establish a border zone by the move from Coquelles to Grande-Synthe (Welander, 2020). Consequently, these EU securitization border politics have led to the creation of all "illegal" immigration narratives now used as "pretexts for renewed and expanded tactics of military interdictions" (Panzone, n-d, p.5). The existence of "illegal" migration has become a root for political and economic management in the region, exploiting the difference between the legal and illegal. Thus, these politics leads illegality's "legal production" (Panzone, n-d, p. 6). Practically, the legal establishment of these accords forces asylum seekers to unsafely attempt to reach the UK through smuggling modes to claim asylum in the UK (Ibid, p.4). Paradoxically, despite the apparent lack of collaboration of States, asylum-seekers have the right to legally claim asylum in the U.K (Refugee Council, 2023). However, because of complex British immigration policies and bureaucratic red tape, many are forced to wait in France for months without assistance (Zhang, 2023). In 2023, the Sangatte Protocol and *Le Touquet* Treaty remain intact and unmodified by UK and French authorities. However, since the announcement of Brexit, the UK does not abide by the Dublin Regulation Treaty. Further, since 2018, the chance of people-on-the move to cross has decreased with the toughening of British immigration legislations, as shown by Rwanda accords on hold until final ruling and installations of floating detention centres for illegal migrants (BBC, 2023).

## **3.2 CITS history in light of human rights**

### **3.2. 1 Minimum living conditions**

France and the U.K. are bound to the European Union directive of January 27, 2003, laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum-seekers. It states that every E.U. member state must provide “material reception conditions to ensure a standard of living adequate for the health of applicants and capable of ensuring their subsistence” (Council of the European Union, 2003). As part of this directive, Article 1 stated that “minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers will normally suffice to ensure them a dignified standard of living and comparable living conditions in all Member states” (Council of the European Union, 2003). More, Article 1(6) states that Member states are bound by obligations under instruments of international law, prohibiting any discrimination (OHCHR, 2023). While the latter only applies to asylum seekers status, the European Convention on Human Rights (Resolution 1509 -2006) also requires parties to prevent human rights violations against irregular migrants effectively. Indeed, the Convention states that the right to life should be enjoyed and respected. In turn, unreasonable force is forbidden to prevent non-nationals' entry into a country and more, a duty exists for authorities to endeavour to save those whose lives may be in danger in seeking to enter a country. Irregular migrants should also be protected from “torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (OHCHR, 2023). From an international stance, the UNHR recognizes that people recognized as "migrants" are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, especially concerning the right to housing. Further, because of their legal status, they are often unable to get adequate housing and often live in "overcrowded and insecure conditions" (OHCHR, 2023). Despite the risks, these populations have rights also stated in the Convention relating to the status of refugees (1951). In Article 21, "contracting states (...) shall accord refugees lawfully staying in their territory treatment as favourable as possible and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances” (OHCHR, 2023). In the same sense, General Comment No.20 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on non-discrimination in economic, social, and cultural rights states that "The Covenant Rights apply to everyone including non-nationals, such as refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, migrant workers and victims of international trafficking, regardless of legal status and documentation” (UNHCR, 2009).

Despite these measures, the reality of the Calais region remains far from ideal, and, as illustrated by the CITS history, through deterrence and politics of exhaustion, it is the perfect example of minimum living conditions infringements.



### **3.3 A history of CITS in the Calais region**

#### **3.3.1 CITS Before 2015**

The government never recognized CITS as an official refugee camp. Rather, CITS was regarded as a “state of exception” (Agamben, 2005, p.39). It is “an anomic space in which what is at stake is a force without law” (Ibid, p.39). These places are characterized by a suspension of the law operated purposely by the French and UK States in Calais’ case. Further, states of exception are spaces marking the border between facts and legal requirements but also between the fact of being human or not (Minca, 2005, p.406). The latter is illustrated in Calais’ case within the evolution of CITS in the region. In 1999, the first official centre opened in a former Eurotunnel building. At this point, the Sangatte migrant centre started with the help of the French government and was managed by the Red Cross (Ibid, 2016). In 2002, the French government ordered the closing of the centre as the British government started to worry about the number of illegal migrants coming in. More precisely, the camp was closed to stop a “symbol of the illegal immigration magnet in the world” (Le Défenseur des Droits, 2015, p.9). This closing led to the first big deterioration of living conditions for 2000 people on the move (Le Défenseur des Droits, 2015). Thus, this moment symbolizes the starting point of a deterrence assimilated to an “exclusion” strategy, in that case, decided by both countries (Keen, 2020, p.14). In turn, it leads to the understanding of border regime practices as described by Arendt (1951) as “places within which the subjectivity of a person can be transformed from that of a citizen, or a political subject with “the right to have rights” to a quasi-citizen or non- citizen with less rights, to an abject subject whose very right to have rights is suspended” in Rygiel (2011) (Rygiel, 2011, p.2). This is illustrated by the recurring expulsions and police raids rhythming the next years. Following the closing of the CITS, housing options were limited in the camp leaving people on people-on-the move to occupy “abandoned plots of land, industrial zones and buildings outside Calais city centre” and in Sangatte’s woods (Harrington, 2023, p.5). The situation remained rhythmied by police expulsions followed by numerous wanderings until 2009, when the main CITS was bulldozed and many of the 1000 illegal migrants living there were arrested. In July 2009, as part of UK-French administrative arrangements, governments decided on a stepping up of policing operations to “avoid concentrations of irregular immigrants at the common frontier” (Keen, 2020, p.14). The framing and generalisation of Calais population as “illegal economic migrants” justified the use of forces despite the EU Convention on irregular migration to avoid unreasonable use of violence against these populations. Indeed, as stated by Ticktin (2016), the status differentiation between asylum seeker, refugee and “illegal immigrant” is central to the narrative and distinguishes the “innocent from the guilty and deserving from the underserving” (Ticktin, 2016, p258). Transcending legal terms asylum seekers and

refugees are connotating a sense of “real” danger and have “well founded fears of persecution” (Ibid, p.159). Also, asylum-seekers and refugees are legally protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The term “illegal economic migrants” are portrayed as “wily”, “trying to lie their way into the European benefits” and therefore as dangers to the European security (Ticktin, 2016, p.259). This is, based on this very narrative that securitization measures were allowed in Calais. Indeed, there is no internationally agreed-upon legal definition for migrants. Thus, migrants are often lawfully disregarded right-rise because they do not fit into the legal definition of either refugee or asylum-seekers (Amnesty International, 2023). Consequently, border control produces a differentiation and stratification of legal statuses and subjectivities (Keen) For more than a decade, the idea of creating new reception centres was rejected based on the argument that it would lead to the formation of a “new gathering point for migrants” (Le Défenseur des Droits, 2015, p.82). Rapidly, the situation escalated (Panzone, N-A, p.7). In 2011, local French police started to conduct almost daily raids on people on the move in an abandoned factory. Calais deputy mayor Philippe Mignonet stated that the local council was determined to keep a “certain level of pressure on exiles” to send the message that “it is useless to come to Calais” (Keen, 2020, p.14). By 2014, many more migrants had reached Calais and were waiting for potential crossing. Living in disastrous conditions, people on the move subsisted having to go through multiple evictions and CITS partial destructions.

### **3.3.2 CITS From 2015**

In 2015, migrants’ settlements became of another level. The so-infamously called Calais ‘Jungle’, located just under 500 metres from the Port of Calais on the eastern edge, and next to the N216 bypass where migrants would hop on lorries, grew to an estimated 10,000 population (Free Movement, 2023). The consequence of the authorities’ intention to exclude these populations from French towns and society created a state of exception.

Indeed, by excluding people on the move from any political community and negating their fundamental human rights, they found themselves living in a state of exception but one that also became permanent in the spatial organisation in the form of a camp (Agamben, 998, p. 20). With regards to the 2015 CITS the UK is often regarded to have breached its international legal obligations by "circumventing the right to asylum and, as a result, the protection against *non-*

*refoulement*" through its externalization of borders to France and underlying U.K. forces deployed



Figure 2

This is a picture taken from Rossignol (2016) showing the former 2015 CITS next to the alternative French government solution to accommodate people-on-the-move.

for securitization matters (Welander, 2021, p.31). Moreover, no action was taken despite the urge for the U.K. and France to find solutions and implement the Common European System and the Dublin II Treaty (UNHCR, 2015). Irrespective of these measures, the reality of the Calais region remains far from ideal, and, as illustrated by the CITS history, through deterrence and politics of exhaustion, it is the perfect example of human rights minimum living conditions infringement. The 2015-2016

CITS was self-managed and regarded as a community of care (Ticktin, 2023). Migrants will come and settle. However, in return, they will participate in the daily livelihood of the settlement by providing a service and being part of the local economy of makeshift shops and infrastructures (Tickin, 2023). It clearly illustrates Agamben (1998) the paradox between exclusion and simultaneous inclusion in another informal political community. In August 2015, both governments signed another agreement to strengthen again security cooperation in Calais and 3 million pounds were provided to ensure the dismantling of the CITS (Keen, 2020, p.14). The CITS was dismantled in October 2016 by the police under the decision and collaboration of the UK and French authorities along with the EU involvement (Harrington, 2023, p.5). At that time, the former French ministry of Interior justified this act by acknowledging the unbearable and unhuman living conditions people-on-the-move were living in (Human Rights Watch, 2017). An alternative was proposed to replace the CITS, and communities were soon asked to move into rehabilitated shipping containers. The underlying motivation of authorities to do so, was to enable “control and management” over these populations in Calais (Ticktin, 2023). However, practically, this French-British coordinated measure was a failure. Indeed, it only allowed a small part of the 10,000 residents of CITS to have a house and resulted in increased mobility and wandering of these people not only within the region but also in other regions, such as Normandy (Yang, 2022). Between 2016 and 2018, more than 150 million pounds of British funding have been invested for security and policing in the Calais region (Keen, 2020, p.15). Practically, this decision led to a routine practice of people-on-the-move settlements evictions, every 48 hours or so, around Calais. In other words, the funding served governments deterrence logic to evict “illegal migrants” from the region.

As of 2019, 805 evictions were conducted in the ten first months of the year (Welander, 2020). Thus, since the dismantling of the later CITS, politics of exhaustion practices have forced migrants to settle for short amounts of times within one area whilst also making them harder to reach and support for NGOs. Evictions are commonly conducted by local police forces, so-called CRS



Figure 3

This is a picture taken by Garenzi (2020) showing the formation of a new CITS near Dunkirk.

officers, who use tear gas, pepper spray whilst also confiscating tents and other belongings (Welander, 2020). Other measures taken at the local level also constrain the formation of new CITS. For instance, until September 2022, hundreds of Syrians were staying in the area. The first installations took place on Quai de la Mousse on a small playground. Overall, Calais's municipality plans on installing around 800 tons of rocks for a total cost of approximately 45 000 euros (Oberti, 2022). The installation of rocks in Calais centre is with certainty one of the most recent measures taken against the settlement of these communities. However, it is not the first (Oberti, 2022). Already back in 2020, between October and December, municipal workers and

the municipal authorities had carried out clearing operations on migrants living areas to make these groves impassable (Oberti, 2022).

## 3.5 A history of supporting actors' involvement in the region

### 3.5.1 Early days

The deterrence system and implementation of the politics of exhaustion led to a humanitarian abandonment, a void that few aid organizations and volunteers have been trying to fill since 1997 (Keen, 2020, p.15). In 1997, a group of local Calaisians formed under the name of *Le Collectif de Soutien d'Urgence aux Refoulés*, to address the number of Roma people from the Czech Republic and Slovakia not admitted within the UK (Harrington, 2023, p.5). Salam is the oldest NGO in the area. Initially born from a civil solidarity movement started by the current President of the NGO Jean Claude Lenoir, it was initiated in the 90s during the ex-Yugoslavia conflict and consisted of going along the Dunkirk beach with local Calaisians to provide food. When the Sangatte camp was dismantled in 2002, this solidarity movement gained official and legal

NGO status (Millot, 2023) With the opening in 1999 of the Sangatte Centre managed by both French authorities and the Red Cross, international humanitarian NGOs such as the Red Cross, Médecins du Monde (MDM), and *Médecin sans Frontières* (MSF) also joined in (Ibid, p.5). When the center was closed in 2002, the French Red Cross left the field, and communities started to wander in CITS (Harrington, 2023, p.5). The lack of recognition of CITS as an official refugee camp constrained the UNHCR interactions within the region. Before 2002, the UNCHR was established in the area. However, after the closing of the Sangatte Centre, the organization left. However, in the period, organizations such as MDM and MSF and emergent local grassroots organizations such as *Salam* (2003), *l'Auberge des Migrants* (2008), and *le Secours Catholique* started to open day centers and to provide services such as food, water, medical care, blankets and so on (Harrington, 2023, p.6). In 2008, to alert the French government and local authorities of the humanitarian abandonment of the place, the local NGO Salam went on strike and interrupted its services for a short period. In 2009, the UNHCR came back to reopen a small office to provide information on asylum application procedures in France as it observed that the majority coming from places like Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia had fled violence and persecution. Thus, it constituted a direct concern for the UNHCR, which is ordinarily able to help these populations (UNHCR, 2009). Until 2014, the previously mentioned international humanitarian aid organizations supported them.

### **3.5.2 From 2015 onwards**

The period 2015-2016 constituted a real turning point in the history of NGO mobilization. In 2015, the international media coverage of people-on-the-move led to a peak of grassroots organizations' involvement in the area. In 2015, volunteers from Europe, mainly from the UK, France, and other European countries, travelled to Calais to provide aid and various services in the CITS (Sandri, 2018). Further, the CITS was a heterogenous coalition that emerged from heterogenous mobilization circuits, mixing individual initiatives and large NGOs, relational bricolages and professionalization (Bouagga, 2018, p.137). The support, however international, was mainly provided by grassroots organizations run by volunteers due to the lack of support from official institutions and governments (Sandri, 2018). Indeed, except for the medical international humanitarian aid organizations previously mentioned, no other organizations ever stepped foot on the ground (Keen, 2020, p.7). The provision of services in 2015-2016 implied “cooking hot meals, sorting, distributing donations, building temporary shelters and toilets, organizing recreational activities” (Sandri, 2018). Simultaneously, in August 2015, a UK group of friends launched a call

for donations under the hashtag #Help Refugees. The group raised more than 56.000 euros and received 7000 items a day, and this signified the birth of the small NGO Help Refugees working together with *l'Auberge des migrants*. In March 2016, a camp site, *La Linière* is, opened in Grande-Synthe under the will of Calais' mayor, Damien Carême, built by NGO MSF and managed by - Utopia 56, created by Britany volunteers - together with other local emerging grassroots agencies. Soon, donations became extraordinarily high, leading to informal distributions causing high tensions within the CITS. Thus, NGOs and camp inhabitants rationalized the distribution (Bouagga, 2018). Together, the *Auberge des réfugiés* and Help Refugee rented out a big warehouse in which tasks were organized between volunteers and the reception of donations (Bouagga, 2018). With the dismantling of the CITS, the Calais region witnessed new temporary forms of solidarity projects, one of the main ones being the spread of mobile aid, aiming at reaching most of the people still in the region by moving around. Three main mobile projects were the *Refugee Info bus*, *The Refugee Youth Service*, and *the School Bus Project* (Patteri, 2022). Most grassroots organizations and small agencies are still on the ground in a volunteer-run form. However, most have transformed into more structured solidarity forms of aid. Others have dissolved or left the site after the dismantling in late 2016. This applies to the border activist groups *NoBorders* and *Calais migrant Solidarity* (CMS) (Harrington, 2023, p.10). In 2015, the site was also joined by the newly created UK charity *Care4Calais* (2015) and, later, *Mobile Refugee Support* (MRS) in 2017, which will still be operating in the region in 2023. The warehouse still groups up the leading NGOs, British and French, working together: Help Refugee, *Auberge des Migrants*, Utopia 56, Women Centre, *Refugee Youth Service*, *Refugee Infobus*, and the *Refugee Community Kitchen* (RCK). Two other organizations, respectively, the *Secours Catholique* day centre in Calais and the “No Border” center from Utopia 56, offer emergency aid. The *Cabane Juridique*, a local legal aid NGO, still operates in the region (Bouagga, 2018). The two prominent international medical aid organizations, MSF and the Red Cross, are still present on the new CITS. While UNHCR has, over the last two decades, been temporary and inconsistent due to the lack of collaboration of French and UK authorities, it should be clear that the UNHCR has applied these governments constant pressure through reports and statements on the situation at different times (UNHCR, 2016). In 2016, the UNHCR urged the French government to close and replace the 2015 CITS with proper accommodation (Ibid). It remains unclear whether the UNHCR is still present in the region nowadays. Thus, CITS were, and remain until today, mainly managed by smaller agencies and grassroots solidarity movements.

## Chapter 4. NGOs Internal Organisation

### 4.1 From grassroots movements to official NGOs

Firstly, the initial finding to consider is the nature's evolution of both organisations Care4Calais and MRS.

In September 2015, Clare Moseley in September 2015 heard about the situation for the first time. Originally an accountant for Merseyside, Clare (56) left behind her family in England, as she was shocked by the harrowing conditions endured by men, women and children who'd fled war and persecution to seek sanctuary in Europe (Care4Calais, 2023c). Following the events, she decided "that she wanted to give more than cash" (Care4Calais, 2023c). Thus, with "Stand up to Racism", at the time sending supplies to the CITS, she decided to help transport clothing across the Channel. Clare's motivation to start this grassroots project, is held by the belief of "responsibility to help" and more to "show that there are people in Britain who care" (Care4Calais, 2023b). This very finding coincide with Sandri (2018) description of grassroots movement back inthe Calais CITS in 2015 reffered to as volunteer humanitarianism described as predominantlly being led by citizen-led initiatives and individuals embodied by Clare, the founder of the organisation.

These motivations echoed the belief that the situation in Calais was only temporary, however, 8 years later, Care4Calais, initially an individual grassroots project, has become an "organisation with a 2m turnover that helped hundreds of thousands of refugees in the UK and in France" (Jones, 2023). After a year on the site, in 2016, Care4Calais was set up officially and legally registered as a UK charity (GOV.UK, 2023). Over the years, the NGO evolved and its activities are now defined as the "provision of direct aid and social support to displaced people in the UK, Belgium and France as well as advocating for a welcoming and inclusive attitude towards refugees in the U.K" (GOV.UK, 2023).

Unlike Care4Calais, MRS did not emerge because of the 2015 CITS formation but was also motivated by a certain sense of emergency to create a different organisation (MRS website). By different the organisation meant to create a NGO functioning on a taylor-made approach and bottom-up as opposed to being a mass distribution one. MRS appeared in the form of a co-initiative by Charlie Chappers and Jed Tinsley, two British citizens, previously volunteering and working for Care4Calais. These two individuals, after the destruction of the 2015 CITS and camp "La Linière" decided to quit Care4Calais. Initially, both started to go around and distribute with a car material items to evicted people borrowed from *Care4Calais* warehouse, when the NGO stopped to operate over the summer 2017. In 2018, the organisation registered as a French charity

organisation. Further, MRS only operates at the local level of the Calais region, and thus, only provide direct aid in this area.

In turn, both organisations were born as the result of citizen-led solidarity initiatives and became over time, charities. From a primary analysis, these different organisations are interesting case studies because of their common bottom-up approach to aid and initial solidarity motivation; Simultaneously, they are legally charities. With regards to Spade mutual care model (2020), charities and solidarity are incompatible. Thus, it leaves us with the following question: do their legal status a barrier to solidarity or are their practices alternatives to traditional aid functioning?

## **4.2 NGOs Organisation and Resources**

MRS and *Care4Calais* are volunteer-run charities. As for 2022, Care4Calais encompassed employees, whose salary does not exceed “60k a year, 4 trustees” and a turnover of “700 volunteers” for the year 2022 (GOV.UK, 2023). Trustees do not receive any remuneration payments nor benefits from the charity, thus they operate as volunteers. Through my experience and understanding, those defined as “employees” are professional aid workers operating and supervising volunteers work on the ground. MRS is a smaller organisation and thus, with less employees. Drawing from my experience on the field, the only remunerated actors are both co-founders, Charlie Chappers, operating from England and in charge of the administration and finance department and Jed Tinsley, ground coordinator.

### **4.2.1 Fundraising and donations from the public**

An interesting common ground is the independence feature of these NGOs. By looking at official reports Care4Calais receives no “income from governments contracts” nor “income from governments grants” (GOV.UK, 2023). In other words, the charity functions independently from UK government aid. When volunteering, I asked X, team coordinator at the time, about government funding, and X replied that they deliberately chose not to be financed by the UK State to maintain their freedom of action. Similarly, MRS takes the same stance by deliberately stating on their website that they are an “independent volunteer-run” organisation (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023c). Both organisations are willingly not accepting any donations from the government, which implies that they must have alternative ways to finance their activities. This will of preserving its independence put forward by both NGOs suggest that they cannot be regarded as “tangential” to the State and the capitalism system despite their status, therefore, suggesting that they are different from the humanitarian organisations following the corporate



model though it cannot be asserted yet that their decision-making is not constrained by other stakeholders (Haralambous, 2020, p.193).

Indeed, it was found that both organisations use fundraising as a main and only financing means. Care4Calais depends on “fundraising from the public but not from professional fundraisers nor trading subsidiaries” (GOV.UK, 2023). In the same line, MRS relies on two main British NGOs to raise funds on their behalf, namely “Herts for Refugees” and “For refugees”, two UK-based organisations (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023d). Additionally, their website proposes a section for people to make a financial donation.

Both NGOs also encourage the collection of material donations. Whereas monetary donations are constantly accepted, material donations are limited to a list of needs. In the case of MRS, the material accepted by them is limited to camping items, men’s clothing, communication support items and hygiene items (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023b). As highlighted on the MRS website, they are to a certain degree, in a “constant need of donations to continue to maintain all services they provide” (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023b).

This *modus operandi* has a double standard. On the one hand, it allows the organisations to act freely without being accountable to UK and French governments. Simultaneously, its constraints organisations’ opportunities to the extent that they are completely dependent on the willingness of the public to pursue their activities by providing them with financial support and donations. This raises a certain degree of uncertainty to their daily capacity and suggests a potential improvisation feature, linking back these organisation functioning to the more informal mechanisms of volunteer humanitarianism (Sandri, 2018).

#### **4.2.2 From whom are material donations coming?**

*“Today we received a full HGV of festival salvaged tents and sleeping bags”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023g)

NGOs networks are central to understanding where do material resources come from. MRS clearly states on its website that it is part of a broad network involving a plurality of actors ranging from grassroot organisations to international organisations. MRS provides on its website, its main international providers. The two main ones are “Herts for Refugees”, a UK-based charity supporting refugees in the UK and Calais and “O’s Refugee Aid Team” another UK based organisation providing huge amounts of “Aid, relief and donations” (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023e). The NGO *Hearts for Refugees* also provides Care4Calais with material donations. No later

than last summer, volunteers from this organisation led the “Mammoth operation” aiming at going onto festivals over summer in the Netherlands and the UK and picking up tents and camping material to then, helped by the logistic support *Aid and Hope* grassroots organisation (mobilerefugeesupport, 2023f). Similarly, over the same period, Care4Calais also received from this organisation the same material donations (C4C, 2023). Material donations from other NGOs constitute a main source for NGOs. Nonetheless, international NGOs and professionalised organisations are not the only actors involved.

*“For seven years now, George and Henry have been driving their vans from South Devon to our South coast storage unit picking up clothes and essentials and bringing them to Calais”* (C4C, 2023)

This example taken from Care4Calais is also witnessed within the MRS context:

*“It came from our dear friends Sanne and Vanessa from @stichingmovingstone. They gained access to the grounds of the @liquicity Festival in the Netherlands and as team of five superheroes they gathered tents and sleeping bags but also camping chairs and clothing abandoned by festival-goers”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023g)

These quotes signify that donations are also provided by many citizen-led initiatives and trusted individuals. These previous findings show the extent to which these organisations rely on different actors and have a solid network. Nonetheless, it does not allow to assess the relevance of donations.

*“Today, we were sorting out C4C donations and found a lot of random tableware items such as champignons plastics cups, unclean and rusty plates...”*

(Personal Observations, 2023)

The quote above intends to demonstrate that donations relevance can be inappropriate and varies. On the one hand, when donations are inappropriate but usable NGOs provide the items to other charities located in the region. On the other hand, donations can be out of use. Thus, they are being thrown away. In the case of Care4Calais, and because of its unrestricted list of possible give-away items, the organisation often must give away to *Les Restos Du Coeur* and *le Secours Catholique* for instance. Similarly, the same happens in MRS despite its restricted list of possible give away items. The NGO focuses of mens needs however during my volunteering time, a lot of children and women clothes were found in the donations (Personal Observations, 2023). Women clothing can sometimes be used by the organisation because they would fit men, otherwise the organisation gives away inappropriate donations to Emmaüs (X, 2023).

Because of the double constraint of donations, with regards to both quantity and quality, NGOs are often obligated to complement material donations with the purchase of new items, bought thanks to fundraising monetary resources (Personal Observations, 2023).

Both organisations became over time, official charities. Nevertheless, functioning wise they share the main features of volunteer humanitarianism. Beyond having been implemented to deal with a certain level of emergency, these organisations *modus operandis* is characterised by being its independence from any international aid agencies or governments and baed entirely on public donations (Sandri, 2018). These different characteristics were mainly related to citizen-led initiatives and unprofessionalised aid actors. Nonetheless, in view of these findings, it can be stated that these NGOs functioning, despite its professionalisation and structuration, more than being based on these resources are dependent on these resources, thus are obliged to a certain level of improvisation, in turn putting in persepective their ability to fulfill their roles as aid providers caused by their “restricted supply of internal organisational resources” (Kivel et al., 2020, p.133). Lastly, these findings only allow to note that this improvisation feature is linked to the internal functioning of the NGOs as opposed to the improvisation with regards to people-on-the move situation on the ground.

## **4.3 MRS and Care4Calais daily functioning**

### **4.3.1 Recruiting volunteers**

Both organisations’ volunteers are supervised on the ground by team coordinators, officially employees. For Care4Calais, two teams’ coordinators were present whereas in MRS case, there was only one, also the co-founder of the organisation, Jed Tinsley (Personal Observations, 2023).

In both cases, the volunteering processes are characterised by flexibility (Sandri, 2018). In the case of Care4Calais, the NGO is reachable from their website for volunteering inquiries. After sending an email through the website, the NGO sends by email with a form to fill. The main information to provide for volunteering are dates for volunteering, address, passport details, phone number and motivation. Then, people are automatically accepted on the condition to be above 18 years old. The most striking element is that under 28 days of volunteering within the organisation “no criminal background check is required” (Care4Calais Admin Team, 2023) especially because Care4Calais has a big turnover of volunteers. When volunteering for Care4Calais, throughout the period, at least 10 people left and 10 new came. Apart from two volunteers, people are staying on average for one to two weeks.

Differently, MRS prefers a small team with little turnover and, thus long-term volunteers. MRS approach to recruiting differs by adding to the recruitment process a direct contact. Indeed, after the emailing, one of the co-founders will reach out to organise a visual online chat. In this regard, MRS has a more individual-based and personal approach. However, no official information nor personal information are required, except for volunteering dates. These findings suggest a lack of security and raises the question of volunteers capacity to assist people-on-the move.

*“Mobile Refugee Support's work in the field depends entirely on the hard work, time and dedication of our ever-growing family of volunteers”*(Mobile Refugee Support, 2023f)

Thus, Care4Calais and MRS well-functioning not only depends on fundraising and material donations, but as illustrated with the above quote also heavily does on volunteers. This dependency feature the key cause of the lack of securitization of the recruiting process. Because of their need for volunteers, they do not possess the privileged to choose experienced people.

These findings highlights an important pitfall of volunteer humanitarianism practices. Indeed, their choice of functioning reflects these NGOs resistance to the conventional aid architecture, nonetheless, it also highlights that volunteers are mainly unknown and unexperienced ordinary citizens (Bonizzoni et al., 2020, p.7). Further, by highlighting the different processes of recruiting for volunteer work, it becomes clear that these NGOs are not extremely cautious of who they take in or not. Thus, while flexible volunteering is a key characteristic of Sandri's (2018) volunteer humanitarianism framing, it puts in perspective the double-standard of “having a restricted supply of internal organizational resources” (Kivel et al., 2020, p.133). Thus, it shows voluntary help downfall by letting daily vulnerable communities at the mercy of strangers.

### **4.3.2 Complementary Aid on the ground**

Both organisations provide direct aid. Nevertheless, Care4Calais and MRS are also complementary. Indeed, both providing material aid, especially blankets, sleeping bags and so on, Care4Calais' focus is on services. These services provided by Care4Calais range from serving teas and coffees to English lessons. As stated by the latter, Care4Calais is “both providing material and social support to communities” (Care4Calais, 2023b). Differently, MRS focal point is on material involving hygiene products, clothes for men and camping equipment.

Interestingly, whereas operating in the same region, these organisations often complement each other and alternatives to one another nonetheless, not exclusively. Indeed, MRS deliberately focuses on men's needs. This choice is not random. The underlying reason for that is that both

Care4Calais and the Women Refugee Centre (WRF) are aiming at meeting the needs of women and children. Whereas Care4Calais provide material equipment for everyone regardless of age and sex, the Women Refugee Centre is exclusively focused on women and children needs. Because Care4Calais and MRS bring limited amounts of clothing for each sex and age, they often, on sites provide people-on-the move with the organisation contact and/or refer them directly when on sites. In the case of emergencies for camping equipment, however, it was found that Utopia 56, French NGO is the main organisation to be contacted:

*“During my volunteering, it happened multiple times that people-on-the-move had just arrived on the same day on sites. In these cases, the team coordinator would help them to contact Utopia 56. They will then come on the site where these people in need where to provide them on the same day with a tent and camping equipment for the night”*

(Personal Observations, 2023)

NGOs also serve as alternatives to one another depending on the day of the week. Indeed, most NGOs move around from Calais’ distribution sites to Dunkirk distribution sites. This is the case of Care4Calais, going twice a week on three different sites, respectively near Calais Hospital, in Calais centre and New Lidl (Personal Observations, 2023). In contrast, MRS goes on the same site, located behind Grande-Synthe beach, every day except for Sundays. The reason why they are not coming in Sundays, is once more, because on these dates Care4Calais and another organisation are present on the sites (Personal Observations, 2023). This dimension constitutes an alternation dimension to services beyond their complementary feature. This element is explicitly illustrated by the case of generators and plugs equipment’s on sites.

Care4Calais and MRS are hardly in direct contact, however, MRS bases its provision of generators, plugs and SIM cards depending on whether Care4Calais is on the Dunkirk site or another site (Tinsley, 2023). Indeed, MRS only operates on the Dunkirk site. Considering the importance of people-on-the move access to their phone as stated below, on days where Care4Calais is not on this site, MRS, takes as its responsibility to bring these material on the site. Thus, as shown by the quote below, the absence of one organisation does not constraint people-on-the move access to their phones.

*“Access to power has become one of the more vital necessities to those stranded in foreign lands (...) Generators grants many people the needed charge that will help them call their families back home or, communicate with their families already at their destination”*

(Mobile Refugee Support, 2023a)

These findings show that both Care4Calais’and MRS internal and external functioning are dependent on a variety of actors for both volunteers, financing and external collaboration. Hence, it conveys the idea that since being framed by Sandri (2018) in 2015, the Calais region is still managed by a variety of actors of grassroots movements to international organisations.

MRS, Care4Calais and Salam are all part together with other NGOs such as *Help Refugees* and *L’Auberge des Réfugiés* of inter-associations weekly meetings, currently occurring every Tuesday. These weekly meetings aim at updating on the current migration situation, for instance whether it’s a calm week meaning they are few refugees on sites or whether it is a hectic one. Once the situation updated, NGOs talk about the coordination of services and distribution. If needed, and accordingly to the type of week, NGOs will adapt the organisation of distributions on sites and their inter-organisations (Millot, 2023).

Thus, these findings show volunteer humanitarianism interdependency and collaboration features of these organisations with a broad range of actors nowadays in the Calais region both internally and externally. Indeed, the collaboration between actors from “ordinary citizens” from “new aid actors who lack professional training” within the NGOs is obvious (Sandri, 2018, p.77). The latter pushes forward that volunteer humanitarianism can be applied individually to the internal functioning of an organisation can serve as a tool to organise the external organisation of different volunteer aid- based organisations and their collaboration in the Calais region.

### **4.3.3 Between collaboration and frustration**

Whilst a certain degree of collaboration is noticeable online, tensions also arise from collaboration. Claire Millot from the French NGO Salam talked about her experience:

*“Numbers of people (civil groups and NGOs that are not based in the area, Stand by You and RCK coming from afar) come unexpectedly on sites, however, it is problematic it complicates the inter-association organisation and number of meals to prepare”*

(Millot, 2023)

As argued by Claire Millot above, whilst being well-thought, unexpected initiatives often lead to food waste or double distributions on the same day (Millot, 2023). The latter often gives rise to tensions between NGOs based off a feeling of frustration to not being able to optimise available resources (Millot, 2023). In most cases, the issue is a clear lack of communication between the different organisations. In the case of double distributions, the outcome for people-on-the-move is not negative despite being an obvious waste of resources. Nevertheless, when this lack of communication would result in no food distribution at all, this lack of communication between the different actors providing aid, endangers people-on-the-move living conditions.

The above finding connotes the dead end of this type of functioning. Indeed, volunteer humanitarianism as proposed by Sandri (2018) the diverse actors involved take “independent” initiatives. Nonetheless, this type of independent initiatives can lead to the creation of inner tensions within the diversity of volunteer humanitarians on the ground. Thus, it challenges the notion of solidarity and groups actions and shows the underlying individuality within these different actors’ motivations to support people-on-the-move. Beyond, as stated by Dimitriadis et al., (2021) actors aim is to “filling in for public authorities and meeting needs unresolved by public welfare provisions” (Dimitriadis et al., 2021, p.4). Differently, this finding shows that volunteer humanitarianism is dependent on the actors’ will and skill to communicate and coordinate with one another to fulfill this role. In turn, it reinforces the idea that these actors’ success to provide relief depends on Denniston (n-d) to form alliances.

## Chapter 5 NGOs external functioning

### 5.1 NGOs philosophy and core values

#### 5.1.1 Humanity as Solidarity ?

An interesting feature of NGO practices is the justification of their actions. In both cases, the key motivations are human-oriented motives. Whereas humanity is a vast term, it implies here, that both organisations recognize their actions as providing human dignity and respect to these communities. Care4Calais uses the bellow narrative to justify its actions and practices:

*“We are ordinary people like you who believe that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity. We are on the ground with the refugees every single day and are respectful of their common humanity and responsive to their needs”*

(Care4Calais, 2023c)

MRS practices seem to be motivated by a similar thought process. Indeed, the NGO recognises that they aim at providing “*relief and aid to those who need it*” (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023b). Both organisations are charities, nevertheless, MRS strongly defines its aid as “Solidarity and not Charity” (mobilerefugeesupport, 2023e).

Similarly, Care4Calais states to the extent that they prone being mainly “responsive to their needs” without extending predominantly how to they consider their help to correspond to, neither charity nor solidarity (Care4Calais, 2023c). To this extent, these communities are the one choosing for themselves whether they need aid and if so, what kind of aid they need. Further, it shows it highlights that aid is a tool for migrants to achieve their own will as opposed to NGOs doing it for them.

*“We care deeply about the people we are privileged to meet every day. And they care about us. The bonds of trust, friendship and mutual care that flow between us are rooted in the oldest and most powerful there is.*

*Love.”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023d)

The NGO justifies its actions as mutual care and solidarity as opposed to charity. Solidarity is, thus, to allow people to tell the organisation what they need and when and how they need it. Hence, acknowledging the deeply-rooted “victim/saviour” binary as being a main feature of traditional humanitarianism aid, they recognise people-on-the-move agency and resilience to voice how they wish to be helped or not. Hence, this logic of deservingness serves solidarity and as



shown, this solidarity equals equality with respect of identities. In turn, challenging the space of CITS as a space of political “exception” (Haralambous, 2020, p.193). Further, MRS emphasises the idea of love as resistance and mutual care between them and migrants.

By putting forward the idea that they provide aid because for humanity aims, NGOs justify their actions by a certain principle of deservingness and solidarity, regarded as a main motivation of Sinatti’s interpretation of borderwork (Sinatti, 2023). These findings indicate that despite being professionalised organisations, providing aid as official non-profit charities, these organisations nonetheless challenge the traditional so called “regime of care” (Ticktin, 2011, p.58). Indeed, this logic assumes that humanitarian organisations only address the suffering of undocumented migrants rather than the deeply rooted historical context that led to their suffering (Ticktin, 2011, p.58). Thus, humanitarian politics reproduce the “racialized postcolonial nation-state” and invalidate the independent will of people on the move as potential actors of change for themselves. However, is that in the cases of NGOs under study, MRS and Care4Calais motivations take an opposite stance on its practices by straightforwardly recognising and emphasizing the idea that they are recognising that undocumented migrants do have the strength and power to act for themselves. More, it conveys according to which, new NGOs borderwork through redraw the lines between “inclusion and exclusion” in the Calais region by challenging through discourses and actions the bordered accounts of belonging (Sinatti, 2023, p.13). Hence, this logic of deservingness serves solidarity and as shown, this solidarity equals equality with respect of identities. In turn, challenging the space of CITS as a space of political “exception” (Haralambous, 2020, p.193).

### **5.1.2 Political Discourses: Border Contestation**

An interesting finding regards the political feature of discourses. Against the traditional argument according to which, NGOs are apolitical, these organisations, clearly hold strong opinions on both French and British border politics, and more, apparent their practices to a form of resistance.

*“Border kill. Everyday. Most silently in indifference”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023a)

The first outline theme of their political stance is the case for borders opening through the implementation of “safe passage” for people-on-the move. Whilst differently argued, both organisations are strongly opposed to current border politics and recognise a certain need for change.

*“We say safe routes now because people are dying on our borders now”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023b)

Care4Calais, as shown below, shares the same view on safe passage and thus, policy change. Further, the organisation argues and advocates in the UK through campaigning to implement a safe passage for people-on-the-move (Care4Calais, 2023b).

*“The case for #SafePassage has never been clearer”*

(care4calais, 2023)

The common ground is that these organisations all hope for border policy change. This idea puts in perspective the underlying activism feature of their solidarity practices in the Calais region. Where can arguably be considered as having the same common grounds and to constitute the continuation of the “No Borders” movement in a more structured way and passive form. The latter is generally defined as the “transnational social movement” which aim is to “challenge dominant securitarian narrative underlying the concepts of “citizenship”, “refugee”, “asylum seeker”, “economic” and “illegal migrant”, and so on.” Further, the latter is based on a strong contestation of the EU border regime and characteristic of radical solidarity (Panzone, n-d, p.3) In Calais, the movement was embodied by Calais Migrant Solidarity (CMS) activists active in Calais since 2009 by squatting solidarity practices in the area (Pazone, n-d, p.5). Whilst NGOs practices are based on providing direct aid to people-on-the move, their rather radical idea on borders puts in questioning whether their actions are not, more than solidarity based, politically motivated.

These different narratives against border contestations convey to a different extent the idea of solidarity as resistance. By contesting borders, the different organisations embody the idea of borderwork as the involvement of ordinary people in processes of production, reproduction and transformation of border have traditionally been the domain of nation-states (Sinatti, 2023, p.14). Further, with regards to the previous findings, borderwork in Calais promoted by NGOs nowadays could be arguably regarded as practices to renegotiate, challenge, confirm and transform physical borders based on the principle of deservingness (Sinatti, 2023, p.14) This principle of deservingness is assimilated in the case of Care4Calais and MRS to solidarity and mutual care analysed above. This very narrative conveys the logic that NGOs by justifying their support aim at challenging border politics in the Calais region which they stand against. Further, by putting forwards highly politicised arguments in their narratives, it raises a tension between whether to regard these organisations as aid organisations or as activists.

## 5.2 NGOs Services: Solidarity as Resistance

### 5.2.1 Daily services

*“Since the closure of the ‘Jungle’ camp in October 2016, the authorities are determined to prevent another permanent camp from reforming.”*

(Care4Calais, 2023a)

Despite NGOs recognition of governments will to chase away people-on-the move from the area (see above) NGOs Care4Calais, Salam and MRS provisions of diverse services comes directly against it. Indeed, by providing and restoring people’s human dignity and answering their needs NGOs comfort migrants’ decisions to stay in the Calais region to attempt crossing by providing them with food, material, and services (Care4Calais, 2023a). MRS particularly recognises the provision of services as a resistance to the implementation of exhaustion policies:

*“The space is hostile, dehumanising and traumatising. If we focus on that we serve the system. So we respond with Love”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023d)

Whereas differently, Care4Calais also provide migrants with food packs twice a week by going directly where the CITs are located and more precisely, by sending volunteers in the camps directly in the middle of people’s tents to wake them up and ask if they need food. By coming directly on their living sites, the Care4Calais approach also normalizes their stay on these informal sites which in turn sustain their stay on the ground (Personal Observations, 2023). More, the provision of camping items in the case of Care4Calais, Utopia 56, MRS and so on directly legitimizes the people-on-the move will established in the CITs until they are able to leave for the UK (MRS, September 2023).

Nevertheless, daily services provision goes beyond comforting migrants’ decisions, it often provide them with the tools they need when attempting to cross the borders. Indeed, whilst Salam provides them with food, both Care4Calais and MRS through material donations allow them to be prepared to cross. The latter is particularly noticeable through clothes donations and power/charge services.

Indeed, MRS provides on top of generators services provisions, a service of overnight charging of power banks. Indeed, they can collect people-on-the-move personal power banks to charge them before returning them the following day. The later allows for people to have access,

between other things enough battery on their phones if they need to “potentially contact the emergency services” whilst at sea (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023a). The daily practices of NGOs on the ground can be interpreted as de-bordering solidarity practices. Indeed, whilst it was demonstrated that NGOs act on a will of deservingness, their actions are motivated by challenging border policies implemented by the French and UK governments to discourage migrants. By providing aid, the organisations go directly against the framing of borders. Most precisely, by providing aid to relief people on the move poor living conditions, the organisations participate in so-called internal de-bordering practices characterised by providing various types of aid to enable people to remain on the territory (Ambrosini, 2022).

*“On the Dunkirk site, one day a man came to the MRS distribution truck and asked whether I had an extra raincoat for him. I told him I had not for today but perhaps he could get one tomorrow. He replied that he needed one today. When I asked him why, he told me that he was going to cross tonight by boat.”*

(Personal Observations, 2023)

This quote shows that NGOs also prepare people-on-the move travel to UK authorities once reaching the British soil. The latter measures participate indirectly to external de-bordering solidarity practices (Ambrosini, 2022, p.3). External de-bordering practices regroup all concrete and direct measures taken by one to directly go against border closure (Ambrosini, 2022) On the paper, NGOs ensure by providing clothes and SIM cards daily that people-on-the-move can contact their families once arrived on the British soil (Personal Observations, 2023 & see above). More than material preparation, Care4Calais brings awareness by distributing leaflets and English lessons on the distribution of leaflets related to the current immigration policies in place in the UK. On the leaflets, these populations are also provided with Care4Calais advice legal team phone number so they can reach out to them once on the UK soil (Personal observations, 2023). These practices are not directly external de-bordering practices, however, by mentally and physically preparing these communities to leave, one might wonder where the line should be drawn between external and internal de-bordering solidarity practices.

### **5.2.2 Emergency services**

This logic of solidarity as resistance to local authorities is even more noticeable when it comes to cases of emergencies. Indeed, in the cases evictions by the local police, happening extremely often nowadays in the region, organisations immediately come on the ground to provide people-on-the-

move with resources. Indeed, most of the time, “sleeping bags and possessions are regularly confiscated by the police” leaving them with nothing to sleep or protect themselves (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023a). In these cases, organisations Care4Calais and MRS do emergency trips to “replace what was taken and provide, if possible, a feeling of security despite the constant hostilities” (Mobile Refugee Support, 2023a). Whilst personally not having witnessed any eviction during volunteering, these happen often and are posted on social media by both organisations. In general, organisations bring about camping equipment, as being the most urgent need. As found out through MRS Instagram page on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, after I left the police carried out a large-scale eviction where an estimated number of 800 people were surviving, forcing people in buses into the accommodation shelters in Calais. To respond, MRS came on the ground after the police left and provided “200 tents” to people still on the site (mobilerefugeesupport, 2023c) Simultaneously, Care4Calais joined on the ground to provide “tents, sleeping bags and blankets” (care4calais, 2023). Whereas it was stated that most people were “forced under threat of arrest” and “taken to reception and Examination Centres” (care4calais, 2023). Interestingly, it shows that police authorities did not scare away NGOs workers. The latter leaves us to wonder about NGOs interactions with local authorities.

## **5.3 NGOs interactions with authorities**

### **5.3.1 Avoidance?**

NGOs discourses and practices can be understood as opposition and resistance to border politics and authorities’ actions on the ground. However, the latter is in tension with the lack of direct opposition between local authorities forces and NGOs.

Indeed, whilst volunteering with Care4Calais, it was found that local police forces were extremely present on the distribution site and often around during distribution sites. Indeed, from the first day on the Dunkirk site, on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, a police truck was present and observed NGOs activities from a distance. Policemen never interacted directly with volunteers, but scared migrants away from NGOs services and thus, perturbed the efforts of C4C to provide their services in a safe environment (Personal Observations, 2023).

However, in contrast to the NGO practices, C4C guidelines are to not approach the police first and avoid interactions with them at any cost. In the case where a policeman was to come, volunteers were told not to answer their questions directly and politely send them to the team coordinator on the ground (Personal Observations, 2023). Overall, throughout these ten days, a police truck stayed afar six times and/or passed by distribution sites in the afternoons.

When I was with MRS, at the end of August 2023, the local police were not often present on Dunkirk distribution site. Only once on the way to the distribution site, Jed Tinsley and I witnessed the presence of a border police car processing to the arrestation of migrants sat in a car on the side of the road on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2023. The presence of border police within these areas is quite unusual as they are normally posted on the beach frontline and port areas as told by Jed Tinsley on that very same day. In both cases, no interactions between NGOs workers and the police were made on the ground. On the contrary, the lack of interaction rather suggests a will of avoidance from the NGOs side. This will avoid the local police is even more noticeable in emergency avoidances cases.

*“As a team we responded after the police has left”*

(mobilerefugeesupport, 2023c)

As stated by MRS above, NGOs tend to come only once the police have gone from the site rather than simultaneously. Thus, their practices are not a direct and frontal opposition to authorities but confirms their positioning of solidarity as resistance. However, quite interestingly, acting in times of emergencies does coincide quite with Spade’s notion of mutual care” (Spade, 2020, p.137). Indeed, for NGOs to achieve solidarity, they must move away from the charity model through the completion of three criteria. These organisations actions do complete the first and second criteria as they are working to dismantle existing systems and institutions, whilst also working for people on the move, targeted by systems and institutions. The last criteria, to work by providing infrastructures for people on the move is more arguable. Indeed, NGOs do not provide shelters *per se*, nonetheless by providing tents and camping equipment, they are allowing these communities to have somewhere to sleep at night. Thus, by interpreting infrastructure in that sense, it can be stated that they are completing the three criteria of Spade’s model of mutual care, in turn, meaning that they are acting in complete solidarity.

### **5.3.2 Legality at Play?**

The sense of avoidance of any direct contact with the NGOs could have been explained by a legal dilemma and a fear of being arrested. Indeed, in France, legislation condemns the entry, residence, and movements of populations in irregular situations, encompassing the undocumented feature of these populations (Vie Publique, 2023). In turn, the law condemned until 2018 people assisting them under Article L.622-1 of the French Code for Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum (CESADA) indeed criminalized "any person who, by direct or indirect aid, facilitates or attempts to facilitate the illegal entry, movement or residence of a foreigner in France will be

punished by five years' imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 euros" (Conseil Constitutionnel, 2018). Before 2018, since 2003, exceptions were stated in the Article 622-4 and specifically 622-4(3) protected for condemnation "any natural or legal person when the offending act did not give rise to any direct or indirect compensation and consisted of providing legal advice or providing food, shelter or medical care intended to ensure the foreign national aimed at ensuring humane and decent living conditions, or any other assistance aimed at preserving the dignity or physical integrity of this individual" (Vie Publique, 2023). In turn, it protected humanitarian aid from condemnations.

On July 6, 2018, the French Constitutional Council decided to make fraternity a principle of constitutional value. From this principle derives "the freedom to help others for humanitarian purposes, regardless of the legality of their residence on national territory." Further, it was recognized that the principle of fraternity must nevertheless be reconciled with the safeguarding of public order: "the objective of combating illegal immigration is part of the safeguarding of public order, which constitutes an objective of constitutional value" (Vie Publique, 2023). Moreover, it declared "irregular residence" in the first paragraph of Article L.622-4 of the CESEDA unconstitutional. Thus, with that decision came the changing of Articles L.622-1 and L.622-4 of the CESEDA. Article 622-1 condemned all people from supporting illegal migrants except for the exceptions decided in Article 622-4. Since the French Constitutional decision, however, the article 622-1 has been repealed. Article 622-4, however, remains but only criminalizes support provided by people concerning entering the territory and exiting it. In other words, it is perfectly legal for NGOs, based on their "exclusively humanitarian purposes" to help irregular migrants reside and circulate within France, based on the fraternity principle. In that Constitutional decision, the words "exclusively humanitarian purposes" did not appear to reframe the exceptions. In turn, an action carried out with a militant aim could not fall into the scope of humanitarian immunity. Nonetheless, in February 2020, a ruling clarified the interpretation of Article 622-4(3) of the CESEDA as such: "It does not follow from these legal provisions that the protection afforded to the perpetrators of acts carried out with an exclusively humanitarian aim is limited to purely individual and personal actions, and that non-spontaneous and militant action carried out within an association is excluded" (Legifrance, 2021). Thus, nowadays, the aid provided by NGOs, either politically or humanitarian motivated, either based in France or elsewhere, is not condemnable as regarding any "physical or legal person" regardless of the nationality. In other words, only assistance in a lucrative aim is condemnable.

These last findings show that despite participating in de-bordering solidarity practices, NGOs are acting in their rights to aid migrants. Therefore, the opposition between the two is

political and legally reasonable. This very idea also conveys the idea that the presence of police on distribution sites is attributed to the preservation of the public order. However, the lack of interactions between the two stakeholders shows that as opposed to being unlawful, organisations avoidance of the police is a symbolic resistance. Thus, Calais distributions sites are places of cohabitation between people-on-the move discriminated against by the State, NGOs acting as a combination of militant and humanitarian supporters and the police monitoring the areas.



## Chapter 6. Conclusion and Discussion

The migration situation in the Calais region is constrained by national and international framing of migration border policies. These legislations do not only constrain the movement but also the image of people on the move as sub-humans. Despite their legal obligations to international laws and human rights, France and the United Kingdom have been infringing on the non-refoulement and rights for minimum living conditions of people on the move. Further, the lack of official recognition of the area as a refugee camp has constrained the UNHCR, putting it in a complex situation. As a result, over the years, NGOs have taken over the organization and management of the area. During the period 2015-2016, different actors, ranging from civil-led initiatives to international aid organizations entered the Calais region. Nonetheless, this research has focused particularly on the new types of organizations present since 2015-2016. More precisely, drawing from fieldwork experience and secondary data, this paper intended to find out how and why these newly established organizations have provided support to people moving to Calais.

Two of these NGOs were analysed more closely; they were founded and supported by grassroots movements. In both cases, their implementation is interlinked with a certain sense of emergency and responsibility to provide aid to the remaining people of the area, and over time, they became official charities. However, as opposed to traditional international aid, they function autonomously and are financially independent from state-delivered aid provision. This makes sense as they can be easily assimilated into the logic of volunteer humanitarianism. Thus, it enables them to position itself against the government if they wish to. Nonetheless, their strength lies in their ability to be part of an organized network of organizations involving other international NGOs, citizen-led movements, and individual initiatives. Moreover, these organizations are volunteer-run on the ground. This comes with certain constraints and often puts these organizations at the mercy of uncertainty with regard to their activities. This triggers the question: why do organizations operate like that? It cannot be denied that solidarity constitutes a major part of their motivations. Putting forward their mutual care philosophy and human dignity values enables NGOs to justify their motivations based on solidarity. However, within these organizations, solidarity as mutual care encompasses solidarity as resistance to the current political system. This dimension is central to understanding the underlying motivation present in their discourses, which essentially opposes border politics. This specific narrative serves the NGOs as a fuel to provide aid, which, in turn, represents resistance. In practice, NGOs provide different types of services. Nonetheless, providing services sustains the stay of migrants in the region and, thus, contests the politics of exhaustion implemented by the authorities in a deterrence logic. More

than sustaining the situation at the French border, these organizations also indirectly prepare migrants to cross the Channel, thus facilitating their decision to reach the UK despite that country's anti-migration tendency. Consequently, this type of aid fits Ambozzini's (2022) definition of de-bordering solidarity practices, as it reframes the imaginary as well as the physical borders. This political contestation seems to be contrary to the complete legality within which aid providers operate. Indeed, volunteers and non-lucrative initiatives, regardless of the nationality, status, and motivations have been allowed in France since 2018, despite the high surveillance of local and border police on distribution sites, exercising constant pressure on NGO, trying to avoid interactions with authorities at all cost. Nonetheless, both police forces and aid workers are present on CITS sites and cohabit without a minimal level of interactions.

Based on the findings and conclusions, an interesting follow-up research could focus on personal people-on-the move experiences with NGOs in the Calais region. This would allow to assess the efficiency of the aid organisations and would perhaps generate key findings for these NGOs as it will potentially highlight areas of improvement. It is suggested to interact with people-on-the-move during as well as after their time in the Calais region when they have settled in the UK. After all, due to their obvious vulnerability during transit, their responses and views will likely be given under stress and pressure. This follow-up research may be complemented with an assessment of NGO limitations and issues. The result could perhaps serve for authorities to intervene with direct aid or hopefully to adapt their practices on the ground in order to facilitate local NGO work .

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## List of Appendices

### *Appendix 1 Informal interview NGO Participants*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Place</u>
Claire Millot	French	Salam secretary	Online
X	British	Team coordinator	Care4Calais
X	British	Team coordinator	Care4Calais
X	British	Team coordinator	Care4Calais
Ted Tinsley	British	Team coordinator and co-funder	MRS
Charlie Chappers	British	Team coordinator and co-funder	Online