“It Feels Good to Be Useful”

A Study of the Experiences of Volunteers in Calais, France.

Master’s Thesis in Social Anthropology

University of Oslo

Faculty of Social Science

Department of Social Anthropology

Margarita Lavrentjeva

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Author: Margarita Lavrentjeva

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Abstract:

In this paper I will explore the experiences of volunteers who travelled to offer humanitarian aid to the refugees living in the makeshift refugee camps in Calais, France. My focus lies on the emotions that motivated the volunteers to travel to Calais, as well as the emotions that were generated during their time volunteering. I will also explore what attracted volunteers to Calais, and what led some of them to come back over and over.

While volunteering might come off as a selfless act, many anthropologists and other researchers argue that people who engage in work that addresses the suffering of others also gain some sort of self-fulfillment from it (Malkki 2015, Ticktin 2014). The volunteers were constantly witnessing neglected conditions, and were constantly aware of their limited capacity to resolve them. The emotions that my informants described experiencing during their work were often overwhelming, complex and at times painful. However, they admitted to take a certain pleasure in experiencing these emotions. Throughout their stay in Calais, volunteers would balance between repressing and encouraging certain emotions, such as empathy, anger, frustration and hopelessness.

I will therefore explore how the experience of having a community to return to might have played a part in the volunteers being willing to go back to a place that was a lot of the time filled with suffering and hopelessness. My aim is to contextualize the emotional reactions of the volunteers, the roles and identities that they assumed and the relationship that they established to the volunteer community and the people whom they were helping. I will do this by analyzing the mobilization and emotional experiences of volunteers as a reaction to the effects of exclusion of the refugee population. I will also analyze this through anthropological theories on humanitarian reason (Fassin 2012: xii) and cultural notions behind humanitarian responses. Drawing on what Doidge and Sandri described as a “humanitarian vacuum” (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 466) in the makeshift camps in Calais, I will analyze the practices and emotional reactions of the volunteers as a response to witnessing the results of government institutions neglecting a vulnerable community. Through the findings in this thesis, I hope to shed light on the emotional impact on individuals and communities that are working to improve the conditions of populations that are excluded from society.

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Introduction

During one of my online interviews, "Emily", a twenty-four years old woman, described how she had travelled to the French small town Calais multiple times, where she would work assisting refugees living in makeshift camps surrounding the town and waiting for an opportunity to cross the UK border. Emily was one of the thousands of people who travelled to the French border to offer humanitarian relief in the makeshift refugee camps in northern France. She had lost count of how many times she had been there, but she guessed that it was nine or ten times.

> "*The first time I went, I went with a group of friends. I was studying in Sweden (…), and we had to take initiative and design our own curriculum. I think it was in 2016, when the whole refugee crisis was really kicking off, so it was in our thoughts a lot and we decided to take that opportunity. I hitchhiked with a friend, all the way from Sweden to Calais. And we were there I think 10 days, and that was a very intense experience. But since I have been going back loads, because I cannot look away. It really captivated me and pulled me in.*" – Emily, a volunteer.

I asked Emily if she enjoyed volunteering, since she went back so frequently. She paused for a second, seemingly puzzled, possibly even a little offended at my choice of words. After the slightly awkward pause, she replied that "enjoy" was perhaps not the word that she would use. She went on to tell me how the experience was always very "humbling", and made her extremely aware of her freedom and her privilege, as a woman who grew up and lived in The UK[1].

Despite the amount of times Emily had travelled to Calais, she never quite got used to what she encountered there. Every time she would feel extremely overwhelmed and drained by the scale of the crisis. However, despite the powerlessness and frustration that she felt, Emily kept going back. Something made her unable to stop.

[1] Many of my informants travelled to Calais from the UK, as the organization from which I recruited my informants is British. I am aware that the travelling and work of these people may be affected by the travelling restrictions following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. However, the majority of my informants travelled to Calais in 2020, when they could still travel freely to and from the EU. (Gov.UK n.d) Brexit did therefore not affect them. Neither did any of my informants bring up Brexit as an obstacle.

Since 2015 an increasing amount of volunteer organizations have been coming to Calais, in response to the lack of responsibility taken by the government in order to address the conditions in the makeshift refugee camps in the area. Thousands of volunteers just like Emily would travel to Calais to take the responsibility that was never taken by the government. (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 466).

Emily's relationship to the critical situation in Calais was not unique. While gathering data for this thesis, I encountered a lot of volunteers who felt the same way. This thesis is about emotions and experiences of people like Emily. I will focus on how they were affected by trying to improve living conditions created by neglect and exclusion. What drove them into engaging in work that might be uncomfortable and even emotionally painful? What kind of fulfillment are the volunteers getting out of this? How do they perceive their roles as volunteers? What had captivated Emily and pulled her and her fellow volunteers in?

The experience of volunteering in Calais was at times exhausting and uncomfortable, and affected by a huge range of emotions. My initial interest was in the emotions that motivated the volunteers to go to Calais. Throughout the data gathering my interest shifted towards the addictive aspects of volunteering. In this thesis, I will therefore discuss how the identity of my informants was altered throughout their time volunteering, and how they grew attached to the site and the work that they engaged themselves in there.

In this thesis, I will demonstrate how the emotions of the volunteers, as well as the volunteer community itself, can be analyzed as a response to exclusion and neglect of a group of people. I will demonstrate how the experience of having an obligation of humanitarian response, as well as continuously witnessing structural exclusion and it's very material and physical effects, created an environment to which volunteers like Emily would keep returning.

This thesis is based on 8 online interviews conducted in the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021, with volunteers who were travelling with the British charity organization SupportofC[2]. My aim is to shed light on the emotional impact of internalizing the role of being a volunteer, in an environment filled with precarious living conditions.

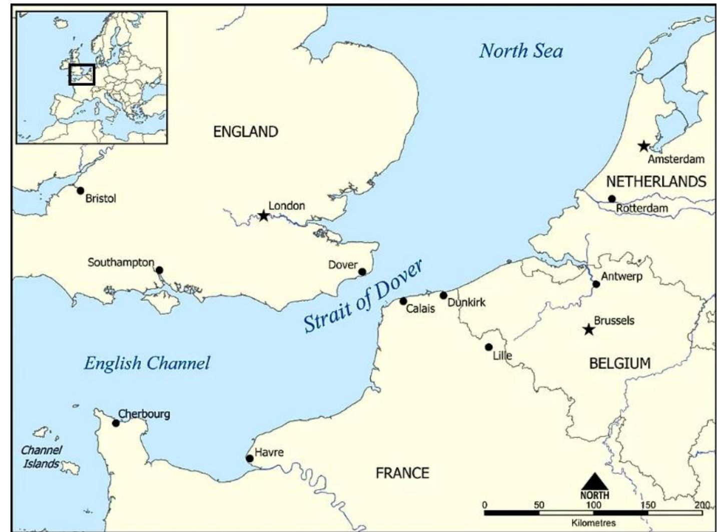
My focus will be on the experiences of the volunteers rather than the situation the refugees in Calais itself. French and British immigration politics, as well as asylum rights and refugees and

[2] For the sake of the confidentiality of my informants, I have chosen to change the name of the organization that I conducted research within. The charity that my informants were affiliated with had a different name than «SupportofC".

asylum seekers in Europe, is outside the scope of this thesis. However, to contextualize the experiences of my informants, it is necessary to give an outline of the situation in Calais.

Background

According to Ibrahim and Hogarth (2018), Calais has a long history as a space where borders are protected from people from the outside. Ibrahim and Hogarth describe how the English Channel has, since the Middle Ages, been thought of as a roadway into Europe, with Calais as a gateway. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 6)



Map of the English Channel and Strait of Dover. (World Atlas, 2021)

The opportunities that it provided to cross the channel has been imagined and spoken of as a threat since the opening of the Eurotunnel in 1994. (Ibrahim & Hogarth year: 4-6) Calais has a history not only as a gateway into the UK, but also a space where the figure of the refugee is constructed. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 7)

It was in the late 1990s that the Calais and Northern France attracted media, public and political attention due to the increasing number of migrants and refugees fleeing through the area, due to conflicts in the Balkans and Iraq and Afghanistan. French politicians became increasingly concerned with people who were living without shelter on the border. This concern later resulted in the opening of the famous Sangatte Center. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 47)

As was argued in the 2021 report published by the Refugee Rights Europe (RRE):

> "*The externalisation and heavy securitisation of the UK's border, begun in the 1990s, and the UK's unwillingness to grant individuals access to its asylum system, has led to the creation of a bottleneck for displaced people in northern France wishing to reach the UK. In tandem, and indeed partly financed by the UK government, French police are tasked with policing and uprooting communities in order to prevent so-called 'fixation points' along the coast. Under the same policy, minimal state intervention providing access to services has been seen over the decades.*" (Gerlach, Welander & Timberlake 2021: 8)

RRE has described the situation of the refugees in Calais as an effect of the strict policies of both the UK and France. According to RRE, the preoccupation of the French government to avoid fixation points – which they fear will attract more refugees – is exactly the reason for why the crisis goes unsolved and the refugees remain in precarious and neglected conditions (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 9). The RRE also describes how the zero fixation points-policy and the continuous destruction and re-emergence of makeshift camps is leading to an absurd situation, one that is "*temporary and transitory whilst, at the same time, permanent in nature*." (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 9) Similarly, Volk argues: "*Calais is one of the major sites of illegal refugee encampments in north-westers Europe for already twenty years. Its existence is due to the UK's particularly strict security controls taking place on the French side of the border*." (Volk 2017: 310)

Ibrahim and Hogarth (2018) have argued that the response of the French and the UK government to the concentration of refugees in the border region surrounding Calais has been strongly affected by a discourse on the refugees as something dangerous that is crossing borders and must be kept out. (Ibrahim & Howarth 2018: 39-40, 44-46) It is by labelling the asylum seeker as an illegal migrant that the division between the ones worthy of sanctuary and the ones who are not is created. When labelling asylum seekers as illegal migrants, the authority of the state is supported, at the same time as the body of the migrants is placed into a condition of exclusion. (Ibrahim & Hogarth year: 45-46, 60)

Ibrahim and Howarth demonstrate how the reaction of the French and UK government to the makeshift camps in Calais can be understood as a manifestation of the more general image of Europe as a fortress under siege, which must be protected from the external intrusion. (Ibrahim & Howarth 2018: 21, 31, 61)

According to a report released by Refugee Rights Europe in 2018, some of the common reason for why so many asylum seekers wanted to go to the UK were pre-existing language skills, beliefs that it would be easier to access education or get a job in the UK than elsewhere, and existing ties with friends, family and other contacts in the UK. Some of the migrants also seemed to believe that it would be easier to get asylum in the UK. The latter suggested that they were lacking reliable sources of information when making the decision to travel in order to seek asylum, and rather based their decisions on rumors and non-expert advice (Hendersen-Howat & Welander 2018: 14-15).

Some of the asylum seekers also explained that they felt like they had to finish their journey after having decided to go to Calais, and after coming this far. They felt like they simply had no choice but "clinging to a determination to reach an 'unreachable' destination." (Hendersen-Howat & Helander 2018: 14).

The Sangatte Center:

According to Alcade and Portos, the Sangatte Center, opened in 1999, represented a turning point in the solidarity mobilization in the region surrounding Calais. Part of the reason for why it became so significant, was that it became a source for contention between Britain and France, as the United Kingdom believed that it encouraged refugees to come to France and to continue their journey to the UK. (Alcade & Portos 2018: 259-260) The Sangatte Center was a transit camp, initially meant to accommodate the refugees for a short period of time. (Fassin 2005: 363).

During the existence of the Sangatte center, only a small number of the refugees ended up applying for and getting asylum in France. The rest attempted to continue their journey to the UK. However, as the British immigration politics became more restrictive, it became increasingly difficult for the migrants to make it out of Sangatte, which lead to the center becoming over-loaded. As the center was intended for a much smaller amount of people than the amount that now was stuck there, the migrants started to build a community of makeshift camps around the center, which soon started to resemble a small town (Fassin 2005: 363). In 2002, it was estimated by UNHCR and the Red Cross that the center had an average of 1700 individuals in it, when it was initially designed to take in 600 individuals at a time. (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 6-7)

In the end of 2002 the French president chose to close the camp under pressure from the UK. The same year as the Sangatte center was closed, a range of security measures were taken by the French and British authorities in the area, including fences, security cameras and increased presence of the police. The French and the British government became increasingly focused on protecting the border and controlling the people who were crossing it. The displaced people, however, remained in the area. Makeshift shelters – which later became known as the "jungles" – were continuously constructed by the refugees and then torn down by the police under the order of the government (Alcade & Portes 2018: 259-260, Escarsena 2019: 220).

In 2003, former French president Nicolas Sarkozy signed the Treaty of Le Touquet with the United Kingdom, which meant that France and the United Kingdom had to contribute to

immigration controls on each-others borders (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 9). After the closure of the center, The UK and France entered a new agreement on keeping refugees away from the area (Alcade & Portes 2018: 259-260).

During this time, French immigration minister Eric Besson declared that building a new center similar to the Sangatte center was out of question, as he feared that this could contribute to attracting even more migrants. He stated: "*It would not be a solution to the humanitarian problem, it would be an extra humanitarian problem*." (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 9)[3] Minimal amounts of help for the refugees or solutions to the critical situation they were in was offered by both governments. The focus was on controlling and protecting the border, and on surveillance of the ones who were trying to cross (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 9).

The Jungle and its demolition

The closure of Sangatte soon led to the reappearance of smaller camps surrounding the area where the reception center previously was. They were periodically torn down by the French state authorities. (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 10) The conditions in these camps were poor and neglected. In 2014, Calais Migrant Solidarity released a report on the human rights situation on the border, highlighting a lack of access to appropriate accommodation, poor hygiene and insufficient distribution of food. (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 9, 12, 17, 24).

The displaced people in the area eventually formed the large makeshift camp which became known as "The Jungle". Together with volunteers, the residents of the makeshift camp developed the Jungle into a village-like space with various social and cultural facilities, such as churches, shops, libraries and schools. (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 11-15)

> "*While the Calais 'Jungle' camp has been romanticised by some, it was to soon receive widespread media attention as the "worst refugee camp in the world." At its peak in 2016, it would come to host up to 10,000 individuals, with large numbers of volunteers and activists arriving from the UK and various countries worldwide to join in solidarity, to offer support and*

In order to gather information on the background of the situation in Calais I have chosen to rely on several reports made by organizations working for refugees and refugee rights. I am aware that reports written by organizations might not be entirely neutral and unbiased. However, relying on reports I have managed to gather information that is well organized, detailed and updated. I have also made sure to look up the sources that were used as references in these reports, and to check who else have cited them.

> *provide services in the absence of state care*." (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 11)

In the end of 2015, refugees were evicted from their self-made shelters to make space for state run container camps. Several such containers were set up the following years, but a lot of the migrants were skeptical towards moving into them, due to distrust towards the authorities. (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 16). In October 2016 the entire Jungle was demolished under the order of President Hollande. Around 6000 people were moved to temporary reception centers, while the rest of the residents of the now demolished camp moved to make-shift camps in the area of northern France. (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Wellander 2020: 20). In the transition between 2016 and 2017 displaced people would return to the area where the Calais camp used to be, where they now would sleep in forests and under bridges. In 2017, the situation seemed to have deteriorated further, with an increasing amount of police violence and evictions (Boittiuax, Gerlach & Wellander 2020: 22).

Aftermath of the demolition of the Jungle

> "*The end of the Calais 'Jungle' introduced an era of further deteriorating living conditions, exacerbated by constant evictions and the dismantling of living spaces, reflecting a sustained attempt by the authorities to prevent the creation of 'fixation points' along the coastline and the prevention of the emergence of another camp*." (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 33)

In 2016 RRE released several reports in which the aftermath of the demolition of the refugee camps was described. The conditions that the migrants were living in were described as deplorable. With the lack of access to information, it was extremely difficult for the refugees to change the situation that they were in. Most of the refugees were planning to stay in the area despite the demolition, despite sleeping directly on the ground and living in deplorable and neglected conditions for prolonged periods of time. Refugee Rights Europe stated that all this suggested that the demolitions and neglect of the camps did not work for reaching the goal of pushing the migrants out of the area (Boittiaux, Werlach & Wellander 2020: 18).

In 2016 Refugee Rights Europe made a large study in the area, which led to a report on the human rights issues in the camps. These issues would include lack of access to information and education, and lack of adequate shelter, hygiene facilities, food and healthcare. It was also reported that people included into vulnerable groups, such as children, women, elderly and

people with disabilities were not sufficiently protected (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 16-17).

In March 2020 local authorities announced that they would take measures in order to prevent spread of covid-19: however, Refugee Rights Europe states that these measures did not respond accurately to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 33) Around the same time, a lot of charities withdrew from working in Calais and suspended their cervices. (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 33-34). However, a lot of NGOs and grassroot organizations working in Calais called out the French government, as well as EU and the UN for an adequate Covid-19 response to the situation of the displaced refugees in northern France. (Boittiaux, Gerlact & Welander 2020: 35)

The effects of exclusion:

> *"Calais has a long history of creating refugees through expulsion and as a gateway for those seeking sanctuary in Britain."* (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 4)

Ibrahim and Hogarth (2018) have argued that the response of the French and the UK government to the concentration of refugees in the border region surrounding Calais has been strongly affected by a discourse on the refugees as something dangerous that is crossing borders and must be kept out. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 39-40, 44-46) They demonstrate how by labelling refugees as illegal migrants, the French authorities would immediately turn them into figures that were understood as dangerous transgressors. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 46) "*In severing displaced bodies from the context of their forced displacement and recasting refugees as migrants, ministers have presented them as less deserving of our pity or compassion and presaging a retreat from the moral obligation to provide sanctuary.*" (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 46) It is by labelling the asylum seeker as an illegal migrant that the division between the ones worthy of sanctuary and the ones who are not is created. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 45)

Refugee Rights Europe (2021) stated: "UK's juxtaposed border arrangements and increased security measures have created a 'bottleneck' scenario in northern France, whereby the hostile climate appears to deter prospective asylum seekers from wanting to stay in France, with liminal and precarious conditions acting as a strong impetuous for people to try and get to the UK at any cost." (Boittiaux, Gerlacht & Welander 2020: 38). They also state that the border control measures taken by the UK and France would make it harder for the migrants to make it to the UK, trapping them in neglected conditions (Boittiaux, Werlach & Welander 2020: 38).

Refugee Rights Europe (2021) have described how evictions have been used by the French government as a way to strengthen the border control (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 4). The use of evictions, as well as confiscation of items and making refugees leave their resting places was used as a way to avoid fixation points was especially used after the demolitions of the great Jungle. (Gerlach, Timberlake and Welander 2021: 33, 37)

Escarcena (2019) argues that during the past approximately 20 years there has been a circular process going on in the area surrounding Calais, where informal camps were built by migrants, developed into sometimes city-like communities, and then destroyed by the order of the French government. After that, there were built formal centers for vulnerable refugees in the area, established by the state. This would lead to a concentration of migrants in the area and the construction of new, informal camps, that would later be dismantled. The larger informal camps would then scatter into smaller ones. (Escarcena 2019: 219-221) Escarcena describes how refugees are continuously prevented from settling down anywhere, as well as having any dignity or autonomy. This would be achieved through constantly confiscating their belongings and preventing them from getting a chance to rest (Escarcena 2019: 217, 220, 231).

Similar tactics of exclusion have been seen throughout the last two centuries. The migrants were seen as a contamination that had to be avoided. The neglected conditions that these expulsions caused were never really addressed, as the main concern was to avoid migrants crossing the border, or living near it (Boittiaux, Gerlach & Welander 2020: 38). They were, in other words, treated like something polluting, something that was a threat to society and had to be kept outside of its boundaries.

This can be related to Douglas' (1966) theory on pollution and the fight against pollution. According to Douglas, the things (or people) that are considered dirty, dangerous or out of place are the ones that are crossing boundaries and therefore challenging established orders. Society, therefore, actively works in order to prevent this challenge and pollution of the order. "Dirt offends against order. Eliminating against it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment." (Douglas 2002: 2) Fighting against the pollution of the existing, clean order is a creative movement. Our need to protect this order maintains certain values, ideas of how one should act or how things should be, and the authorities of certain institutions and structures in society. (Douglas 2002: 3-4) The fight against what is understood to be dangerous, intrusive or impure can produce structures that in themselves can create framework for identities, practices and interactions.

McGee and Pelham (2017) argue that the conditions that the refugees are living in is depriving them from any social and cultural identity, from having any of their individual and cultural needs covered. They describe how the refugees are living under "*imposed regimes of bare life, brutality and suffering*" (McGee & Pelham 2017: 29). In order to describe the state that the refugees are being put in they use Agamben's term "homo sacer" – "*the figure whose life is forcibly stripped 'naked' of biography, rights and citizenship such that they may be subjected to physical and symbolic violence without legal recourse*." (McGee & Pelham 2017: 24).

Anghel and Grierson also describe the state that the refugees live in as "*'frozen transience', stuck in psychological, cultural and social transitions between leaving and arriving*.". (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 490) They characterize the situation of the refugees as "expanded liminality" (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 490), as their completion of their journey to the UK was terminated for an unknown period of time. (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 490).

Katz describes how the conditions in the makeshift camps of Calais in terms of Agambens concept "*bare life*": when human life is stripped of all its cultural and political significance and reduced simply to a biological body that is to be regulated by the state authority. (Katz 2017: 2) Agamben understands "bare life" as "*exclusive inclusion*", which is brought upon a group or individual by the sovereign state. (Agamben 1998: 107) When someone's existence is reduced to bare life, their lives are stripped of all political rights. (Agamben 1998: 103) "*He is pure zoē, but his zoē is as such caught in the sovereign ban and must reckon with it at every moment* (…)" (Agamben 1998: 103-104)

According to Katz, the camp is a space where people are "not treated as humans but as unwanted and exposed bodies". (Katz 2017: 10) The residents of the camps were considered as a threat to the national order and therefore had to be kept legally and socially as well as physically outside of the boundaries of society, yet at the same time be kept under control. (Katz 2017: 1-2, 10)

To illustrate the effects of the exclusion, Katz makes the distinction between "the power over life" vs. "the power of life" (Katz 2017: 13). "The word 'life' here does not merely refer to biological life, but primarily to human life in its distinct uniqueness; human life that realizes its power and freedom through acting and shaping the world according to its needs and desires." (Katz 2017: 13) Biopower, which can also be understood as the power over life, reduces the potential in life to biological existence, to bare life, and restricts the ways in which groups and individuals are allowed to exist. (Katz 2017: 13-14) In the makeshift camps the power over life

and the power of life are in a constant friction with each other, with the authorities trying to control the population of refugees, at the same time as the refugees are trying to regain agency and ownership of their own identity. (Katz 2017: 6-9, 13-14)

In their article "Public health in the Calais refugee camp: environment, health and exclusion" (2018) Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi describe the very physical manifestations of the exclusion that the refugees were subjected to by the French and the British government. "*The arrival of asylum seekers in large numbers coupled with inadequate state provision, has created significant concerns for the health and well-being of migrants*." (Davies, Isakjee & Dhesi 2018: 140) The findings within this report can be analyzed as the physical manifestation of the reduction of people to unwanted bodies, to bare life.

Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi argue that "medical advancements and modern state development combine to offer citizenry guarantees of care". (Davies, Dhesi & Isakjee 2018: 141). This means that exclusion of certain groups that are not counted as legitimate citizens also happens through deprivation of healthcare. Drawing on Foucault, they argue that modern development of society has led to a way of governing that exerts a positive influence on life. This positive influence happens through governmental provision of health care, and governmental action to reduce poverty, illness and environments that put the population at risk for getting sick or injured. (Davies, Dhesie & Isakjee 2018: 141)

With this development, health exclusion takes form through withdrawal of the kinds of provisions that ensure health and safety, which makes groups that are excluded from society more vulnerable. (Davies, Dhesi & Isakjee 2018: 141-142) The lack of sufficient nutrition, adequate housing, protection from diseases, toilet facilities and clean water manifest in injuries and ailments that could have been easily prevented and treated. A lot of residents in the makeshift camps dealt with respiratory issues due to lack of shelter and gastronomical issues due to polluted food and water, in addition to the psychological issues that were caused by the precarious conditions. (Davies, Dhesi & Isakjee 2018: 145-150)

The outline and analysis provided by Davies, Dhesi and Isakjee on the health conditions in the makeshift camps presents a framework for the humanitarian vacuum that attracted the enormous number of volunteers and volunteer organizations. The physical symptoms experienced by the refugees were not only manifestations of the governmental neglect, they also became immediate needs that had to be addressed. The depiction and media representation of the suffering

happening in Calais, together with the history of humanitarian engagement and the existing network of volunteers at the site.

A humanitarian vacuum

Mark Doidge and Elisa Sandri had themselves spent some time volunteering in the informal camps in Calais, while also conducting research. Based on their findings, they wrote the article "Friends That Last a Lifetime: The Importance of Emotions Amongst Volunteers Working with Refugees in Calais" (2019). In this article, they used the term "humanitarian vacuum" (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 466). Humanitarian vacuum, according to Doidge and Sandri, is what has taken shape due to the lack of state action addressing the critical conditions that the refugees have been stuck in, which leads to people having to survive in precarious and neglected conditions for prolonged periods of time. However, the humanitarian vacuum is also the phenomena that has attracted this large amount of volunteers to this particular area. (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 466).

I find the term "humanitarian vacuum" useful to describe the conditions that the informal camps surrounding Calais. The humanitarian vacuum in Calais would attract humanitarian workers and organizations such as SupportofC. Throughout this thesis, I will argue that the humanitarian vacuum of Calais is what in many ways shapes the experiences of the volunteers, the perception that they would gain of their own work, of their relationships to the refugees and to their fellow volunteers, and even of their own identity.

Volunteer Mobilization in Calais

> "*Due to the lack of support offered by governments and aid agencies, and because of the dreadful conditions the refugees lived in, grassroots organisations, run by volunteers, increasingly took on the responsibility of managing the Jungle. Volunteers came from all over Europe to provide assistance, but the overwhelming majority of volunteers were from Great Britain.*" (Sandri 2018: 66)

In this quote by Sandri (2018) it is described how the conditions that were outlined in the section above attracted volunteers from various places in the world. Volunteers and volunteer organizations were drawn to the site by the humanitarian vacuum that was created by the expulsion and lack of action taken by the French and British government.

Anthropologist Liisa Malkki argues that so called "humanitarian situations" are unique in the way that they attract people who want to alleviate suffering. "*The qualifier humanitarian makes the need of those to be helped appear simultaneously somehow elementary (basic) and*

monumental (superhuman) in scale: 'basic human needs' (water, food, medicine, shelter, sanitation) have to be supplied by "*the international community" to alleviate the 'basic human suffering' of the anonymous masses of 'humanity*'." (Malkki 2015: 6) A humanitarian situation, then, is one that is precarious, where basic human needs must be addressed, at the same time as it is the global, international human community that is obligated to address the issue. I would argue that the situation in Calais exemplifies the kinds of situations that Malkki describes here, which create the perfect object for humanitarian engagement.

Calais has a long history of mobilization out of solidarity with the refugees. According to Alcade and Portes, the closure of the Sangatte center, run by the Red Cross, became a turning point in the humanitarian engagement in Calais. After the closure of the center, refugees continued to camp in the area. The increasing amount of people in transit living in the area surrounding the former Sangatte camp led to an increase of local charity organizations that were addressing the situation. (Alcade & Portes 2018: 260)

"*In parallel to the evolution of the so-called refugee crisis in—and en route to—Europe, a new jungle in Calais again hit mainstream media headlines in 2015*." (Alcade & Portes 2018: 260). Alcade and Portos describe how this contributed to the large amount of volunteers and humanitarian organizations getting attracted to the area. "*While local activism of solidarity with migrants and refugees has a long history in the region, the international dimension is more connected to the refugee crisis, beginning at the end of 2015 and expanding during 2016*." (Alcade & Portos 2018: 161) In connection with the increased media attention directed towards Calais, a social movement of volunteers emerged, consisting of hundreds of local and international volunteers and activists. (Alcade & Portes 2018: 260) Researchers have argued that the movement of volunteers was attracted to the area by the humanitarian vacuum (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 466) created by the inaction of the state institutions. (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 466)

In the report published by Refugee Rights Europe (2021), Gerlach, Timberlake and Welander describe how grassroot organizations such as SupportofC, in collaboration with larger organizations, created an "*a unique and organic 'architecture of care and dignity*'". (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 13) These volunteers supported the refugees the consolidation of the makeshift camps into the small village that eventually became known as the Jungle. (Gerlach, Timberlake & Welander 2021: 14)

Mc Gee and Pelham (2018) argue that the grassroot organizations that work in Calais and similar sites can be seen as an alternative to more traditional state humanitarianism (Mc.Gee & Pelham 2018: 27). "*Unencumbered by state bureaucracies, both operate under a self-ascribed authority derived largely from their own moral insistence of the human right to a dignified threshold of life*." (Mc.Gee & Pelham 2018: 27-28) Grassroot humanitarian organizations are concerned with the rights of the recipients of their aid, both rights to having their immediate needs covered but also to have a life that is more than mere physical survival, such as socialization and play (McGee & Pelham 2018: 28) According to McGee and Pelham, activists and volunteers who are part of such grassroot organizations are trying to actively counter the neglect that the refugees are facing by the state, and subjects reduced to bare life their visibility and agency back. Although such organizations often perceive themselves as "apolitical" and simply focusing on doing good, McGee and Pelham argue that their project is in fact deeply political, as they would intervene in what they considered state violence and neglect (McGee & Peelham 2018: 30).

Ibrahim and Hogarth connect the wave of volunteers and what they describe as "voluntourism" with the change in the media representation of the situation in Calais, which included increased visuality and focus on suffering. One example of this was the picture of dead body of a child refugee, Alan Kurdi, that went viral in 2015. This kind of media attention sparked both increased curiosity and sympathy, and therefore also solidarity and mobilization of volunteers and activists. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 58-59)

According to Ibrahim and Hogarth it was in particularly the image of the dead body of Alan Kurdi on the beach increased public interest in the crisis in Calais. Simultaneously, it also created a wave of stronger tendencies of visualization in the news media. This caused more interest, curiosity and experience of a moral duty to help in the British public. This led to an increase in the phenomena of voluntourism, caused both by moral plight but also curiosity. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 59)

> "*The increased gaze into the camps and its inhabitants since 2014 mark a moment of conflicted visuality where the refugee bodies are objects of interest and curiosity. Their personal spaces, bodily needs, and sanitation become objects of gaze that emerge through a discourse of cataloguing and documenting their depraved conditions, and in the process this gaze is just as disconcerting as the mammoth machine bulldozing their makeshift tents. It produces a gaze into the*

> *private realms without producing an intimacy to the Other*". (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 61)

Mc.Gee and Pelham argue that the activism and volunteer work in Calais has been criticized for taking form "media-savvy forms of 'humanitarian branding'" that ultimately could serve for the hegemony of neoliberal political interests. (Mc.Gee & Pelham 2018: 28)

Emotions have been stressed as an important motivator for the volunteer mobilization in Calais. (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 464). Doidge and Sandri argue that "*volunteering with refugees is infused with emotions throughout the process*" (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 464). Doidge and Sandri write the importance to suppress, control and interpret emotions in certain ways, according to unwritten but socially established emotion rules. (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 474-476)

In this thesis, I will build further on the idea that emotions and interpretation of emotion is a crucial component to the activities of volunteers. My focus will lie on the role that the interaction between individual volunteers and the volunteer community played in the creation of so-called "feeling rules". (Doidge & Sandri 2018: 469) As I will demonstrate through my empirical gatherings, ideas on appropriate emotional responses to the precarious situation that the volunteers are addressing appear in communication and interaction between volunteers.

Theoretical Framework

Humanitarianism

In this thesis I aim to exemplify, comment on, and to some degree critique important anthropological theories on humanitarianism. Therefore it would be fitting to outline the theories in some important anthropological works on the topic.

The terms "humanitarianism or humanitarian in Didier Fassins monography "Humanitarian Reason" are used in a broad way. Fassin speaks of biopolitical control of populations, military intervention in the name of protecting or saving lives, or the imperative of alleviating suffering. (Fassin 2012: 1-2, 7, 12, 226) In this thesis, terms such as "humanitarianism" or "humanitarian work" are referring to the experience of the responsibility to, and emotional need to, stop or ease the suffering of disadvantaged people. I am, however, aware of the fact that the term "humanitarianism" can also be defined in different ways when used in different contexts.

I use Fassins definition, where humanitarianism is interpreted as the principle of protecting lives and preventing or easing suffering, that is heavily informed by moral sentiments.

“Humanitarianism” and “humanitarian work” also refer to the practices that are informed by this imperative. (Fassin 2012: 1-4). In his comparative monography “Humanitarian Reason” (2012), Fassin argues that the experience of an universal obligation to help the disadvantaged is in fact full of contradictions and paradoxes. (Fassin 2012: xi-xii) Humanitarianism as a social phenomena is dependent on catastrophic events, that are precarious but at the same time also need attention for only short periods of time. (Fassin 2012: x)

Critical anthropologists argue that through humanitarianism and humanitarian practices, people are being constructed as victims who have to be saved by the humanitarians. (Ticktin 2014: 279) Malkki, for instance, has argued that recipients of humanitarian aid can easily end up being imagined as having more basic needs than other people. (Malkki 2015: 7)

According to Miriam Ticktin (2014) humanitarian anthropology grew out of medical anthropology and its interest in suffering. In the 1990s the discipline of anthropology had gone through several crises of representation and turned away from what Robbins described as the “savage slot” (an interest in what was considered to be radically different from one’s own society). Its new object of interest became suffering, or “*the figure of humanity united in its shared vulnerability to suffering*” (Ticktin 2014: 276). Through the “suffering slot”, anthropology got a new object of study that did feel more politically correct, as the approach to this object was not as influenced by the colonial past of the discipline. (Ticktin 2014: 276)

Shifting focus from trying to study the radically different to studying something as universal as suffering and trauma, the discipline of anthropology became more interest in the sameness with its object of study. Trauma and suffering can be understood as a universal experience that all people can relate to in one way or another. (Ticktin 2014: 277) The suffering slot also led anthropologists to experience an obligation to contribute to the “humanitarian project” through their research (Ticktin 2014: 277), a similar experience of moral obligation to the one described by Fassin.

In the 2000s, however, anthropology moved away from engagement with humanitarianism, towards a critique of it. “(…) *Without abandoning the set of moral positions related to suffering, anthropologists engaged with and critiqued humanitarianism according to its own self-professed principles, examining the effects of these principles ethnographically and often denouncing their failures*.” (Ticktin 2014: 277)

The focus was now directed towards the hidden interest in the operations and practices of humanitarian organizations, as well as their unexpected consequences. (Ticktin 2014: 277-278),

a critique heavily influenced by critical theorists such as Agamben, Foucault and Arendt. (Ticktin 2014: 278) This interest in humanitarianism has also shed light on peoples' personal motives in becoming humanitarians, as ways of self-care or self-help. (Ticktin 2014: 279) One example of anthropologist who take a more critical approach towards humanitarianism is Liisa Malkki, who discusses how people engage in humanitarianism not only to respond to the needs of the recipients of their aid, but also to their own needs. (Malkki 2015)

Redfield's monography "Life in Crisis" (2013) presents an ethnographic analysis on the humanitarian non-profit organization Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders. (Redfield 2013: 11-13) The mission of the organization is to help people in crisis, to save lives that are in a critical situation and to address circumstances that need urgent, medical response. According to Redfield this mission makes the organization dependent on the concepts of "crisis" and "emergency", terms frequently used by the organization to characterize the kinds of situations that they addressed. (Redfield 2013: 13-14) MSF and similar organizations address situations that can be classified as states of exceptions, which means they can help the people in the moment of crisis, such as in wars and natural catastrophies, and then move on. (Redfield 2013: 14-15, 17)

Their work was about preventing people from physically suffering, getting sick or dying. It consists mainly of covering immediate needs such as shelter, sustenance, hygiene and medical aid. (Redfield 2013: 15) However, Redfield argues that the aid that MSF offers is largely temporary, and it prolongs rather than saves lives. (Redfield 2013: 17) "*Survival, after all, is a perpetually temporary outcome*". (Redfield 2013: 17)

Humanitarian organizations like MSF are, however, often deeply concerned with preserving and upholding the dignity of the ones whom they are trying to help (Redfield 2013: 17). "They refer to it frequently as a fundamental aspect of humanity, gesturing to it as a rhetorical ideal and denouncing its absence in particular contexts. Life for them thus certainly involves more than survival." (Redfield 2013: 17)

Humanitarian aid has been problematized by several anthropologists, in the sense that the interactions between the ones who are giving and the ones who are receiving the help creates power differences. Fassin describes how this leads to the poor and disadvantaged ones experiencing a lack of integrity and dignity, "the shame of the poor". (Fassin 2012: 3) "(…) *The very conditions of the social relation between the two parties, whatever the goodwill of the agents, make compassion a moral sentiment with no possible reciprocity*." (Fassin 2012: 3)

In anthropology many scholars have spoken about the dilemmas within humanitarianism in terms of gift-giving, particularly drawing on the theories of anthropologist Marcel Mauss. According to Mauss, gift-exchange has a crucial function in all societies, and it can be understood as a so called "*total social phenomenon*" (Mauss 2002: 3), that gives expression to all kinds of institutions in society, such as family, religion, laws and economy. (Mauss 2002: 3-4) Mauss draws on Malinowskis accounts on the kula, a trade practice that goes on within and between the tribes on the Trobriand Islands. The very symbolically loaded items were passed on from chief to chief, and the practice was surrounded by strict rules and norms, such as who hands over items to whom, for how long they are kept etc. (Mauss 2002: 28-29) "(…) *The Kula (...) consists of giving by some, and receiving by others. The recipients of one day become the givers on the next.*" (Mauss 2002: 28) These "mechanisms of obligation" (Mauss 2002: 29), as Mauss refers to them, are also consolidating the relationships between the tribes within the Kula ring. (Mauss 2002: 29)

Three important obligations are involved in the institution of gift exchange: the obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate. Studying the process of gift-giving among Polynesian clans, Mauss found how practices and obligations of gift giving could lay a foundation that kept a society together. He suggests that rules and norms surrounding gift-exchange can have similar functions in other societies. (Mauss 2002: 17-18)

Some anthropologists have argued that humanitarian aid can create disempowering relationships between the givers and the recipients of the aid, something that creates dilemmas for humanitarian workers. Drawing on Mauss, Malkki suggests that humanitarian aid is also a sort of a gift. What makes humanitarian aid a special case is that the gift (in form of aid, care, supplies, protection, emotional support, whatever it is that the disadvantaged and marginalized population is receiving) is not followed by a counter gift, nor is reciprocity expected. This makes the exchange uneven, and might create an unbalanced dynamic of power between the giving and the receiving end. (Malkki 2015: 25-26,).

Malkki describes some humanitarian practices as an uneven kula ring (Malkki 2015: 109). In her analysis of gifts to disadvantaged children, she concludes that the gift exchange is not always happening between the aid worker or volunteer and the disadvantaged person. Rather, the "giver" makes a gift to himself or herself, through the gift that he or she makes to a disadvantaged person. (Malkki 2015: 160) The giver also has a need that must be covered, a need to feel like being a part of something greater or feeling like a good person.

Exclusion:

According to Douglas, the things (or people) that are considered dirty, dangerous or out of place are the ones that are crossing boundaries and therefore challenging established orders. Society, therefore, actively works in order to prevent this challenge and pollution of the order. "Dirt offends against order. Eliminating against it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment." (Douglas 2002: 2) Fighting against the pollution of the existing, clean order is a creative movement. Our need to protect this order maintains certain values, ideas of how one should act or how things should be, and the authorities of certain institutions and structures in society. (Douglas 2002: 3-4) "*Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment.*" (Douglas 2002: 2) The fight against what is understood to be dangerous, intrusive or impure can produce structures that in themselves can create framework for identities, practices and interactions.

In her article "Invasive others: Towards a contaminated world" (2017) Ticktin describes how the flows of people who are crossing national borders often are imagined as something threatening, invasive and contaminating (Ticktin 2017: xxi). Ticktin argues that people crossing borders of states are often thought of and spoken of in similar ways as invasive organisms, such as pathogens and plants that invade eco-systems and organisms – they are something that threatens the order of the system and something that has to be fought against (Ticktin 2017: xxi).

Øyvind Fuglerud (2003) presents similarities between the discourses on immigration in the western world and images of purity and the body. He refers to Martins analysis of how understanding of immigration and the impact it has on the nation often is related to the way people understand the body and its protection from foreign organisms. Although the human body is not often used as a metaphor for the border that must restrict immigration, the protection of the border and the protection of the body nevertheless are images resembling of each other (Fuglerud 2005: 306-309). Drawing on Douglas, Fuglerud argues: "The physical body can have universal meaning only as a system which responds to the social system, expressing it as a system." (Fuglerud 2005: 307)

A similar argument has been made by Katz. Katz argues: "*Undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and other people "on the move" (we will use "migrants" from here on as the most inclusive term) are often perceived as a threat to the security, the economy, or to the "purity" of the nation-state's "national body*." (Katz 2017: 1) Katz goes on arguing that states

react to this "threat" or "impurity" by trying to restrict them or push them out of their borders (Katz 2017: 1).

As mentioned above, Agamben presents an understanding of exclusion that can be understood through the deprivation of political and social status, and through a form of exclusion that does not exclude altogether. Individuals who are not considered to belong in society are still under its control, however, completely deprived of rights (Agamben 1998: 103-104, 107).

Emotions and emotional discourse

In "Anthropology and Emotion" (2014), Beatty discusses how emotions are difficult to define, and how researchers who study emotions have never really come to agree upon a definition of the concept that can be universally used. (Beatty 2014: 454)

Beatty describes emotions as subjective first-person experiences, but nevertheless also a product of the collective, and not detachable from the surrounding social context. (Beatty 2014: 551-553) Another aspect of emotions that Beatty stresses is the biographical one. Emotions and emotional responses are socially constructed, but they are also conditioned by the individuals past experience. When writing about emotions as an anthropologist, one must keep in mind how they are created within a constant friction between the social and the individually biographical. They are "*primed by evolution, to be sure; shaped by culture; constrained by subject position; but given personal relevance and intensity by individual history*." (Beatty 2014: 552)

Encyclopedia Britannica offers a definition of emotion that goes as follows: "a complex experience of consciousness, bodily sensation, and behavior that reflects the personal significance of a thing, an event, or a state of affairs." (Solomon n.d.)

According to Lutz and Abu-Lughod, emotions have for a long time been viewed in a somewhat essentialist lens by anthropologists and other social scientists. They have been understood as something that is universal, that naturally exists within the individual and is interpreted or controlled by the culture. This essentialist presents emotions turns the focus away from the role that social discourse has in the shaping of emotion (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 2-3).

According to more recent anthropological works, the view on emotions as "*psychobiological processes that respond to cross cultural environmental differences but retain a robust essence untouched by the social or cultural*" (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 2) can be both limiting and harmful to the study of emotions (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990: 2). Abu-Lughod and Lutz stress

the importance of taking social and historical context into account when analyzing emotions in anthropological research. (Lutz & Abu Lughod 1990: 5)

Lutz and Abu-Lughod also stress how discourse is necessary to be taken into account in analysis of emotions. While discourse can be a fleeting concept with many different kinds of meanings, depending on the discipline it is used within, in this context it can be understood as practices that form the objects or the reality that they describe. (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 9) From this point of view, social practices are "productive of experience and constitutive of the realities in which we live and the truths in which we work" (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 9-10).

Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990) define emotional discourses as "situated deployments of emotional linguistic forms". (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 13). Emotions can be put use in order to achieve something in a given context. Emotional discourses and discourses on emotion are usually tied to specific social issues, power relationships and dynamics. (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 13-14) "*Emotional discourses establish, assert, challenge or reinforce certain power differences*". (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 14) At the same time, emotional discourses also have instrumental value, as "pragmatic acts and communicative performances". (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 11) By this, Abu-Lughod and Lutz mean that emotions and the way that we interpret and act upon our emotions often has functions in our social relations and communities. (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990: 11)

Quoting Foucault, Abu Lughod and Lutz describe discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak". (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 9) According to Lutz and Abu-Lughod, this means that communication and other forms of social practice contribute to shape the way in which we perceive the world around us. (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 9-10) In "The Archaeology of Knowledge" Foucault explains the term "discourse" as a group of hypotheses, statements or rules that make it possible to define and categorize objects in a certain way, or as a framework within which objects are constituted or transformed. (Foucault 1972: 31-34) Statements are linked to one another within a discourse. (Foucault 1972: 60)

Emotions are not only about individual experiences and reactions. They also revolve around social life and power relationships (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 16). Lutz and Abu Lughod approach emotions as something that is informed and produced by social values and understandings of reality. Emotions are embodied experiences, but they should not be seen as separated from the socially constructed discourse (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 12-13).

In this thesis, the concept of discourse will be largely used in relation to emotions, and interpretation of certain emotions. In social theory, discourse can be understood as a tool in order to approach speech and other kinds of practices as something that can contribute to constituting reality in which we live, and the things that we interpret as true. Jørgensen and Phillips (1999) also describe discourse as a collection of statements that can be interpreted to be true. (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999: 22)

Discourse can, in other words, contribute to the creation of relationships between various individuals and groups and constitute a social reality. The empirical examples that were gathered for this thesis show how discourse also can contribute to changing relationships and creating a different reality from the one that has been established. This also goes for emotional discourses: in fact, emotions have turned out to be crucial for this rearrangement of certain hierarchical relationships and of the creation of subjects.

According to anthropologists concerned with humanitarianism, such as Fassin and Malkki, emotions play an important role for motivation to engage in humanitarian work. Fassin describes, as mentioned above, how the experience of obligation to help others is informed by moral sentiments, which are “the emotions that direct our attention towards the suffering of others and make us want to remedy them.” (Fassin 2012: 1)

Sociologist Hoschield, on the other hand, focuses on the ways in which we manage emotions, and adjust them to socially constructed rules on what is appropriate in a given situation. According to Hoschield, emotions are not as spontaneous as they often are considered to be. Emotions are, therefore, often enterpreted, controlled and put to use through existing social norms. (Hoschield 1979: 555) According to Hoschield, conventions of emotion are useful to a community, and can function as something that consolidates the relationships within the community. (Hoscield 1979: 572) Drawing on Hoschield, then, one can argue that the way we experience emotions is based on the norms that exist within our community, in that particular social context.

As mentioned in the introduction, emotions play a crucial role in the motivation for volunteering, but also volunteers perception of their work and of themselves during and after their time in the field. In this thesis, emotions will therefore be understood as forces that motivate us humanitarian action, but that also can be shaped by the community and its values, and that are appropriately controlled and employed. Emotions can also contribute to our

understanding of the way in which the world is organized: for instance, our understanding of what is fair and unfair, and who needs help and support.

Social roles:

In his introduction to Goffman's work "Interaction Ritual" Best (2005) describes how the self, to Goffman, is under constant influence from the context that it finds itself within. (Best 2005: ix-v) In "Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life" (1965), Goffman argues that "(…) When an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive in a situation." (Goffman 1965: 8)

Goffman understands any activity where a person interacts with others and tries to impact their impression of themselves as a "performance" while the people who are present during the performance can be understood as an "audience". Goffman argues that the way an individual appears in social situations depends on his or her "audience", the other people who are present, as the individual wishes to maintain a certain impression. (Goffman 1965: 8, 13). He or she therefore assumes a "social role", which can be defined as "*the enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status*" (Goffman 1965: 9). In other words, the way individuals present themselves, and the qualities that they show, is dependent on the given social context, as well as the expectations of the community around them.

Drawing on Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, Goffman argues that the way individuals are expected to perform in social situation can be understood as a reflection of the common values within that society or community. (Goffman 1965: 23) In this thesis, the roles that my informants took upon themselves can be seen as a reflection of the reaction to witnessing exclusion, and the emotional discourses that they embodied.

Outline of chapters

In chapter 1, «Methodology», I will present the methods that I have used to gather the data for this thesis. I will outline the way my method differed from classical anthropological methods, and the challenges this posed for the process of research, as well as the ethical considerations that I had to make. The impact that the covid-19 pandemic had on ethnographic research will also be discussed in this chapter.

In chapter 2: "Arrival and first impressions", I will outline the motives that my informants explained to have for volunteering. Here I will also discuss the conflicting motives that humanitarian workers might have engaging in their work. I will also describe how the

volunteers experienced arriving to Calais, and which first impressions made most impact on them.

In chapter 3 “Everyday life”, I will describe the image I have managed to create of the everyday life of a volunteer in Calais, drawing on the descriptions that I have gathered from the interviews. Here I will, however, also spend some time describing the multiple and at times conflicting emotions that the volunteers had to deal with while working in Calais. I will also explain the relationships they developed with the migrants. Finally, I will discuss the social community formed by the volunteers, and how their socialization affected their experience.

Chapter 4, “Departure and life after Calais”, will mostly revolve around the thoughts and feelings that my informants had connected to the departure from Calais. I will begin with discussing how the concept of liminality is useful in this context. After that I will describe the emotions that would arise before and during departure, and what meaning volunteers would usually attach to these emotions. Finally, I will also give an account on the lasting impact that the experiences in had on the identity, self-perception, and sense of belonging of my informants. the way the experience of volunteering would alter the identity of the volunteers and what they would do in order to preserve these changes in their identity.

In the conclusion, I will outline what I have found out about the relationship the volunteers created to the migrants and the field in which they were working. Specifically, I will focus on how humanitarian situations such as the one in Calais I will discuss the ways in which my findings can shed light on the background literature that I have used for the analysis in this thesis.

Chapter 1: Methodology

From the beginning of the masters' program at the University of Oslo, I was planning to do research on humanitarianism and humanitarian practices. I was originally planning to do my fieldwork in an organization in Oslo. However, as Norway was put under restrictions in order to prevent the spread of the Covid-19, it quickly became obvious both for me and for the leaders of the organization that doing fieldwork there during the spring and the summer would be very difficult and uncertain.

I therefore realized that I would have to find an alternative in order to be able to stick to theme that I had already picked for my research project, proposed to the institute and done research for. Together with my supervisor, I came to the conclusion that it would be best to combine empirically gathered data with an analysis of published sources. As I had already used some sources on the volunteer movement for background for my topic of research, I decided to focus on Calais as a field site, with the volunteer movement that has been drawn to it.

The use of digital services and social media was nevertheless crucial for the recruitment of my informants. My informants were gathered from the organizations Facebook group – except for one, who was contacted on the basis of a post that she had written on the blog forum on the website of SupportofC. The informants who were recruited on the Facebook page were recruited through a post I made there twice about looking for people to interview, and the volunteers who chose to get in touch with me seemed to be interested in discussing their experience in Calais with someone.

Gökçe Günel, Saiba Varma and Chika Watanabe (2020) state in "A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography" that the covid-19 pandemic has made traditional ethnographic methods very difficult, as it puts restrictions on travelling and social interaction. Many anthropologists across the world had to cancel their plans of long-term fieldwork, just like my fellow students and I had to. The writers of "A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography" state the possibility that the outbreak of covid-19 and its aftermath might have altered ethnographic methodology permanently. However, they also describe this as a possibility for the consolidation of new and innovative ways of conducting ethnographic research. These might for instance include online

fieldwork, multi-sited ethnography and auto-ethnography (Gökce, Varma & Watanabe 2020: 2).

They therefore propose the term “patchwork ethnography”, which I think might be useful to describe my research methods, and the way I have approached my field and theme. By patchwork ethnography Gøkce, Varma & Watanabe mean ways of conducting ethnographic research that is less holistic than the traditional long-term fieldwork. Instead, this innovative way of gathering data embraces using several methods at once, such as short term visits to your field site combined with online ethnography. Patchwork ethnography is also a research method – or combination of methods – that is more compatible with the ethnographers personal commitments or restrictions (Gökce, Varma & Watanabe 2020: 3).

I would argue that my approach to my research topic, and the way I chose to gather data, can qualify as patchwork ethnography, as it combines several methods as an alternative to the traditional participant observation method. In this chapter, I will outline the traditional methods in anthropology, in which ways I diverted from them but also how I have tried to align the research behind my thesis with them.

The global covid-19 pandemic caused numerous restrictions that people, institutions and practices all over the world were affected by and had to adjust to. The academia and the conduct of research is no exception. Due to the circumstances under which this thesis was written, the methods of the research on which it was based ended up being rather experimentative, and not traditionally anthropological. The methods I have used were a combination of interviews and analysis of existing publications on my topic of research.

I would argue that my approach to my research topic, and the way I chose to gather data, can qualify as patchwork ethnography, as it combines several methods as an alternative to the traditional participant observation method. In this chapter, I will outline the traditional methods in anthropology, in which ways I diverted from them but also how I have tried to align the research behind my thesis with them.

Briefly on fields, participant observation and the ethnographic interview:

Bronislaw Malinowski, described as “the great synthesizer of ethnographic fieldwork” (Robben 2012: 54), describes his own ethnographic fieldwork as follows:

> “*Living in the village with no other business than to follow native life, one sees the customs, ceremonies and transactions over and over again, one has examples*

of their beliefs as they are actually lived through, and the full body of actual native life fills out soon the skeleton of abstract constructions." (Malinowski 2012: 76)

Malinowski further explores how the ethnographer has the ability to create a unique outline of the way life is lived in the field, the "imponderabilia of actual life", by which he defines all the mundane aspects that together create everyday life, such as preparation of food, work routines and interactions between friends. Phenomena like these cannot be researched and recorded through mere questioning or documentation (Malinowski 2012: 76). "(…) They have to be observed in their full actuality." (Malinowski 2012: 76) In other words, Malinowski argues that the way life is lived and the world is perceived can only be studied and observed from the inside by the ethnographer. Robbens states that Malinowskis field research method remained hegemonic in the discipline of anthropology up until the 1990s, the research methods started to become affected by globalization, and therefore started to embrace multi-sited fieldwork. (Robben 2012: 54)

"Participation is central to being ethnographic" (Madden 2017: 75) Madden states in his ethnography handbook "Being Ethnographic". According to Madden, the practices of anthropologists and ethnographers conducting research are traditionally not too different from the interactions between people in everyday life. They involve talking to people, spending time around them (hanging out), sharing activities with them and observing them. In sum, this is what is called participant observation by anthropologists (Madden 2017: 75).

Participant observation happens in a "field". "*Ethnographic fields do not exist beyond the imaginings of the ethnographer*", (Madden 2017: 38). The field is the space in which ethnographers conducts research. It is therefore created by the ethnographer's research project, and does not exist as such without it. The most important aspect of the ethnographic field is the connection the field has to the people and social phenomena that are studied by the ethnographer (Madden 2017: 37-39). "An ethnographic field provides an interrogative boundary to map on to a geographical and/or social and/or emotional landscape that is inhabited by a participant group." (Madden 2017: 39)

Similarly to participant observation, the ethnographic interview has a lot in common with an ordinary conversation between people. Spradley (1979) describes how the ethnographic interview in many ways resembles a friendly conversation between friends or acquaintances. "In fact, skilled ethnographers often gather most of their data through participant observation and many casual, friendly conversations." (Spradley 1979: 58) When ethnographers conduct

research the distinction between the friendly conversation and the interview is often blurred. The ethnographer will talk to the informant about the informant's everyday life, or whatever topic the ethnographer is interested in, in a relaxed setting. In many cases the interview will not be considered an interview by the informant, while the ethnographer will gather the data they are looking for (Spradley 1979: 56-68).

During ethnographic research, one common method is to rely on semi-formal interviews (Madden 2017: 65-66). The ethnographic interview, just like the friendly conversation, contains a greetings, asking questions, expressing interest and ignorance (ignorance as in lack of knowledge on a certain topic, in order to encourage the other person to elaborate or keep telling a story), taking turns while talking and finally making a statement in order to finish the conversation or withdraw from it (Spradley 1979: 55-67).

The ethnographic interviews differ from ordinary, friendly conversations in the sense that the ethnographer exerts a greater control over the course of the conversation. For most part, it is the ethnographer who asks questions, and it is also the ethnographer who decides what topic the conversation will be about. The ethnographer also usually states the explicit purpose and topic of the conversation – something you usually don't do when talking to a friend or acquaintance. The ethnographer asks the informant a range of questions with the purpose of gaining insight into a certain topic. These can be questions that require explanations of terms and cultural domains or descriptions of environments and practices. Throughout the interview the ethnographer might also ask what "friendly questions" in order to make the informant relax and become more comfortable in the conversation (Spradley 1979: 55-67).

Fieldwork on a distance

Although I did not physically immerse myself in a field site the way Malinowski advocated for, I would still argue that my research took place in a field. According to Sarah Pink et.al. (2016), there are several ways of being in a field apart from physically staying there. The increased anthropological interest in social media has made us realize that there are alternative ways for being "present" in the field. According to Pink, there is the possibility to be in the field remotely, which means that you are interacting with the participants and your site through chat services or videotelephony services such as Zoom or Skype. Second, you can be in the field virtually, which means that you are using things such as web forums or interactive games. Third, you can also be there imaginatively, through stories and images found in blogs, video sharing platforms, photos shared online and social media (Pink et.al 2016: 134-135).

I, for instance, used video calling services to conduct the interviews (remotely), and I used Facebook, as well as a blog archive in order to find informants to interview (virtually). Finally, I also made use of blogs, Instagram accounts, twitter accounts and other platforms to get a sense of the issues that the volunteers would concern themselves with and their motivations and attitudes. The insight that I gained from online platforms was very helpful when I later would construct interview questions and engage in conversations with my informants. Doing interviews over a video calling service with people that I was geographically far away from can be considered being in the field imaginatively. The descriptions my informants would give me would give me a sense of the environment that they were in. I will elaborate more on this later in this chapter.

The analysis that I will present in this thesis is based on 8 interviews that were conducted using zoom. I got in touch with my informants on the Facebook page of SupportofC, which was mostly for practical reason, such as communicating in order to plan trips to Calais and coordinate donations. To be accepted as a member of the Facebook group you had to be either a current or an aspiring volunteer, and you had to get in touch with one of the leaders of the organization beforehand to be invited into the group. I e-mailed one of the leaders, describing my project to her, explaining my interest in the work of the volunteers and expressing how helpful it would be for me to get invited. To my relief, she answered that she thought my research project sounded very interesting and invited me right away.

I then posted two posts in the group (one in December and one in January) where I described my research topic and my need for informants. I also stressed how highly I would prioritize the safety, anonymity and privacy of my informants, and the fact that they legally had the right to withdraw their data at any time. To my positive surprise, volunteers were very quick to read the post and get in touch with me directly. In addition, one of my very helpful informants got in touch with some of her fellow volunteers and gave them my contact information after they had confirmed that they were interested. One of my informants was also found through one of the blogposts she had posted on the organization’s web site. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted on the video calling service Zoom. All of my informants gave me permission to record the interviews. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed.

This way, I gave the informant a choice. If they wanted to, they could draw on their personal emotions and affects when explaining what was common to feel as a volunteer in Calais. Often, they seemed comfortable with doing so. If they did not, however, they also had the choice to talk about the emotional reactions of the people around them. Or they could, of course, do both,

which was what many of my informants did. This turned out to be mutually beneficial, as I could get both personal accounts on the emotional experience of volunteering, as well as a more general overview of the common ways to feel or react. Even if my informants, of course, did not necessarily know how their fellow volunteers were feeling, I could still get a sense of the emotional climate and which emotions seemed appropriate to express among volunteers.

It cannot be stressed enough that my methods were very unconventional for anthropological research (although, as mentioned by Gökçe Günel, Saiba Varma and Chika Watan, these kinds of mixed and innovative methods have become more common during the last years). However, I would argue that I have borrowed the approach from the ethnographical method of participant observation. My findings were of course not made through the same raw, sensory experience and direct contact with the environment and the informants as they usually are in participant observation. As Robben (2012) argues, ethnographical data is traditionally produced through much more than just verbal or written communication: the ethnographer usually uses all the senses that are being stimulated in the field, such as sight, smell, hearing, touch etc. All of these senses can be put to use in order to comprehend the life, the culture and the institutions in the field. (Robben 2012: 443)

Nevertheless, speaking to several informants who were at the same place, approximately in the same period of time, doing the same activities during the same circumstance gave me some insight into what it was like to be a volunteer in Calais.

During ethnographical fieldwork, where the ethnographer usually is in the field for a prolonged period of time, she or he will get the chance to be involved into the course of events as they are happening. In my case, however, I was not present to witness that. Instead, I was given an account of how my informants experiences and relationships unfolded through the stories that they told me. The empirical data that I have gathered, has been gathered from the events that my informants recalled.

My informants and I also spent a lot of time discussing what the surrounding area looked like, the organization of the environment and the atmosphere in the town. A lot of the volunteers told me where they would spend their free time, and what the relationship between the locals and the migrants was like. We would also spend a lot of time discussing the relationships between the city of Calais itself and the constantly moving refugee encampments was like. I therefore got an impression of what being there would be like, although it cannot measure up to the knowledge and insight that would be gained from actually being there. Through hearing their

descriptions and stories, I would get a sense of what impact the experience of volunteering made on my informants.

However, I also think it is crucial that I acknowledge that had I been able to travel to Calais and spend prolonged time there, being around the volunteers, observing and participating in their practices, I would have been able to gain information that I was not able to gain on the basis of literature analysis and long distance interviews. I would have been able to gain insight into the acts of assistance and care as they happened, and the dynamics between the volunteers and the residents of the makeshift camps that were created and reinforced as they were happening. In this case I did not gather sensory experiences, as you usually do during fieldwork, but rather previous experiences and memories of my informants, which were, at times, very much sensory.

This also goes for the information that I have been able to gather about my informants. My research was based on online interviews. This meant that I only talked once to every informant – with an exception of my informant "Sarah", with whom I made an interview twice. The interviews were also centered on my informants' experiences of volunteering, and we did not really talk about anything else in depth.

Staying in the field, ethnographers often get to know their informants on a personal level. Spending time with someone for several months, having conversations with them over prolonged periods of time, the ethnographer has the opportunity to learn a lot about the informant and their background (at least, the things that the informant is willing to share). I, however, did not have the opportunity to get to know who my informants were apart from being volunteers in Calais, something that made it difficult to find the context that they were coming from. Compared to anthropological research that has been conducted through traditional participant observation, I have limited knowledge on my informants background. This has created limitations for finding the context that they were from, something that might have affected both their motivations for travelling to Calais, and their experiences there.

However, I also think that my conversation-based method was also well-fitted for studying the experiences and emotions of my informants. Even though we were not in the same physical space, I feel like I often gained great insight into their experience through cues not directly expressed. In this brief instance of miscommunication, or misunderstanding from my side, I gained insight on something that was very important for the rest of my analysis: that although some of the volunteers argued that volunteering did make them feel good, it was about so much more than enjoyment.

Interviewing Informants

My main method of research can be described as what Madden referred to as semi-formal interviews, as my interviews were mostly focused on open-ended questions and the informants leading the conversation.

Prior to conducted the interviews, I was a little nervous about whether my informants would be willing to discuss topics such as personal emotions and experiences, and how they would handle complicated, difficult, and negative feelings that occurred while they were volunteering. However, it seemed like most of the people who reached out to me were both willing and excited about talking about their personal experiences with me. Many of them also seemed genuinely interested in my research project and research topic (part of the reason for this might have been the fact that several of the volunteers were taking degrees or had recently graduated with degrees in the social sciences).

Despite the fact that my method was in many ways not classically anthropological, I faced many of the same issues that are faced by anthropologists who engage in fieldwork and participant observation in the traditional sense. For instance, the issue of building rapport (Bernard 2006: 368) – or trust – was a concern that I had. As is stated by Madden, "Rapport building is crucial to the ethnographical process, and it can take some time to establish – one can't afford to rush things, be too pushy and risk being alienated by one's participant group; it is a 'gradual building up of trust'." (Madden 2017: 17) Rapport is primarily built by the process of being in your informants' presence for a prolonged period of time (or hanging out), so that the informant and the ethnographer can get comfortable around each other. After rapport is built, the ethnographer might be able to ask direct questions and discuss sensitive topics with the informants. (Bernard 2006: 368-69)

I was interested in other people's deep, complex, often negative and possibly conflicting emotions, as well as emotionally loaded experiences. Anthropologists are often interested in topics that might be sensitive for the informants to talk about. I would not get the chance to be in the field, spend time with my informants and build a sense of rapport with them over time. Instead, I would have to talk to them about emotionally loaded topics on my first interview, during a video call, without us having a chance of getting to know each other beforehand, and with a screen between us, which created a sense of distance. Due to this, I was concerned that asking questions about emotions and strategies of upholding emotional well-being would feel awkward.

My solution to this was usually to chat a little on something that was not directly related to my research project before getting started with the actual interview. Ironically, the covid-19 pandemic often became one of the topics that my informants and I used to warm up to each other, as it was something that we knew was affecting everybody's life at that point in time. Often, we would talk about how it was going in each other's respective countries, discussing the governments strategies for keeping the infection rates down and asking each other how we were holding up under the restrictions.

I would often begin with expressing gratitude to the informant for agreeing to participate, telling them that their participation was extremely helpful and that it meant a lot for my project. I would then verbally ask the informant if they were okay with me recording the interview, even if they had consented in the informed consent sheet. I would also stress that it was absolutely fine to say that they did not want to be recorded. However, all my informants replied that being recorded did not bother them at all.

I understood that emotions and your relationship to your emotions was a sensitive topic that had to be handled with delicacy, especially as my informants and I had not gotten the chance to get to know each other. My solution was usually to ask questions in the following manner: "What was your experience of the general emotions that the volunteers would go through, drawing on your own experiences, or the experiences of others, or both?" or "What is your experience of the emotions that volunteers had in general? What kinds of emotions did they display, or what sorts of emotions were common?"

This way, I gave the informant a choice. If they wanted to, they could draw on their personal emotions and affects when explaining what was common to feel as a volunteer in Calais. Often, they seemed comfortable with doing so. If they did not, however, they also had the choice to talk about the emotional reactions of the people around them. Or they could, of course, do both, which was what many of my informants did. This turned out to be mutually beneficial, as I could get both personal accounts on the emotional experience of volunteering, as well as a more general overview of the common ways to feel or react. Even if my informants, of course, did not necessarily know how their fellow volunteers were feeling, I could still get a sense of the emotional climate and which emotions seemed appropriate to express among volunteers.

I had to take some considerations regarding the fact that the topic that I would be interviewing my informants on might be a sensitive and emotional issue for them. Considering the importance of building rapport with your informants as an ethnographer, I would not want to

upset or offend them, or make them feel like I lacked understanding or respect for their emotional experiences. However, it was often in these moments of miscommunication, or slightly inappropriate choice of words on my part, that I was able to gather a deeper understanding on what kinds of emotions and values the volunteers were living by.

One such instance was the conversation with Emily, when I asked her if she enjoyed volunteering, she waited a second, and then replied with a slightly amused and puzzled tone: "I don't think 'enjoy' is the right word." I immediately realized that I had chosen the wrong words. To her, this was not about enjoyment at all.

Litterature research

As mentioned above, this thesis will partly be based on existing literature on the topic of volunteers working in Calais, and partly on my own ethnographic interviews of informants. Due to the lack of possibility of doing actual participant observation during the covid.-19 pandemic, and due to the limited data that I have been able to gather through interviews, I have chosen to take departure in analysis of existing literature on the situation in Calais and use the material gathered in my interviews for that analysis. Through existing literature on the topic, I have been able to build a context around the data gathered through the interviews.

The researcher Elisa Sandri (2018) based her article "Volunteer Humanitarianism: volunteers and humanitarian aid in the Jungle refugee camp of Calais" of her own stay in Calais, in 2015, together with the volunteers working there. Sandri had previously already been involved in the work of such organization multiple times. Therefore she had to distance herself from her previous experiences and relationships to some degree in order to be as objective as possible. She reflects on how her previous involvement led to an already existing understanding of the internal structure and issues of interest among the volunteers, while also giving her a relationship of trust, or rapport, with the volunteers and the organization. (Sandri 2018: 67)

In an article that she published together with Mark Doidge it is stated "*we could not pretend to write as neutral observers*", (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 470) explaining that the process of the research was emotionally loaded. Doidge and Sandri argue that emotions do not necessarily hinder or decrease the quality of research: on the contrary, they can make it more nuanced. "*Ignoring emotions mutes the research, both the power of the participants, and the impact of the researcher*." (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 470) Their previous involvement also gave them a chance to understand the emotions of the volunteers (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 470). They

describe how their involvement and certain lack of neutrality gave them insight into the ways in which emotions were and were not displayed among the volunteers.

Doidge and Sandri describe their approach as “sensory ethnography”, as they would pay attention to sight, sound, smell, emotional reactions and sensory impulses as a means to gather information. (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 471) Referring to Pink, they argue that a sensory approach allows the ethnographer to “develop experience-based empathetic understandings of what others might be experiencing and knowing” (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 471).

I have also drawn on the publications of Hughes, Burck and Roncin, who drew their analysis on the experiences of a team of therapists and clinical psychologists who travelled to Calais in 2016 in order to offer support to the volunteers working there. (Hughes, Burck & Roncin 2019: 1-2, Hughes & Burck 2018: 223)

Finally, in order to capture the context of the experiences of my informants, I have relied heavily on reports made by various organizations, such as Refugee Rights Europe and InfoMigrants.

Positionality

Although I interviewed all my informants individually, I noticed how many of them seemed to have the same impression of me and who I was. To the volunteers, I seemed to come off as one of their own, as I was a student (and the majority of my informants were either students themselves or had recently graduated), I was studying social science, and I was clearly concerned with similar issues to the ones that the volunteers whom I interviewed were concerned with. When we spoke, it was clear that they knew that I shared a lot of their opinions, and it was clear that they expected me to understand their interests and motivations, as I was studying social science.

However, it also seemed as though the volunteers wanted to educate me on the knowledge that they had gained during their stay in Calais. They would for instance point out common assumptions that they noticed that people had about the refugees, or assumptions that they previously had, and explain how these assumptions had turned out to not be true.

Ethical conciderations

It is not uncommon that volunteers have uncomfortable encounters or even confrontations with the police (Infomigrants 2018). To ensure the safety of my informants, I have chosen not to touch upon this subject at all when writing about the empirical data that I have collected, to avoid the possibility that this could negatively affect them or the organization.

I have also chosen not to reveal the name of the organization that the volunteers I was interviewing was affiliated with, partly because what they are doing might be seen as civil disobedience by the French authorities. On the other hand, several of the volunteers also expressed some critical views on the way the organization was operating (this will be elaborated on in chapter 3), and I would not want any conflicts or awkward situations arise between the volunteers and the organization itself.

All of the names of my informants are of course replaced with pseudonyms. Information that these people have published themselves anywhere online is not revealed, neither is other kinds of information that might potentially identify them. Of this reason, I have also chosen not to use the website of the organization that my informants were affiliated with as a source of information for my thesis.

I am aware that I did question my informants on a topic that might be sensitive and close to heart to many of the volunteers. They might have both strong personal opinions as well as strong emotions connected to the topic that I have been interviewing them on. I have tried to be as delicate as possible, not appearing to be critical or overly analytical of the practices of the organization that they are affiliated with, and I have continuously stressed that my main goal is to get a sense of their personal experience as volunteers, care takers, and activist.

My main goal was not to criticize the organization, or the practice of volunteering in general, but to get a sense of what it means for people to help the ones that are vulnerable and disadvantaged, and how and why it gives us a sense of purpose and fulfillment. I am hoping that to contribute to a larger field of research that can make the kind of work that SupportofC engages in as useful and effective as possible.

Chapter 2: Arriving and First Impressions

> "*I graduated university this year and I haven't started working yet so I've got quite a lot of time on my hands. I remember reading in the first lockdown back in March that a lot of charities had pulled out and the situation was really bad. But I was having my finals at that time so I could not go then. It was just a combination of things. I wanted to go and help and England was in another lockdown so I was feeling like a was really useless here*." – Sarah, a volunteer.

This is a quote by Sarah, a woman in her 20s. Sarah was one of the many young people who travelled to work in Calais as a volunteer in 2020. She considered to be a perfect time to go to Calais as she at the moment did not have any obligations back in the UK, her final exams being handed in, being done with university and not yet being tied to a full time job. This window of opportunity, combined with hearing about how the troubles in the refugee encampments had worsened due to the covid, was what motivated her to make the decision to go to Calais.

"(…) *I graduated university last year, last summer. And then I thought that if I don't go out [to Calais] now… well it is the perfect time to go out now, apart from the corona virus*", another volunteer, "Tina", explained. Tina and Sarah both really wanted to have this experience in their lives, and when they had thus opportunity, they felt like they could not just let it go.

Motivation:

> "*Solidarity actors responded to the growing flow of migrants on the basis of similar humanitarian and moral motivations, meaning on the basis of a similar understanding of the situation that inclined them to intervene in order to compensate for the perceived violation of a shared moral code, that of the respect for and inviolability of human beings*." (Milan 2018: 194)

This is a quote by Milan (2018) from "Solidarity Mobilizations in the 'Refugee Crisis", edited by de la Porta. According to Milan, action during a humanitarian crisis is often motivated by the moral vision that the world is not fair the way it is, and that the world should be different. (Milan 2018: 194) The volunteers who chose to travel to Calais gathered around common values

and ideas about the unfairness of the situation. For an individual volunteer, having an existing community of people with common values and understanding of the situation was a crucial component to make the decision to go to Calais.

As will be explored in this chapter, there were a variety of factors that contributed to the volunteers making the decision to go to Calais. Along with the "humanitarian and moral motivations" that Milan writes about, many of my informants also were well aware of the fact that they were being motivated by rewarding emotions and by the experience of being a part of a larger community.

Compassion

When asked what exactly pushed, motivated or inspired them to travel to Calais and work in the informal migrant camps, they usually explained that they could not simply watch suffering without intervening. The answers were often quite simple and straight forward. Hearing about the awful conditions in the camp, they felt like they had to do something.

> "*I guess I felt sorry for them. Even though I did not know these people. I felt lucky, living in a safe country and being economically stable*." – Hanna, a volunteer.

> "*I just wanted to go and do something about this situation. Something that I was able to do about it, but I recognize that it is very short term*." – Sarah, a volunteer.

> "*It's just that it's such an awful situation. The main thing for me is that I just think it's a bit wrong that so much of our lives and our futures are determined by where we are born, and that people who are born in countries and places where they are not safe or they are persecuted, or even economic migrants who are not born in a place where they have the opportunities that they would want to have… I just think it is a really unfair situation and I think that people should be able to move and to go wherever they want to go, especially in the UK. We are a massively privileged country. We've got money, we've got resources and we are not sharing them at all. And I think with our position geographically – an island far away, far from Africa and the Middle East – we have been able to get away with shutting our doors more than a lot of other countries, and that's really bad.*" – Sarah, a volunteer.

My informants spoke about feeling empathy for disadvantaged people, about unfair privilege, and about feeling like they should do whatever is possible to improve the situation, even if it is

short term. It can be argued that the motivations that the volunteers had to travel to Calais, were informed by what Fassin (2012) refers to as moral sentiments: "the emotion that directs our attention to the suffering of others and make us want to remedy them." (Fassin 2012: 1) According to Fassin, "moral sentiments" have become essential in political discourse and practice in modern time. By moral sentiments he means "the emotions that direct our attention to the suffering of others and make us want to remedy them". (Fassin 2012: 1) Compassion is one of the most important aspect of these moral sentiments, as it combines the experience of sympathy while witnessing our fellow human beings suffering and the experience of having a moral obligation to make this suffering stop. (Fassin 2012: 1)

As Malkki writes in "The Need to Help", in order to understand the many of the sentiments that motivate people to get involved with transnational humanitarianism, one must understand "humanitarian and humanist modes of imagining world unity". (Malkki 2015: 79) These are cultural forms, structures of feelings and practices that aim at evoking the experience of a global human community. (Malkki 2015: 79) This is reflected in the thoughts that Sarah shared with me, on how she experienced herself to be unfairly privileged, and therefore also felt an obligation to help people from other parts of the world, who were less lucky. The experience of being a part of a larger, human community contributed to the sentiment of moral obligation to help others.

"Some people feel like they need to go"

Although the volunteers were motivated by the wish to ease suffering, many of them confirmed that their motivations were not completely selfless. Sarah was one of the volunteers to whom I talked to about this at length:

> *S: "(…) Its very easy to sit at home and have a nice life and forget about things like that. And some people feel like they need to go… you know, giving money isn't enough for some people. They need to go and experience it, even if it is a bit uncomfortable or unpleasant. That's almost like a part of the reason for going there, I think. To some it's a selfless "I want to help" while to others it is almost a selfish "I want to feel like I am helping". I think there is actually quite a subtle distinction between the two."*
>
> *M: "It can also be both. I don't think one excludes the other."*
>
> *S: "Probably almost more so both than one or the other!"*

As the title of her monography suggests, Malkki raises the question of who truly is in need when volunteers and humanitarian workers go on missions in order to address to situations of the disadvantage and suffering ones. (Malkki 2015: 2-3) Looking at her own observations of the humanitarian workers in the Finnish Red Cross, Malkki argues that there was "an undeniable neediness that drove people to do their often hazardous work". (Malkki 2015: 3) Drawing on Cohen, I would argue the need to help is what created the community that the volunteers become a part of. It is the need to help that differentiates the "some people" that Sarah identifies with, from the others. The "some people" who cannot just assist from afar, who are drawn to travel to Calais and experience the precarious conditions there first-hand.

Sarah spoke of a need. Not to just contribute in some way, such as through financial donations, but also to experience the crisis from the inside, to witness it and find herself in the middle of it. This need to see the crisis with your own eyes was something that I recognized from my other interviews. Along with the need to alleviate suffering and improving the living conditions, many of the interviews suggested that the volunteers were driven by a different, more personal need. For Sarah, and many of the other volunteers, it was necessary to find themselves in the middle of the events, to get out of their comfort zone, to experience something completely beyond the everyday, and to *feel* that they are helping and making a difference.

Sarah is clearly aware that this is not something she is just experiencing individually. "*And some people feel like they need to go… you know, giving money isn't enough for some people. They need to go and experience it…*" Sarah attributed the need to help the refugees and to experience Calais to a certain kind of people, one that she feels like she has something in common with. This common need creates a community.

In "Symbolic Construction of Community", (1993) Cohen argues that there is an intimate link between our identity and our perception of ourselves as a part of a community. He argues that communities mark themselves through establishing what they are not, through contrast to other communities. There is a tight link between our perception of ourselves as a part of a community and our awareness of the boundaries between our own community and other communities. (Cohen 1993: 109-110)

People who engage in humanitarian work are motivated by "a sense of an international obligation". (Malkki 2015: 3) This global community makes you a part of humanity at large, but also gives a "*a duty to offer something of one's own abundance to those who need it*". (Malkki 2015: 25)

However, the motivation for engaging in humanitarian work is also based on the workers relationship to the self, according to Malkki. Malkki sees a continuity between the need to help on one hand, and the desire to be a part of a global community on the other. Humanitarian work is, according to Malkki, often based on the need to transform or transcend yourself, lose yourself and your everyday life, to escape yourself, to have a transformative experience or to be a part of a community (the community of other humanitarians, or the global community of humans at large, or both). In other words, a lot of the motivations of humanitarian workers are quite self-centered (Malkki 2015: 4, 10-13, 33).

First impressions

Seeing bare life

> M: *What was your first impression when you went to Calais?*
>
> H: *It's surreal. It is completely different from what the media makes it out to be. You don't really hear about it but everybody has so much hope. Everybody is so greatful, and even standing in the rain, everybody has smiles on their faces. Also, what struck me, is that these camps are so close to normal civilization. The first camp I went to is called the Hospital, because it is right outside a hospital. I thought it would be further out into the bushes, not on the opposite side of a hospital.*

This is an excerpt from my interview with Hanna. There were two things that struck Hanna when she arrived to Calais. First, it was the paradoxical exclusion that she witnessed, seeing the informal refugee camps being so close to the civilization of Calais, the residents of the camps living so close to the French citizens, yet excluded from the society.

The other thing that strongly surprised Hanna was, however, the atmosphere of solidarity and hope, something that was completely different from what she had been presented with in the media. As is argued by McGee and Pelham in their article (2018), when focusing on the camp as a space of violence, exclusion and marginalization, it is easy to forget to view it as "*as a social and political space – a space thus punctuated not just by immobility, violence and material precarity but by forms of collective resistance and solidarity, even a makeshift sense of community.*" (McGee & Pelham 2018: 26)

Another volunteer, "Lisa", described how arriving to Calais, she and the other volunteers did not really have any preparation before their first distribution. "*I remember so strongly……when you arrive to Calais, you go and work in the ware house in the morning, and in the afternoon*

you go and distribute something, so it is very like 'go, go, go!'." Lisa's first distribution was in the neighboring informal camp in Dunkirk. The feeling that she was overwhelmed with was the intense realization that the crisis that she was witnessing was actually real, at the same time as she did not really get a chance to get used to what she was witnessing.

> "*Where we are going, it is not where they are living, we are distributing like in an open space that is near where they are sleeping – and I just remember being there, and this feeling, and seeing all these people and like… "This shit is real!". Because you don't have a filter, its not like you are seeing it in a news paper or the TV or something. Like: "This is real!". I was very like… I don't know about shocked, but this feeling like "This is happening!". Which was my very first impression.*" – Lisa, a volunteer

Shock was a common emotion that many of the volunteers would experience when arriving to Calais and seeing the informal camps for the first time.

> "*I was not quite sure what to expect. It was not as bad as I had expected in terms of the condition that the people were in, people had clothes that fit them and looked like they've had a haircut recently and like they were well fed. My initial reaction was that it was better than I thought it would be, but that quickly changed, even within the day, just by speaking to people. Hearing their stories and what they've been through.*" – Sarah, a volunteer.

After her first distribution, Sarah and another volunteer were asked to stay back and help a medical charity with organizing a queue.

> "*So we spent quite a long time, standing in this like, talking to the people while a doctor saw these people. And we saw so many injuries that were just so neglected. And that really struck me, seeing all of these guys, and a lot of them were 19-20, they were younger than me, and they had left their families. And they were positive, they were really, really positive about the situation.*" – Sarah, a volunteer

When stressing the neglected conditions that the refugees were living in, several of my informants would describe visible physical signs of neglect, as though this a symbol of the precarious conditions that the refugees were living in, and the lack interest shown in the conditions by government institutions.

In her introductory chapter Ticktin describes the importance of documenting the suffering body in order to determine who is disadvantaged and therefore in need and deserving of compassion, protection and care. "(…) *The imagined universal suffering body is the primary subject of care for those on the margins of nation states, the central figure of politics grounded in the moral imperative*." (Tickin 2011: 11-12) However, the suffering body is visible only in very rare and specific moments during processes of violence and marginalization. Humanitarian action usually takes place during an exception – when a crisis has come to a point where the suffering body is visible (Ticktin 2011: 11). The suffering or visibly injured body is can therefore be a symbol of the precarious situations that humanitarian organizations address.

I would argue that "structural violence" could be a useful term to describe what the volunteers were responding to. The term "structural violence" (Galtung 1969: 170) was introduced by Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung (1969). It described forms of violence that can be distinguished from personal violence, which is characterized by a clear subject-object relation, and where it is possible to point at a person who commits an act of violence towards another (Galtung 1969: 171). Structural violence, however, occurs when there is no such personal relation in the act of violence, but people are nevertheless injured, or having their potential limited. (Galtung 1969: 170-171) Galtung states than any instance where death, suffering and limited potential could have been avoided, can be defined as a result of violence. (Galtung 1969: 169)

The volunteers would often describe the visible suffering almost like a kind of testimony to the neglect and structural violence that the refugees had been subjected to. They would often get back to talking about the cold and the rain that the migrants could not hide from, lack of clothing appropriate to the weather and neglected wounds. In line with Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi, took note of how the governmental neglect from both the UK and the French government, in the attempt to prevent people from crossing the channel, eventually showed itself through ailment, injury and emotional distress.

To Sarah, the neglected wounds seemed to be a manifestation of the general neglect that the migrants were facing, but also the extreme conditions that she was working in, and the void that she was trying to fill. Perhaps, this was why she felt the need to tell me about this experience. She wanted to raise awareness about an issue, and I was a part of the audience to her.

Seeing community and hope

However, many of my informants also were surprised at the informal camps surrounding Calais being places full of solidarity, community and hope. They described a community where people shared skills, helped each other out, and were very friendly and welcoming towards volunteers (although they also mentioned that conflicts between groups and individuals did break out.) To them, this was a stark contrast to the image that the media had created for them, of a brutal and neglected environment. Even more than being horrified and devastated when seeing the physical suffering, Sarah and her fellow volunteers seemed to be even more so inspired by their resilience and positivity.

Hanna told me how she was deeply moved by the friendly attitude that the refugees had to the volunteers.

> "*I just felt so looked after and respected. People have this idea that the refugees are not grateful. But we are not there to gain their gratitude. Its just so nice. They just treat volunteers so well. If fights break out, a lot of the refugees would stand and protect the volunteers so that they don't get hurt, they are really, really, really caring people*." – Hanna, a volunteer.

Volunteers reported being nervous prior to their first distribution, uncertain of what they were supposed to do, how they were supposed to act and which kinds of questions that were appropriate to ask the migrants. However, immediately after getting started with the work, they seemed to enter a state of flow and the doubt and insecurity would disappear.

Chapter summary

For many of my informants, their first encounter with the conditions in Calais also became their first encounter with a space full of exclusion, marginalization, de-humanization and bare life. Sarah's shock from witnessing the physical wounds could be ascribed to her witnessing what Agamben would describe as "bare life" (Agamben 1998: 8). I would argue that for Hanna, it was a similar impression when she, to her surprise, realized that the makeshift camps were actually very close to the "normal civilization", which can be viewed as an example of Agambens understanding of bare life as "exclusive inclusion" (Agamben 1998: 107), which means that the abandoned figure is both excluded from society but also at the mercy of its law. (Agamben 1998: 26-27)

In this chapter I have outlined the motivations that drove the volunteers to go to Calais and engage in work that was challenging and even draining, no matter how rewarding. I have used

Fassins concept of “moral sentiments” and Malkkis theory of the more self-centered motivations of volunteering for the analysis of the forces behind the individuals decision to volunteer, and the mobilization of organizations such as SupportofC. They were attracted to the site by the combination of the knowledge about the humanitarian void created by the lack of government action, and by compassion and the experience of the necessity and plight to help. In line with Redfield, I would argue that organizations such as SupportofC have been created as a response to crises, and therefore also depend on situations that can be described as crises. This response has also created an existing network that makes the humanitarian engagement so much easier and accessible (and enjoyable!) for individual volunteers.

Alongside with having their first encounter with the condition of bare life, the volunteers also had their first encounter with a community of hope and solidarity. Just as shocked they were with the suffering and neglect, they were also confronted with a very positive and grateful environment. This ambiguity is illustrated by McGee and Pelham: “Absent from an Agambien perspective, after all, is precisely an understanding of the camp as a social and political space – a space thus punctuated not just by immobility, violence and material precarity but by forms of collective resistance and solidarity, even a makeshift sense of community.” (McGee and Pelham 2017: 26)

In the next chapter, I will describe the emotional rollercoaster, as one of my informants put it, that was created in the volunteers’ interaction with the conditions that they encountered upon arrival.

Chapter 3: Everyday life and the Emotional Rollercoaster of Being a Volunteer in Calais

> M: "*A lot of the volunteers that I had talked to prior to you have spoken of this as a very emotional experience. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Both from you own perspective and the emotions that you observed in others? What kinds of emotions would people go through when volunteering?*"
>
> L: "*Yeah, it is quite an emotional experience. Like, sadness, I guess. And also, feeling a bit useless. That constant reminder. Because we are giving out a meal or a hot drink for now, but who is going to do that in three weeks time? You are supposed to be dealing with the root of the issue, but that is nothing we can do, we are not there for that, we are there for a response to the what the people there need. It is emotional on that side of things. And I guess the more conversations you have with people, the more you get affected, I guess.*" – Lucy, a volunteer.

"Lucy" – a woman in her mid-twenties, described a recurring feeling of being useless, which resulted in sadness. Every day while she was volunteering, she was reminded of her inability to resolve the suffering around her. She felt helpless, as though no matter what effort she put in, the suffering that she was trying to resolve would continue. Lucy was far from the only one who expressed this feeling: many of her fellow volunteers who described feeling the same way. It seemed as though one of the main sources of the volunteers' emotional distress was the awareness of the exclusion and violence would continue, despite their efforts.

This chapter will describe what everyday life looked like when you were a volunteer in Calais. As I gathered from the interviews that I had with my informants, every aspect of the work was affected by intense emotions triggered from what the volunteers were witnessing around themselves.

Everyday life

Throughout the interviews I asked volunteers about what their everyday life would look like, and gathered a quite detailed overall impression of it. I must stress that the data I have gathered

is not from events I have witnessed first, but the descriptions and impressions from someone else. My informants might have had different perspectives or interpretations of events, or simply different experiences, as some stayed in Calais at different times. The brief account on the everyday life of the volunteers that I will give here is an account of the descriptions that mostly correlated with each other. I asked all of my informants about how a normal day – as "normal" as it could get – would be in Calais. Here is the description given to me by Hanna:

> "*The majority of the day we would go and do distributions at different sites. It would begin in the warehouse and it usually started at 10 am French time, so for me that would be 9 a.m. In the morning we would do warehouse work, whatever that would be. For example we would be resorting the donations into new boxes, and going through new donations and checking if they were OK to give to the migrants. We would also spend a lot of time doing food packs. Once a week we'd go out and we'd give out food packs. It would take hours to make them. They would have like beans and tomatoes and onions and garlic and oil, they were great, but it took up a lot of time. Then a couple of volunteers would make lunch, and then we would have lunch, and then after lunch we would go out to the sites. Some of the volunteers would have to stay back, depending on how many people we could fit into the vehicles and they would continue to do wear-house work, and then after lunch, most of them would continue to do distribution. And then around 5 we would be back, wash our kits and have a debrief. Time goes by really quickly there, it is really lovely.*" – Hanna, a volunteer.

A lot of the work would take place in the ware-house, which was actually several ware-houses connected, as I learned from Hanna. This was the building where the supplies that would be distributed to the migrants or used during services were stored. In the morning, usually around 9 am, the warehouse work would begin, when the volunteers would go through the donations and make sure they were properly sorted and in good condition. This is also the time when they would prepare food packs that then would be distributed to the migrants.

After a couple of hours of work in the ware-house, the volunteers would have lunch together, which was described as a very social and nice event. After lunch they would drive in vans to whatever distribution site they were supposed to go to that day, and do distributions of food, clothing items, tents, sleeping bags, etc. During the distribution of essential items the atmosphere usually was very professional and formal, and they would have routines in place in order to make sure that there was no cheating or sneaking in the queues. "*We would be polite,*

but quite firm, just because we wanted to make it fair for everyone." Tina explained. One or several volunteers would be in charge for making sure that there would not be any pushing in the queue and that distance was maintained, while others would be looking handing out items, holding items up or looking for the right sizes.

After the distribution of the essentials was done, the volunteers would provide services for the refugees. This could be providing charging boards where they could charge their phones, hair dressing services, having tea and biscuit and playing games. This was also an opportunity for chatting and socializing. The atmosphere would then be a lot lighter, and the relationship between the volunteers and the migrants would be a lot less affected by the hierarchy that was in place during the distribution. Many of the volunteers really enjoyed this part of their work, as they got a chance to socialize and get to know the migrants, while at the same time bringing some brightness into their day.

The day would usually end with a briefing. During the briefing, the volunteers and the leaders would discuss what had worked out well and what had not, and what needed to be done. They could also ask questions, raise concerns, and, in some cases, talk about the strong impressions that they have had during the distributions.

Due the covid-19 pandemic going on at the time when most of my informants were working in Calais, and the ever-present worry about contamination, it was necessary to scrub everything down in the ware-house after the distributions. Therefore, a couple of hours would be spent cleaning the equipment and the storage area. After this, around 5 or 6 in the afternoon, the volunteers would be free to spend their evening however they wanted.

A large majority of this time would be spent in the company of other volunteers. Despite the intensity of everyday life as a volunteer, there was room for leisure time. The volunteers that I spoke with mostly lived in Air-BNB's, alone or with other volunteers. In either case, a lot of the time on and off work as a volunteer would be spent in the company of other volunteers. During their time off, they would often go to the beach or go swimming when it was still warm. The volunteers would also enjoy going to the town of Calais itself, visiting restaurants and bars, at least in the periods of time when these activities were not made impossible by the restrictions implemented due to covid-19.

As people spent so much time together, strong friendships were formed quickly. A large amount of the volunteers were in their twenties and shared a lot of opinions and interests. The life of a volunteer in Calais was described several times as a life inside a tiny bubble – as a volunteer,

you would not have many chances to get to know other people in the area except other volunteers. Neither would you really experience life outside of the volunteer community, due to amount of time spent at work and lack of other contacts in the area. It was natural to turn to fellow volunteers when you wanted to spend the time you had off work in someone else's company.

However, there was another reason for why bonds became so tight. The community and the friendships formed among the volunteers were crucial for the maintenance of their emotional well-being. When needing to discuss the intense emotions experienced while working in Calais, that they would often rely on each other. Partly, they relied mostly on each other because these emotions were shared or experienced before by fellow volunteers, and partly because they often felt like no one else would really be able to understand them. Talking to friends and family back home about trivial matters would often not feel particularly helpful, as these people lacked insight into what the volunteers were going through. These conversations would often feel mundane and pointless (although, as some volunteers pointed out, they could also help people stay in touch with the world and the people outside of the little "volunteer bubble", which could be beneficial for your mental well-being and for later re-integrating into the world outside of Calais).

Volunteering during the Covid-19 pandemic

During my interview with "Lucy", who was 26 and trained as a teacher, we talked a little bit about what it was like to volunteer in Calais in early 2021.

> M: *Was that scary? To go there in the middle of a pandemic?*
>
> L: *No, not really! Because I think that when you are out there in the refugee camps the pandemic is probably the last thing that you are thinking about. It's not really high up on the list of priorities. And I guess that as a young healthy person, I felt like high risk volunteers would not go out because it is risky to them. But the risk to me is pretty low. So I was not really concerned about myself. I guess I was more concerned about passing it on, because in the refugee camp it would spread very quickly. But I am guessing that the aid that they are getting from the volunteers there is probably more important. And also, we had a lot of covid safety measures, like we wore PPE and two masks, and we were keeping our distance when that was possible.*

Lucy was not to concerned with herself catching Covid. She was more worried about spreading the virus into the makeshift camps, as she that people there were very vulnerable, and there was little they could do in order to protect themselves against the virus. However, she also considered the work that she was doing in Calais to be necessary, which meant that despite the risk of potentially spreading Covid-19 she had to be there.

The situation in the makeshift camps in Calais indeed remained precarious throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 Refugee Rights Europe released a report on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on the already difficult conditions in the unofficial refugee camps surrounding Calais. In this report, named "Facing Multiple Crises", the situation of the refugees is described in the following manner: "*Their daily lives are characterized by evictions, police violence and violations of fundamental rights, with insufficient and intermittent access to food, shelter, water, information etc. While these violations continue, the Covid-19 pandemic reinforces this group's acute vulnerability and urgent need of protection*." (Patton & Boittiaux 2020: 2)

Further, the report describes lack of accessible water points and sanitary facilities. (Patton & Boittiaux 2020: 8) Evictions, confiscation of personal items and destruction of the informal settlements continued, despite of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The local authorities were still taking measures in order to avoid so-called fixation points. (Patton & Boittiaux 2020: 12) The existing sheltering operations had not met the needs of the displaced people in terms of protection from infection. According to Refugee Rights Europe, during the Covid-19 confinement period in France there were about 1200 people living on the streets in Calais (Patton & Boittiaux 2020: 7).

I was a bit surprised, as I had expected the covid-19 pandemic to make a bigger impact on the volunteers. However, they seemed to be less affected by it than I would have imagined. However, as several volunteers mentioned, most of the people who chose to travel to Calais in 2020 or early in 2021 were probably not especially afraid of getting seriously ill in the first place. My informant Emma said: "*I think the people who were there were the least scared as they were willing to travel during the pandemic, and were willing to commit being around vulnerable people and commit being in an environment where it might be difficult to socially distance*."

My impression of volunteers not being too worried about getting infected with covid-19 might have also had something to do with the fact that my selection of informants were the people

who had travelled to Calais during fall and winter 2020 and early 2021. Therefore I, for obvious reasons, did not get access to the thoughts and reflections of the people who did not travel to volunteer in Calais during the pandemic, but who nevertheless would have volunteered at a different time. "(…) *my experience is that it affected the charities more than it affected the migrants themselves*", Sarah explained.

When we discussed the impact the covid-19 pandemic had on the work of the volunteers, there was particularly one event that Sarah seemed to have recalled. The volunteers had put up cones that would mark the distance that had to be upheld in the queue. Sometimes, however, the queue would get bunched up in the back.

> "*I remember I said to one guy: "Would you mind standing behind that cone? Its for covid." And he sort of made a joke and said: "Oh, so covid does not exist in the back of the queue?*"

She speculated that there could be several reasons for why many of the migrants did not seem to share the concern that the volunteers had about covid-19. This could partly have something to do with the fact that there were so few possibilities to keep social distance in the camp and the access to hand sanitizer and face masks was so limited for the migrants. However, she also though that the reason for the lack of concern with covid-19 could also be that the migrants had already been through so much trauma. According to Sarah and several other volunteers, the refugees seemed to have been through so much that covid-19 seemed trivial to them. Sarah speculated that they had "*more important things on their mind*", given that they were already living in such precarious conditions.

The risk of catching or spreading covid-19 did, however, massively affect the work of the volunteers. During distributions volunteers had to wear to full PPE: face masks and an extra layer of clothing, usually pajamas or something very lose. Tina compared the PPE with a uniform, as it made the volunteers stand out, but also look alike (in combination with the vest that everybody had to wear, that identified them with the organization). This layer of clothing would be taken off before they went back into the warehouse. In case the volunteers would get any virus on their clothes, they would not carry it into the warehouse and end up contaminating themselves, each other or the items that would be distributed or used during services. They would also wash everything off (clothes, games, other items that were taken out to the distribution sites) once they came back to the warehouse. This could put several extra hours on their work day. The biggest concern was not to get the virus out into the camp, as there was

little possibility for social distancing, a lack of healthcare and large parts of the population were considered to be vulnerable.

A concern that Lucy had (and shared with other volunteers) was the way the masks and the rest of the PPE would affect the relationship between the migrants and the volunteers. First there was the communication between the volunteers and the migrants, with the already existing language barrier. When the migrants were not able to see the lower part of the volunteers face this could complicate the communication even more, especially when communicating with children and during games and socialization, but also in general. However, the volunteers were also concerned that the migrants would interpret it as though the volunteers were scared of being infected by the migrants – especially when many of the migrants, at least according to the volunteers, seemed to believe that the Covid-19 pandemic was over, exaggerated or a hoax. "While I was wearing that mask really to protect them, it did not always feel like that. We were always worried about that they would perceive it as though we didn't want to get anything from them.", Lucy explained.

Witnessing and Countering Exclusion

The concern that Lucy expressed about the effect of the PPE on the relationship and trust between the volunteers and the refugees was an example of how the work of volunteers was constantly affected by the conditions of dehumanizing exclusion and marginalization. The volunteers were intensely aware of the stigma and dehumanization that was faced by the refugees, and they also had an intense desire to counter this marginalization.

Ibrahim and Hogart describe how the people living in the informal refugee camps of Calais were perceived as something from outside society. The media and the public associated the people living in the camps with something dangerous and uncontrollable. "The camps, besides being associated with lawlessness and filth, also became encoded through violence and madness." (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 110) The migrants were experienced by French and UK politicians as something threatening, that had to be kept outside by force. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 110)

Douglas argues that the things – or people – that cross the external boundaries of a social system, are often perceived as threatening. (Douglas 2002: 141, 153) In social systems, danger often lies in the transitional state. Individuals who do not yet have a defined state, are perceived as a threat to the borders and therefore also the order of the society. (Douglas 2002: 117-119)

The volunteers witnessed the marginalization of the refugees both from the city of Calais and from the society at large. One manifestation of exclusion that affected the work of the volunteers greatly and was very frustrating was the regulations imposed on distribution of food by the local authorities. There was a certain area within which food was not allowed to be distributed. Sarah explained to me how this could be best described as a "bubble" surrounding the city – a bubble within which distribution of food and other items was not allowed to happen. As many refugees were sleeping under the bridges within the city of Calais, these restrictions would heavily affect the ability of the volunteers to improve the conditions of the migrants. This indicates that the regulations imposed by the French and the UK government led not only to an exclusion of the migrants, but also an exclusion of certain practices that were involved in assisting the migrants.

"*There is a zone and if we are distributing food we are not allowed to enter it. It is actually a bubble surrounding the city center. We would put down the supplies right outside of that zone and go into it and tell the refugees where to go. There is a number of bridges that the refugees sleep under. So the food ban is basically restricting us from handing out food in that area*." Sarah explained to me. Even if there were migrants staying inside Calais, the volunteers would have to distribute outside of the town.

This would mean that the migrants would have to walk out of this "bubble", away from the place where they were staying. My informant explained that the volunteers had to tell the refugees to walk away from the area in which they were sleeping, and walk for 15 minutes to the distribution point, for the distribution to be legal. This was usually early in the morning, around 8, which meant that the refugees sometimes did not have the energy to walk all the way to the spot of distribution. This was deeply frustrating to many of the volunteers, as they felt like they were unable to address the needs of the refugees in a satisfactory way.

The volunteers were pouring all their effort into a situation completely neglected by the state institutions, where the recipients of their aid were treated as something that had to be purposefully excluded. Through my conversations with the volunteers in Calais I gathered that a lot of the volunteers were actively trying to counter this dynamic and establish more equal relationships with the migrants. For instance, they often chose not to refer to the residents of the makeshift camos not as refugees or migrants, but rather "the guys" (in many of the camps the population was heavily male dominated, several of the volunteers told me). As Hannah said at one point: "(…) *we would be resorting the donations into new boxes, and going through new donations and checking if they were OK to give to the guys*." After hearing the volunteers refer to the migrants as "the guys" several times, I finally asked Tina about it. She explained that

many of the volunteers preferred this word over the category "refugee" or "migrant" because they wanted to avoid putting labels on people, and because it felt like a more equal way to interact with people and speak about them.

Emily sometimes felt stuck in the dilemma between wanting to assist the refugees, and not wanting to reduce them to victims or recipients of aid. She was concerned about disempowering them when she actually was fighting to do the opposite – to help them regain control over their own lives.

> "*And I think that aid work can be very disempowering to the people receiving aid work. Whenever I go to Calais, it is because I want to connect to these individuals on a very personal level. But I also want it to be constructive, and I don't want them to be disempowered by me*." – Emily, a volunteer.

This concern is not uncommon among humanitarian workers and is frequently described by anthropologists who are researching humanitarian organizations. Redfield (2013) describes a similar dilemma faced by the humanitarian workers in Doctors Without Borders. Issues that are addressed when trying to ensure basic survival are not empowering at all, even though these organizations are concerned with the dignity and agency of the recipients of their aid. When facing a crisis, humanitarian organizations often focus on health concerns, shelter, hygiene, food and water. The dignity of the recipients of the aid comes second to the more urgent, immediate needs. (Redfield 2013: 15-18) The concern that many humanitarian workers have, is that this focus on immediate survival takes away from the focus empowering the recipients of aid to re-gain an independent and fulfilling life.

Humanitarians are often deeply concerned with preserving and upholding the dignity of the ones that they are trying to help (Redfield 2013: 17). Redfield described how: "They refer to it frequently as a fundamental aspect of humanity, gesturing to it as a rhetorical ideal and denouncing its absence in particular contexts. Life for them thus certainly involves more than survival." (Redfield 2013: 17) However, many aspects of protecting biological lives are often not particularly dignifying or empowering (Redfield 2013: 17). One can often find contradictions between the mission of preserving dignity and the mission of covering basic needs. Referring to Hanna Arendt, Redfield explains the distinction between "zoe" (biological life, which is cyclical) and "bios" (the life that we create for ourselves, which is linear). (Redfield 2013: 16). "'Saving lives surely addresses living in the sense of biological survival, but not always life in the sense of living well or, as the expression goes, 'having a life.'"

(Redfield 2013: 16) Malkki similarly argues that recipients of humanitarian aid tend to be imagined as “more basic”, “socially anonymous” and with needs that are “more simple”. (Malkki 2015: 6-7)

Emily was desperate to do more than just save biological life. She wanted to ensure a good life for the refugees, and avoid reducing them to passive recipients with basic needs. For her, the most important step to do this was to acknowledge the emotional and social needs of the refugees.

> “*And I think… connecting to the refugees, at that point in their life… I think it is the lowest point in their life for most of them, and there is something really de-humanizing that goes on, in that whole process of asylum seeking, and I really feel like I really want them to reconnect with their human-ness, and I want them to know that this moment, it won't last forever, and that they matter. It feels really important to reach them at that point in their life. It is so easy to give up, and I know that there are refugees that do give up*.” – Emily, a volunteer.

Emily and her fellow volunteers were aware of the fact that the conditions that the migrants were in were not only physically but also emotionally exhausting. Acknowledging and addressing the emotional and social needs of the migrants were a crucial part of the volunteers' work, alongside with taking care of physical needs. Emily recognized that they these people were at an extremely low point in their lives, and that her job was also to help them re-gain agency and a sense of being people worthy of human connection and a place in society.

In her introductory chapter, Malkki argues that there are very specific relationships and actors that are constructed when humanitarian crisis and humanitarian aid is imagined. “The needy, sick, dirty recipient and the strong, healthy, clean giver: these charismatic figures draw a certain kind of attention—the principal actors in the ever-expanding imagination, documentation, and mediatization of certain kinds of misery and misfortune.” (Malkki 2015: 7) The aid worker is imagined as strong and active, and the recipient of aid is nothing but a recipient – in other words, passive. (Malkki 2015: 7) The recipient of aid is weak, and has basic needs that must be addressed.

I would argue that the volunteers in SupportOfC were trying to counter this image. As much as they considered their job to be to distribute items necessary for physical survival, they were highly focused on not reducing the refugees to helpless and passive victims, or simply recipients of help. They were often concerned about the role they played in the lives of the refugees, and

as Emily said, about the risk of disempowering them. For Emily, giving the refugees their dignity and agency back was as important as giving out food supplies or a tent.

What Emily and her fellow volunteers are trying to do is to counter the reduction of the migrants to bare life and mere biological bodies, through addressing their social and emotional needs. As a volunteer addressing the makeshift camps in Calais, a large part of your work is to counter the marginalization that reduces people to bare life. My informants recognized the exclusion as something that they needed to work against, if only by socializing with the refugees, or speaking about them in less de-humanizing terms. McGee and Pelham support this arguments, by recognizing the fact that grassroot organizations similar to SupportofC viewed the act of making everyday life more meaningful and tolerable for the refugees through socialization and play as a move to counter the mechanisms of expulsion and reduction of the refugees to bare life. (McGee & Pelham 2018: 29-30)

According to J. Alcade and M. Portes the act of supporting people who are marginalized and excluded from the state can also be understood as an act of rebellion, even by the volunteers themselves (J. Alcade & M. Portes 2018: 263). Pelham and McGee argue that this kind of engagement blurs the lines between humanitarianism and activism. While addressing the immediate needs, volunteers are also express protest against the structures that marginalize the migrants and subject them to neglect and violence (McGee & Pelham 2017: 32). Whether the strategies that are conscious or not is sometimes unclear: and just like the reasons for the volunteering itself, it is probably more often than not ambiguous. However, there are concrete practices that often can be interpreted as a way counter the de-humanization that the refugees have been met with, especially by the attention that have been paid to their basic biological needs and nothing else.

My informants described these kinds of activities where they were able counter exclusion and reduction of life to bare life as one of the most rewarding and meaningful experiences of their stay in Calais. One example of this is a story that Hanna told me. One of her best experiences were from when she was on distribution, helping with keeping a cover over the charging board, as it was raining so much that day. One of the services that would be provided after the distribution of clothes, food, sleeping bags etc. was that the volunteers would bring out a charging board where the migrants could charge their phones. She recalls how it was extremely cold and windy that day, in addition to the rain.

"And I had to stand there and hold this cover over the ones that were around the charging boards, so that it would not rain on top of them, and so many times refugees would just join me, stand there on the outside in the rain, in the wind in the cold, rather than being under it (the cover) and staying dry, they would rather stand on the outside and help me hold the cover without me even asking. And so many times, so many of them – I actually lost count – would come up to me and say: "Do you want me to hold this?" And tell me to go under and stay in the dry and warm. I mean, I definitely wouldn't do that, you know, because that's my job, but I just thought it was so lovely. (...) It's such a big feeling of community, its lovely."

She proceeded to tell about how another refugee came and placed another cover on top of her, so that the rain would not pour on her, and how a refugee also asked her if she wanted him to bring her a cup of tea, as the coffee and tea stands had been put up.

"*The people coming up and offering me their care… I just felt so looked after and respected. People have this idea that the refugees are not grateful. But we are not there to gain their gratitude. Its just so nice. They just treat volunteers so well." She describes the migrants as "really, really caring people".*

The volunteers were actively trying to counter this dynamic and establish more equal relationships with the refugees. For instance, they often chose not to refer to the recipients of their aid not as refugees or migrants, but rather "guys" (in many of the camps the population was heavily male dominated, several of the volunteers told me). "(…) *we would be resorting the donations into new boxes, and going through new donations and checking if they were OK to give to the guys*." After hearing the volunteers refer to the migrants as the guys several times, I finally asked my informant "Tina" about it. She explained that many of the volunteers preferred this category over "refugee" or "migrant" because they wanted to avoid putting labels on people, and because it felt like a more equal way to interact with people and speak about them.

As Ibrahim and Hogarth has pointed out, through the expulsion of the refugees there was created a discourse that labelled them as "illegitimate bodies", that had to be stopped from crossing te border. (Ibrahim & Hogarth 2018: 40, 46) By stating the need of engaging in play, and attending to the social needs of the refugees they are also re-humanizing them, contributing to a counter-discourse and undermining the constitution of the migrants as mere bodies. This can be seen in

connection to the criticism that Sarah raised towards certain NGOs that she considered were working too “clinically”. Sarah herself, and many other volunteers, saw the importance of spending time talking to the refugees. This was partly due to the fact that they considered this a way to gain insight and understanding into the situation at the camp and the needs of the refugees, partly because they saw that this was a benefit to the emotional well-being of the refugees. There was a third reason: they also genuinely enjoyed the company of the refugees, hearing their stories and learning from them. Several of the volunteers described the refugees as inspiring, fascinating and resilient people.

One can therefore argue that by engaging in practices that attend to more than just basic needs of the refugees, the volunteers did not only counter the expulsion by the French and UK government. They also avoided the kind of effect that is described by several anthropologists who take a critical approach to humanitarian aid – such as Malkkis description of the imagination of the relationship between the clean and strong aid worker and the dirty and sick recipient, or her description of aid work as an uneven Kula Ring.

Although my informants never used the word “bare life”, it was clear that this was how they recognized the conditions of the refugees. As much as the volunteers felt like their job was to offer immediate essential help through provision of food and sleeping bags, they also saw it as their task to give the refugees some of their agency and social life back, and make sure that there would be mutual reciprocity within the relationship between them and the recipients of their aid.

The volunteer role

Lucy explained how as a volunteer, you did not really have the time or energy to reflect on your own emotional life. However, she confirmed that she felt like there was a subconscious regulation of emotions among the volunteers.

> “*You would be no use if you were upset. Obviously it is fine to feel those emotions, but it is better when you are out doing distributions and things is kind of knowing that you are not experiencing the same emotions that these people are. Like whatever you are feeling comes second-hand. They are not the people to talk to about it, I guess. Like they can talk to you how they are feeling. Because they are the ones experiencing it. So you should not be off-loading on them. (…) . I guess that after a certain amount of time you also become kind of desensitized to it, like you are not feeling anything. Which sounds pretty horrible. I kind of made myself*

afterwards not do that. Like "No, you should be feeling sad after what you have seen. You have to keep feeling angry and upset." Because if you don't you don't care anymore, which is not great either. But it is about knowing when is a good time to feel certain emotions and when is the time to just put them aside and be useful I guess." – Lucy, a volunteer.

Both feeling and controlling emotions were, to Lucy, crucial parts of the role that she took on as a volunteer. Working in Calais, Lucy felt like she could not just act on her emotions as they came: as a volunteer and an aid worker, she had a responsibility to not let them interfere with her work. It could be counterproductive, even unethical. Despite being overwhelmed with sadness and frustration, Lucy felt like it was crucial for her not to break down in front of the migrants. Lucy was the one who was supposed to be there for the migrants, and not the other way around.

Goffman (1956) argues that in situations where we interact with others, we assume a role, putting certain characteristics on display (Goffman 1956: 107-108) When an individual is performing tasks involving interaction with other people, it is crucial that they are able to perform with specific capacities that are relevant to the situation. Performing well in these capacities is evidence of your character. (Goffman 2005: 215-218) In this context Goffman uses the term "character" as "capacities (or lack of them) for standing correct and steady in the face of sudden pressures" (Goffman 2005: 217)

I would argue that in the case of the volunteers in Calais, one of the most crucial capacities is the ability to be emotionally supportive towards the refugees in the right way. To display certain aspects of the sympathy and compassion that you are feeling, but also to restrain other aspects, and to be able to do so even under emotional stress and pressure. Emotions of frustration and hopelessness were OK to discuss among the volunteers, but not displayed during distributions. Masking certain emotional reactions at the appropriate was a way of demonstrating character. When you are a volunteer, you assume a role where you are in control of your emotions, and where you focus on others needs, rather than your own. Attempting to display the right characteristics for the volunteer role could, however, be exhausting.

Some people would come there and they would be like "Oh, I need to be volunteering every day!" And then they would just burn themselves out because you should not do that, you should always take days of to give yourself a break.

– Lucy, a volunteer.

Many volunteers felt guilty for taking breaks, even though the work was exhausting both physically and mentally. One informant described having troubles sleeping at times, because of the overwhelming emotions caused by witnessing the suffering around her. For her, days off were therefore crucial, so that she could catch up on sleep, however, she would oftentimes feel guilty for taking time off.

Addressing a crisis where people's basic needs were not covered, volunteers often felt like they could not afford taking breaks or addressing their own physical and psychological wellbeing. I would argue that in this case, the creation of the role that the individual is expected to take on is closely connected to what humanitarian reason, and to the experience of having a plight to alleviate suffering. As a volunteer, your actions and your reactions were all expected to be useful for the sake of easing the suffering of people who were stuck in precarious conditions.

To Lucy, it was very important not to get desensitized. It was a fine balance, as suppressing her emotions altogether would also feel wrong. If she was not feeling sad and frustrated witnessing the suffering and neglect of the migrants living around the city of Calais, what kind of person would she be?

> "*I guess that after a certain amount of time you also become kind of desensitized to it, like you are not feeling anything. Which sounds pretty horrible. I kind of made myself afterwards not do that. Like "No, you should be feeling sad after what you have seen. You have to keep feeling angry and upset." Because if you don't you don't care anymore, which is not great either. But it is about knowing when is a good time to feel certain emotions and when is the time to just put them aside and be useful I guess.*"

Fassin (2012) suggests that our emotions that we live by certain values that are important to us. In «Humanitarian Reason", he argues that we often feel like our emotions confirm our humanity (Fassin 2012: 256). As mentioned by Lucy, it was important to hold on to difficult emotions, such as anger, frustration and sorrow. As much as the role of being a volunteer was about repressing emotions when they were not suitable to express, it was also about letting yourself feel them and not getting de-sensitized.

Lucy's thoughts on the emotions that she went through can be analyzed in line with Brenneis thoughts on emotions as "a way of commenting not so much on oneself as oneself in relation to others". (Brenneis 1990: 113) To Lucy and many of her fellow volunteers, emotions could be understood as a symbol of their belonging to the humanitarian vacuum in Calais. To her,

feeling upset, angry and helpless was important, as this was an indication that she actually cared about the people stuck in limbo in Calais.

An emotional rollercoaster: Guilt, Frustration and Uselessness

Most of the volunteers described their stay in Calais as a very emotional experience where emotions tended to fluctuate throughout the entire stay. The phrase "emotional rollercoaster" was frequently used. Words like "drained", "helpless", "sad" and "frustrated" were mentioned over and over throughout our conversations.

"*As the situation is quite bad, and kind of harrowing when you think about it a lot, it is kind of exhausting when you think about it all the time.",* Sarah explained. Continuously witnessing the conditions that the refugees were living in, and continuously thinking about it, would eventually wear you down. As these people were living near the informal residencies for prolonged periods of time and spending almost every day during these periods there, they would not really get breaks from witnessing the brutal and neglected conditions. Brenneis argues that emotions are manifestations of your relationship to the people surrounding you, or the events that occur around you. (Brenneis 1990: 113)

The intense and shifting emotions that the volunteers would go through were described as being intertwined with the complex relationships that they had with their to social relations. The joy of feeling connected to the migrants and bringing some brightness into their lives despite the de-humanizing condition that they have been put into. The anger and despair over not being able to change their conditions and constantly witnessing the never-ending suffering. The guilt for being able to withdraw and rest when the people whom you were helping were suffering. The relief of being able to discuss your emotions with fellow volunteers. However, they all also seemed to impact their perception of self.

There was an ever-present feeling of guilt amongst the volunteers. Sarah noticed how she and other volunteers would feel particularly guilty when leaving the site where they were distributing and going back to the ware-house for the final briefing.

> "*When you are coming back in the cars and turn the heating on and rush back to get some tea and biscuits… and then it hits you like 'Oh my gosh, all these people cannot do that. This is where they are sleeping.' You are leaving them there and going back to your nice volunteer life. Having that realization… that I had been standing in the cold for two hours and that's where they were living and sleeping*."
> – Sarah, a volunteer

It was in this moment when many people would realize that the temporary discomfort that they had felt during the distribution or the service that they provided, was just a taste of the everyday life of the people stuck on the border. The volunteers would spend shorter periods of time in the makeshift camp and experiencing being in a cold, wet, unhygienic environment, but they always had the possibility to leave. The refugees, however, did not. For them, this environment was their permanent living condition. The possibility of returning to your "nice volunteer life", (an expression that I found very interesting), generated a feeling of guilt. "A lot of us were thinking about how for us it was such temporary problem, but for them it was a permanent problem. Once they got wet, they would never get dry.", one volunteer expressed.

Hoschild (1979) argues that we do not just passively respond to the emotions that arise within us. Rather, we are able to engage in so-called emotional work, or emotional management, where we adjust or evoke our emotions in a way that is appropriate to the social situation. Emotions, and the way we interpret and interact with our emotions, is therefore intertwined with the social context that we find ourselves in. In these context, there are certain social guidelines on how we are supposed to feel. (Hoschield 1979: 551) "*Emotion work becomes an object of awareness most often, perhaps, when the individuals feelings do not fit the situation, that is, when the latter does not account for or legitimate feelings for the situation*". (Hoschield 1979: 563)

When individuals measure the emotions that they experience with the expectation of experienced emotions in a certain situation, they can experience a so-called emotive dissonance. Emotive dissonance is the experience of a discrepancy between the emotions that we are currently experiencing and the emotions that are considered appropriate in the current situation. According to Hoschield, attempts to reduce emotive dissonance can give us clues on the expectations, or feeling rules, in certain situations. (Hoschield 1979: 565)

What kinds of feeling rules are you expected to abide to when you join a community who's existence is conditioned by the imperative of easing suffering in a precarious environment? Emotive dissonance is a useful term to describe Sarah's immediate discomfort from leaving the site where the migrants were staying, going back to warmth and comfort together with her friends. Joy was not an appropriate emotion to have in this situation, and it was immediately replaced with guilt.

According to Malkki, one of the biggest issues for humanitarian workers was feeling insufficient in some way, as though they were not able to do enough (Malkki 2015: 54, 68). This was despite the fact that the purpose of the actions, pointed out both by the volunteers and

by Malkki herself was not to change the structural situation. It was rather to alleviate immediate suffering – physical and emotional (Malkki 2015: 6).

> "*Yeah, it is quite an emotional experience. Like, sadness, I guess. And also feeling a bit useless. That constant reminder. Because we are giving out a meal or a hot drink for now, but who are going to do that in three weeks time? You are supposed to be dealing with the root of the issue, but that is nothing we can do, we are not there for that, we are there for a response to the what the people there need.*" – Lucy, a volunteer.

Lucy spent a lot of time thinking about how what really had to be dealt with was what she referred to as "the root issue": the structures that lead the migrants to be stuck in these conditions. Only addressing the immediate and basic needs in the makeshift camps made her feel useless. However, she also acknowledged that she and the other volunteers were not able to change these structures, and neither was it what they were there for. Their task was to address the immediate needs of the migrants. Still, Lucy was frustrated for not being able to do more.

"Emma", a 20 year old woman who had volunteered in Calais between September 2020 and January 2021, explained how it was difficult to witness the lack of change:

> "*On a personal level, I felt like… the idea that I had been here for several months, and a lot had happened, but also a lot had not changed. In the sense of… even when I left, there was always going to be that problem. I could try to give them a coffee every day, but the problem would still exist. I felt like I had done nothing to help the problem.*" – Emma, a volunteer.

Feeling useless and helpless was a widely shared sentiment. Volunteers seemed to be intensely aware of how they were only able to give momentary aid, not change the lives or give more opportunities to the people that they were trying to help. Redfield mentions in "Life in Crisis" how humanitarian organizations often address with immediate solutions. However, the volunteers were aware that while they could not do much more than offer food supplies for a couple of days, or a sleeping bag for the night, the conditions that the migrants found themselves stuck in had prevailed for years, and would unlikely have a quick solution.

Dealing with difficult emotions

The volunteer role could easily take a toll on your ability to take care of your own well-being. The experience of volunteering was extraordinary. Most of the volunteers had little previous experience working in conditions of this kind. It was therefore up to the volunteers themselves.

"*Some days I would just get home and be like "You know what, I just really want to watch a really crappy TV show." Just turn off and go to bed. I had a journal, so I would write about my experiences. And that was a really helpful process, to work out what exactly would make me feel frustrated or angry, and I found that really therapeutic, I guess. So yeah, somedays I would really feel like "Ouf, I can't, lets just turn off and forget about it. But more often than not I would feel quite guilty about trying to do that. Because it felt like… you know, why do I get the right to switch off from this. Why should I be allowed to go home to my warm house and watch my telly and eat my nice dinner and forget about it and while there are people out there in the cold, starving, hungry, or on a boat, risking their lives… But then you come to a point where being sympathetic and helpful becomes unhelpful because you are to exhausted and you just have to switch off for a bit*." – Sarah, a volunteer.

«*If you truly thought of what had happened and what you would see you could probably get yourself pretty worked up. But as you said, that would be counterproductive. You would be no use if you were upset*." – Lucy, a volunteer.

The volunteers knew that if you became burned out, you would actually become useless, and that taking breaks was necessary in order to be able to carry on with the work. However, they felt guilty for being able to retreat to warm, comfortable accommodations and curl up with a TV-show and nice food, knowing that the people whom they came to help were left outside, sleeping in tents or on the ground. As a lot of volunteers were motivated by the thought that the situation that the migrants were in was unfair, it was easy to feel like you were contributing to this injustice by addressing your own needs in ways that the migrants could not.

M: "*What kinds of situations would lead people to be emotionally overwhelmed*?"

L: "*Probably over-working yourself. Some people would come there and they would be like "Oh, I need to be volunteering every day!" And then they would just burn themselves out because you should not do that, you should always take days of to give yourself a break. – Lucy, a volunteer*."

Being a volunteer was described as exhausting physically and mentally. One volunteer described having troubles sleeping at times, because of the overwhelming emotions. For her, days off were crucial, so that she could catch up on sleep, however, she often felt guilty for taking time off. Volunteers were over-working themselves, and not taking breaks from work,

which in itself could lead to exhaustion. However, it was common feel guilty for taking breaks, and feel like they were supposed to be working every day. Addressing crisis where people's basic needs were not covered, volunteers often felt like they could not afford taking breaks or address their own physical and psychological wellbeing.

As Roncin, Hughes and Burcks put it, taking breaks, addressing your own emotional needs and seeking emotional support could sometimes be experienced as "a luxury in a context where there is no room for luxury," (Roncin, Hughes & Burcks 2019: 13) or as downright "anti-refugee" (Roncin, Hughes & Burcks 2019: 9).

Sarah described how emotions would sometimes be dealt with by retreating. Sarah described how the atmosphere during the ware-house work usually would be lighthearted and playful. *"(...) when we were in the ware house we kind of got away from the immediate reality of the situation. In the ware house things tended to be pretty light, people were joking, dancing, you know, general silliness*." – Sarah, a volunteer.

The warehouse was a place associated with a light atmosphere. People would be chatting, joking, dancing while working there, just "general silliness". Although the volunteer would be occupied with work, this was also a place where you were not directly confronted with the conditions that the migrants lived in. Possibly this was because they were occupied with practical and specific work that would not require you to manage your emotions, neither were you witnessing the neglected conditions directly.

> "*Often when people would be feeling like that, they would either go quiet, or have some alone time. Get themselves a job back at the warehouse where they could be alone not talking to people*." – Sarah, a volunteer.

When a volunteer would have a particularly difficult day or feel like the conditions of the makeshift camps would be too overwhelming to confront, they would sometimes cope by withdrawing. This could be getting a job that would not require them to interact with other people. Therefore, some people chose to stay back during the distributions and continue the work at the warehouse instead.

Some volunteers preferred practical tasks that did not involve much emotional interaction with the refugees. They could focus on the practical aspects of the work, and feel like they were useful, while avoiding overwhelming emotions. Lucy, for instance, particularly enjoyed helping out at the first aid area, or taking on similar kinds of work where she had a specific task and

specific roles. Prior to volunteering, she had received a first aid certificate, which she was glad to put to use. «*I liked helping out at the first aid, because it made me feel useful. In general I preferred having a job on a distribution, or where I had a particular role where I would be doing only what I was supposed to be doing. Where I was busy the entire time*.» she explained.

Having a network of other volunteers was crucial. This way, you could always find someone to confide in when the emotions that you were going through were getting too heavy. Sarah explained that as everybody found themselves in a very unfamiliar environment where no one really knew anyone else, people would quickly get comfortable enough around each other to discuss difficult and overwhelming emotions.

> *"I think because people were in such a foreign environment, you could say to people that "I'm feeling like this" or "I've had a rough day. Have you felt like that. What do you think about that?" So I think that from quite early on you get used to discussing these kinds of topics with each other."* – Sarah, a volunteer.

Most important was the possibility of having someone acknowledge that your feelings were normal and common. Volunteers who had stayed in Calais for a shorter period of time would often talk to more experienced volunteers to discuss what they were going through and get advice on how to process or cope with these emotions.

It was common for my informants to rely on the fact that they lived with their fellow volunteers. This gave them the ability to come home after a long, hard day and sit down and talk about how frustrating it felt to work with a situation that was practically impossible to improve. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there were certain emotions that the volunteers were careful not to display in front of the refugees, such as shock, frustration and hopelessness. However, this did not mean that these emotions were kept completely private, and were not to be spoken about at all. On contrary, it seemed as though the experiences of feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and helpless with the situation that the refugees were in actually were a common topic of conversation between the volunteers. Moreover, they might also have been something that brought the volunteers closer to one another. Sarah explained the importance of having fellow volunteers to confide in, as a source of emotional support.

> "(…) *Sometimes volunteers that had close friends within the group would go and confide in one another. It did not tend to be a whole big group discussion, but when someone was feeling emotional, sad or whatever, they would go off with one or maybe two close friends rather than having a whole talk about it. At the end of*

the day a lot of the volunteers lived together as well. So when we went home we could pour a glass of wine and have a chat about what was on our mind." – Sarah, a volunteer.

However, Sarah also addressed the fact that she did not feel like the organization itself really provided an opportunity for talking about difficult emotions.

"*I think they handled it quite badly. I wasn't there before but a couple of weeks before a family had died crossing, and some of the volunteers knew them. And I was not there but the volunteers that I spoke to told me that it was just a fact that was just told to them, there was really no talking about how they feel or what you should do in that situation. One of the leaders was very approachable and would have been very happy to talk about things, I think. But the feeling was more that you should approach her, not that she would check in on everyone. It was not really any like… 'This is what you might see, this is what you might feel, this is what might happen, and these are some things that you might do about it.' There wasn't really any of that, to be honest.*" - «Sarah», a volunteer.

Sarah felt dissatisfied with the lack of information offered by the organization on how to handle intense emotions, and the lack of active follow-up on how the volunteers were feeling emotionally. Several volunteers agreed, and one of them described this as "probably one of the main flaws with the organization".

According to Tina, some of the most discussed emotions amongst the volunteers were the feelings of being helpless, or like all your efforts to alleviate the suffering of the migrants were in vain. When hearing that their fellow volunteers were in fact feeling the same way, the guilt and shame connected to one's perceived helplessness would perhaps become weaker, especially when it was common for my informants to look up to their fellow volunteers.

Chapter summary

In the previous chapter, I described the volunteers first encounter with the physical manifestation of exclusion and bare life, in form of things such as physical injuries and poor life conditions. In this section, it has been demonstrated how the volunteers entire stay and their experience of their work was affected by these same mechanisms of exclusion. Not only did they affect their work, but they also affected their emotional life and their experience of the volunteer community.

Ticktin (2011) discusses how Agamben's term bare life is used by scholars in order to describe the "universal, suffering body". (Tickin 2011: 14) However, according to Ticktin, bare life is nothing but a political concept that is used to define conditions of care, where life must be saved from being "bare" and given back their social significance. (Ticktin 2011: 14) Ticktin argues that life understood as bare by the ones who are intending to improve it, and the definition of "bare" is therefore colored by their intentions.

"(…) *his figure—be it the figure of the universal suffering body or that of bare life — is but a political device to create the conditions for care. Bare life does not exist beyond this; it always comes with political and social attributes allowing it to be identified as human, as bare, and as "life"—biology in the sense of this "biological life" is fundamentally political, including how we define and characterize physicality*." (Ticktin 2011: 14)

Exclusion manifested itself throughout spatial exclusion, but also throughout deprivation of response to the most basic needs of the refugees – which they witnessed around themselves constantly, and which they were trying to cover. This constant awareness led to a range of overwhelming emotions, from shock, disbelief, sadness and anger to guilt and the experience of being useless. Volunteers often felt like their work would never be enough, as though they would never be able to change the structures that resulted in the exclusion. Although they knew that the work that they were doing was essential and in some cases life-saving, they also felt like it would always be insufficient.

The conditions that were described by Davies, Isakjee and Dhesi, where the refugees were constantly dealing with lack of nutrition and sufficient shelter, and constant emotional distress, were draining to address. As a volunteer, you would be pouring all your energy into a situation that you were not able to solve. Volunteers described feeling guilt, for not being able to do enough, for not being able to solve the situation of the refugees, and for being able to retreat to their "nice volunteer life".

Malkki elaborates on the issue of guilt in dealing with crises like this. Drawing on Red Cross workers who were addressing crises such as war and genocide, she states: "*They might ask themselves whether this fieldwork is more important than their medical work in a hospital back in Finland. They might feel heavy guilt about not "doing enough"—but what would "enough" be in a crisis of overwhelming scale*?" (Malkki 2015: 187) In other words, this is a common issue dealt with by people working in humanitarian organizations.

Another aspect that complicated the work of the volunteers, and that was tied to the particular time when my informants were in Calais, was the Covid-19 pandemic. The presence of Covid-19 not only made the exclusion of the refugees more severe, and the work conditions for the volunteers even more difficult, but it also created challenges for creating connections with the refugees that would counter the exclusion that they were subjected to. When volunteers needed to wear masks and maintain social distance, a barrier of suspected stigma was created.

However, it seemed as though the conditions that the volunteers worked in also produced certain roles and belonging to a community. The community of volunteers, and the strong bonds that grew between them, were consolidated through the shared moral sentiments which created the obligation to alleviate suffering. Volunteers described being dependent on support from each other, and how experiences of feeling useless and helpless became frequent topics of discussion. The experience of the everyday life as a volunteer in Calais demonstrates how the response to bare life, alongside with conditions of care, as Ticktin puts it, creates a ground for building community, and for the experience that the individual has of his or her own identity. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these identity formations would become evident during (and after) departure from Calais.

Chapter 4: Transformation, Departure and Life after Calais

When I started conducting my research, my main interest was in what motivated people to engage in humanitarian work. However, as I was done with the interviews, my interest shifted to what happened after my informants were done with their first time working in Calais. The emotions that they went through during departure, and the time that came immediately after it, indicated what volunteering truly meant for them to find themselves in a community that cultivated moral sentiments and the need to help.

What is beyond doubt, and something that all my informants agreed upon, was that the experiences that they had in Calais were transformative. Not only did the volunteers gain insights and skills that they did not have from before, but they also often experienced a transformation of identity. In this chapter, I will describe the experiences my informants had when it came to leaving Calais, and the first time of being back home. I will do this in light of the transformative experiences that they went through (here I will apply the concept of liminality), and the impact of the volunteer community on the individual.

Liminality

The concept of liminality was coined by Arnold van Gennep, but popularized by anthropologist Victor Turner who used it to analyze initiation rites. (Wels, Waal, Spiegel & Kamsteeg 2011: 1) According to Turner, rites of passage, or liminal periods, are present in all kinds of societies (although he argues that they might be more evident as liminal processes in societies that he describes as 'simpler', ones that are "small scale, relatively stable and cyclical') (Turner 1996: 509). Turner describes liminality or the liminal period as the ritual process of transition between one role or status to another, which usually involves acquiring new kinds of knowledge and competence. Liminality is a condition that the individual is in when they are going through a transition between two states, which are stable social positions acknowledged by the community. (Turner 1996: 509-510)

Liminal periods are usually signified by a state of ambiguity, as the individuals who are going through the transition have ceased to belong to one state, yet they still do not belong to another. (Turner 1996: 510-514) They therefore have to abide by different expectations and norms than

the rest of the society. By the end of the liminal phase the individual is reintegrated into society and has a fixed position in society once again, according to Turner. Now however, they have a new authority, status, or new acquired knowledge (Turner 1996: 510, 513-514, Turner 1969: 103).

Anghel and Grierson (2020) demonstrate how the volunteers who were addressing the situation of the refugees in Northern France were in a liminal space (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 496). Leaning on Turner, they apply the term liminality to the work conditions and experiences of the volunteers (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 488-89, 496). Thye describe liminality as "a stressful experience of ambiguity, uncertainty and loss of meaning, but also of intense creativity and self-awareness, with potential for transformation." (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 488) According to Anghel and Grierson, the liminality concept the way Turner used it as something linear, with an end point, is problematic. They argue that there are conditions that can be classified as liminal states, but that do not necessarily come to an end. (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 488-489).

A majority of the volunteers had no prior experience with volunteering, and only limited knowledge of the situation of the refugees and their needs. Skills and strategies had to be developed in the process, often by trial and failure. Anghel and Grierson characterize the conditions that the volunteers were living and working in on the border as traumatizing, but also transformative. "(…) It appears that whilst the border camp is a space of liminality for migrants, concurrently it is also a space of uncertainty and potential transformation for untrained citizen-volunteers." (Anghel & Grierson 2020: 496) At the same time, Anghel and Grierson also described the work in Calais as a ground for potential, as this was a space where new problem solving strategies, work models and forms of relationship could develope. (Angel & Grierson 2020: 496-97)

The liminal period is not only a period of transition, but also a period of reflection, and of seeing things in a new light. "*During the liminal period neophytes*[4] *are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos and the powers that generate and sustain them.*" (Turner 1996: 520). It appeared as though the transformative aspects of volunteering were very important to my informants. Many of the volunteers went through changes in their interests, desires and ways in which they perceived the world and their own place in it, as well as interests and behaviors. It seemed as though self-transformation was expected, desired and possibly even one of the goals when my informants chose to volunteer.

[4] Neophyte is the term used for individuals going through initiation rites (Turner 1969: 95)

My informants felt like this experience both had given them knowledge on the issue of the conditions that the migrants found themselves in, and brought them closer to it. Some of my informants described how they ended up feeling more connected to the situation of the migrants. Some also felt like they had acquired skills that later could be used in various fields in society. Sarah explained that one of the skills that was very important that she had acquired was understanding other people. By being in a situation where she had to assist people who were very vulnerable, possibly traumatized, and in addition to did not always share her language, she felt like she had to learn how to "read people", to understand what they needed from her in that moment and situation. For instance, it was not always easy to figure out who of the refugees wanted to be left alone and who wanted to talk about their experiences. Sarah explained: "*You can use that anywhere, really. Empathy. It's really important, even just in your personal life, just having this ability to read people, and adapt to what they need you to be almost.*" During her time volunteering, she gained skills in not only adapting her behavior and approach to people, but also adapting her role, and the qualities that came with it, in the interpersonal connection with people.

Another important signifier of the liminal phase is the community experienced by the individuals who go through the rite of passage together. The individuals who are going through a liminal phase or rite of passage at the same time form something that Turner describes as communitas. A communitas is signified by complete equality, as the relationships in the communitas transcend all the categories and hierarchies that would normally affect the relationships between individuals in a society, such as class, gender or age. (Turner 1991: 96-97, 111)

They experienced isolation from the outside world, combined with the strong bonds of friendship between the volunteer can be understood as a communitas formed in a liminal space. Volunteers socialized mostly with each other. These young people were in a place where they did not really know anyone else. It was natural to turn to fellow volunteers when you wanted to spend the time you had off work in someone else's company. However, there was another reason for why bonds became so tight. Many of the volunteers thought that the people outside of Calais whom they stayed in touch with, such as family and friends, would not easily understand their experiences. The people whom they were able to turn to when they felt like they needed to share these emotions and thoughts with someone, were the ones who were going through them too.

Departure and unfinished business

Volunteers often felt ambiguous about leaving. When the time came, they often felt ready to leave, as they were feeling drained and exhausted, physically and mentally. However, no matter how emotionally draining and difficult this experience was, leaving often felt hard – to the point where it was very common to postpone departure. By the time when they were supposed to leave, they had formed close connections with some of the refugees, with fellow volunteers and with the site itself. They had witnessed the conditions that people were living in but also experienced moments of joy and community both with refugees and fellow volunteers. They had gained knowledge on the situation in Calais and felt the need to make a change – despite the awareness of their lack of ability to create a structural change, in the form of more humane treatment of refugees and migrants and safer routes to England.

> *"I mean… getting to the ferry to go back to the UK, you can see the white cliffs of Dover from Calais. It is so close. And the journey is so short, and how easy it is for me to just get on and go, at any time. I mean, now during Covid, it is not, but generally." – Emily, a volunteer.*

> *"(It felt unfair) that we could just get on a safe boat and travel across the water. I travelled home with two other girls and they had only come for two weeks. And they said things like "How is this fair?" that they could just get on this ferry. And they spent the whole journey talking about how upsetting it was and how guilty they felt. But I think a lot of them also want to go back. I don't know if they were enjoying it or if they felt guilty." – Tina, a volunteer.*

Tina and Emily are both reflecting on how short and easy the journey from Calais and Britain is for them. They felt like it was unfair for them to be able to leave Calais so easily, and travel back and forth across the channel.

Complicated emotions such as guilt, shame and the feeling of having "unfinished business" – as one of my informants put it – were also common. Tina was one of the volunteers who ended up postponing her departure twice before finally leaving Calais and going home. She felt guilty for leaving when there still was so much that could be done. At the same time, she felt bad for the people that she had formed connections with, whom she now would have to just leave behind.

Another thing that bothered my informants, and that contributed to their unwillingness to leave, was the lack of change in the situation. When they left, the people whom they had tried to help would still be in the same precarious conditions, stuck in limbo.

> "*I think the hardest part for me was to see that sometimes there was just such a lack of progress for them. There were people who were there in September. They would try* (to cross the channel) *pretty much every night, and they were still there when I left in January*." – Emma, a volunteer.

Towards the end of our interview, she described the feelings that made it so hard for her to leave:

> "*I actually ended up postponing going home. For me, a lot of times it was just that I felt like we were doing a good thing. It was nice to see that we helped them. Also how nice the refugees were, how caring they were. And you start to want to help them and build relationships. And then you start to realize that you don't want to leave, because what you are doing here is good work and what you are doing here will help someone, if just a little bit. They have so little and you just need to help them in whatever way you can.*" – Emma, a volunteer.

"*It was sad to leave, because, in the end of the day… there is always an element of being a selfish act to charity work. It is always a part of it. People turn to charity because it makes them feel good*." Lucy said during an interview. However, she continued: "*But then also towards the end you are exhausted, because it is hard work, both physically and mentally*." Lucy was ready to leave, as the work had been exhausting. However, it had also been extremely rewarding, and she admitted that alongside with her wish to make life better for someone, she also went on with volunteering because it made her feel good. Therefore, it was hard to leave Calais.

When Tina finally left Calais the last time before we had our interview, she had postponed her departure twice. She had come home quite recently when I talked to her in January, and she was actually just home for Christmas and was planning to go back to Calais soon. When I asked her about her feelings about leaving, she replied: "I think my situation is quite different, as I am going back. It probably will be a lot different when I will be leaving for good."

Being able to travel back and forth between the UK and France as you please, being able to grab your passport and get on a ferry whenever was convenient for you felt like an unearned privilege. Many of Tinas fellow volunteers felt the same way.

> "*(It felt unfair) that we could just get on a safe boat and travel across the water. I travelled home with two other girls and they had only come for two weeks. And they said things like "How is this fair?" that they could just get on this ferry. And they spent the whole journey talking about how upsetting it was and how guilty they felt. But I think a lot of them also want to go back. I don't know if they were enjoying it or if they felt guilty*." – Tina, a volunteer

She continued:

> "*This time I felt a bit guilty for leaving some of the people that I had made friends with, especially recently. Because that is someone I had known for two weeks, and I would say 'I will not be here next week, or the week after.' That made a big emotional impact on them, and I did not know how quickly people could form attachments like that. Especially when you are from such different situations." (...) "But at the same time it was kind of nice to leave, but at the same time on the ferry I felt so guilty. That I could just do that, I could just go back with my passport, on a safe boat. That was kind of hard emotionally, to deal with*." – Tina, a volunteer

Finally getting a break and going home to see her family felt good for Tina, but that did not change the fact that she was overwhelmed with guilt about leaving the people that she had connected with behind.

The humanitarian vacuum, the sense of unfinished business, but also the community of volunteers and the new forms of sociability created at the site had "*really captivated me and pulled me in*", as Emily, whom I quoted in the very beginning of the thesis, put it. It was, however, also what fueled the existence and the practices of NGOs such as SupportofC.

When we were done with the interview, Tina and I talked for a while about our plans for the future: I about the possibility of me having to postpone the handing in of my thesis, and Tina about hoping to go back shortly after our interview, despite the covid-19 restrictions making the prospect of that insecure. I wished her luck, and told her that I sincerely hoped that she would make it back to Calais.

Life after Calais

The things that the volunteers went through in Calais affected their identity long after their stay. Due to the intensity of the experience, the transition from being a volunteer to going back to

your ordinary everyday life back home could be difficult. The complicated feelings were not only connected to leaving, but also to the time following after she returned to England.

> "*And then when you get home it takes time to process what you have been through, and that makes it quite hard, talking to people back in the UK. They would ask me questions and it would be quite hard to describe how I was feeling to them because you cannot really explain what it's like unless you are there. So that was hard, because people would ask and I would not necessarily want to talk about it to them.*" – Lucy, a volunteer

People whom Lucy knew kept asking her about her experiences in Calais, but she did not feel like she wanted to talk to them so soon after her return. Partly, this was for the same reason as for why volunteers mostly would discuss their feelings and emotions amongst each other, rather than family and friends back home. One could not really understand what it felt like, being a volunteer, working with refugees in Calais, if one had not gone through it oneself. Lucy felt like it was hard to describe her emotions to other people who had not been to Calais. She felt exhausted and drained. However, she also added that as soon as the emotional and physical exhaustion had passed, her first thought was "When can I go again?"

As Malkki writes in "The Need to Help": "it may be true in some measure that people do this work because 'it makes them feel good,' but they also confront the common condition, in the aftermath of humanitarian work, of not feeling good at all." (Malkki 2015: 53) This quote seems to summarize what is happening emotionally with people who engage themselves in humanitarian work: being drawn into it while seeking a certain sense of fulfillment, but also ending up having to cope with the emotions of being drained, exhausted, guilty, sad and hopeless. The need to help could not really be fulfilled. However, it seemed as though this need was also encouraged between volunteers, through interaction and conversation. In the case of the volunteers working in Calais, this inability to fulfill the need to help, and to alleviate suffering, seems to be the force that also preserves the volunteer community and its practices.

Taking on the role of a volunteer could lead to guilt and feeling constantly insufficient, but amidst the crisis and the community consolidated by the need to help, my informants had also gained a new identity, one that had to be nurtured and preserved. This becomes evident in this excerpt of my interview with Sarah:

> *M: Would you say it was transformative, in some way? That their identity had in some way changed?*

S: I think that is definitely true. I think it would be interesting to know if that has continued. A lot of people were saying things like "I am going to make sure to donate clothes. I am going to stay active." You know, do something to continue this. But I wonder how many people have done that. I think that while you are there, it is such an immersive, intense experience, and everything you think of the whole time is this situation. Many people have described this as a transformative experience, but I wonder how many people have genuinely been transformed.

M: Do you feel like it still affects who you are, after a few months?

S: I think yes and no. I feel like I am still attached to the stories that I have heard and that I am empowered, in a sense, to tell people about them and talk about them. This has been an issue that I think of a lot more than I use to. I have gone to several pages where if people need help with getting food or clothes or legal help people tend to post about it, that kind of thing. So in that way: yes, because I am actively trying to help people still. But I have gone back to my normal life, where thinking about the refugee crisis, whilst it is on my mind – it is always on my mind – I sadly imagine that with time it will decrease. There further away I get from when I have been in Calais, probably, unfortunately, the less I will think about it. Unless I go back, or go into a line of working in which that (the knowledge about the refugees) is important.

Sarah felt like it was important to not forget what she had experienced, seen and felt. Many of her fellow volunteers continued to contribute to improving the conditions in Calais from a distance, and volunteer helping refugees and other disadvantaged groups locally. Sarah clearly saw the transformation that you went through as a volunteer as something positive and desirable. However, she was also concerned that she and her fellow volunteers would forget about the experience eventually. Drawing on Turner, and Anghel and Grierson, one can argue that Sarah was concerned that the experience would remain liminal.

Chapter summary:

In this chapter I have described the transformational aspects of volunteering, as well as what it was like to leave Calais after time spent volunteering. I think it was during the leaving of Calais that it became apparent how important the community was to the volunteers. Throughout their stay, the volunteers had been forced to address a situation that seemed unsolvable, and deal with the hopelessness and guilt that came with it. However, they were not doing this alone.

They were surrounded by a community, one that helped them handle and interpret difficult emotions and that they also shared enjoyable moments with. Anghel and Grierson have argued that the work in Calais placed the volunteers in a liminal state, but liminal states, as Turner has demonstrated, are also life changing. The volunteers – both as individuals, and the volunteer organizations – were being pulled to Calais by the humanitarian void that was created there. This void made the volunteers feel insufficient, emotionally exhausted and frustrated but it was also what seemed to pull at them as they were getting ready to leave.

As Tina's story from her ferry-ride home revealed, these emotions were shared. As she was standing on the ferry, on her way back to the UK, one of the two fellow volunteers whom she was travelling home with suddenly expressed the very thoughts that Tina had on her mind: the unfairness of the volunteers being able to cross the border that the refugees were desperately trying to cross. As Lutz and Abu-Lughod state, emotions and emotional discourses tend to be concerned with social issues. (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 13) For this reason, from an anthropological point of view, emotions can be analyzed as forces that keep communities together through attitudes towards issues that are perceived as important.

For the volunteers, emotions and the way emotions were being discussed between people were closely tied to the humanitarian void that they were drawn to. In other words, emotions were comments on their relationship to the structures of expulsion, as well as the community of volunteers that was formed in response to these structures.

Conclusion

The question of this analysis is not whether the volunteers are engaging in the humanitarian work for self-less or selfish purposes: rather, it is how the construction of the self and our social relationships are constantly influencing and even defining each other. The need to help might be selfish, but it is also completely dependent on the social relationships of the individual, and the larger context of social relationships that is surrounding him or her. Without social relationships, the need to help cannot be fulfilled. As Abu-Lughod and Lutz argues, emotions are reflections of social interactions and social structures. (Abu-Lughod & Lutz 1990: 12-13) In this thesis, I have analyzed emotional reactions as a collective response to a situation that Doigde and Sandri have classified as a humanitarian vacuum. In line with Cohen, I have argued that members of the volunteer community have described themselves as members on the basis of what made them distinct from other people, namely what Malkki described as "the need to help". In line with Hoschield, I have argued that certain emotional responses were encouraged and expected in the volunteer community, which was built on the imperative to ease suffering, and the need to help.

While the French and the British government were concerned about the border region around Calais attracting migrants, the events on the border also seemed to attract volunteers. The exclusion, structural violence, marginalization and neglect attracted people who felt a need to fill the void of the lack of responsibility taken by the government. These people were also driven the need to see the crisis with their own eyes and to contribute to make people's lives a little easier, although fully aware of their inability to resolve the situation. The volunteers were filling what was described as a humanitarian vacuum.

Redfield argues that humanitarianism and the agency of humanitarian organizations can be characterized through the urgency of the situations that they responded to, the call for immediate coverage of basic needs and therefore also the ability to move on quickly after addressing the crisis. The volunteers whom I interviewed, however, were intensely aware of the fact that the suffering that they were addressing could not be resolved quickly. The suffering was a manifestation of transnational and political relations, as well as imagination of borders that needed to be protected. They could not move on, not after witnessing the lack of progress that was described by Emma and other volunteers whom I spoke to. This might have contributed to the desire to carry on the work, and even unwillingness to leave the site. As Emily described her experience: "(…) *I have been going back loads, because I cannot look away. I really*

captivated me and pulled me in." Interestingly, the experience that Emily had was not new the volunteer mobilization in the area surrounding Calais.

Doidge and Sandri, who conducted their research in 2015, showed how one of their informants felt drawn to return to the makeshift camps in Calais over and over. "I was moved by the cause and once I met the people I was back there before I had a chance to think about it – my legs kept taking me there. I don't even know how many times I've been there, months and months at the weekends but when things were really, really bad, I took annual leave to manage the situation." (Doidge & Sandri 2019: 472)

During the course of me interviewing a large group of informants, I became deeply interested in the processes that made the situation in Calais captivate people, and pull them in. There was something about Calais that made people postpone their departure, or return over and over again, pouring their energy into attempts to ease the suffering that they were witnessing, till they felt – as they themselves would often describe – drained.

I would argue that alongside with the need to help that Malkki describes, the volunteers were also driven by moral sentiments of obligation to ease suffering described by Fassin. However, this suffering never really seemed to be eased: volunteers who stayed in Calais for prolonged periods of time would often feel there was no solution to the problem. Therefore, the vacuum could never be filled and the moral obligation was never really fulfilled.

A while after I had conducted all of the interviews I realized that both the negative and the positive emotions connected to volunteering in Calais were interpreted and enhanced by the community of volunteers, as these feeling were frequently discussed and approved by other volunteers and also created a basis for interpersonal connection. I would therefore argue that the negative emotions contributed to pulling the volunteers back to Calais over and over as much as the positive ones did.

It was a while after conducting the last interview that I realized the importance of the role that the community of volunteers played for both the responses to the humanitarian crisis, the emotions that the volunteers went through and the addictive aspects of volunteering.

The volunteers whom I spoke to stayed in Calais for limited amounts of time, all between a couple of weeks to several months. Some had only gone there once at the time when I spoke to them, others have returned to Calais multiple times. The individuals who were part of the community were constantly replacing each other. The people whom I spoke to were also all

there at different times. In other words, there was a constant fluctuation of the people who were working in Calais.

What did not seem to change, however, was the importance of discussing emotions with each other, understanding each-others emotions and how to respond to each-others emotional reactions. As Lutz and Abu-Lughod claim, it is through communication with others that we make sense of events and our own actions and reactions (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 12-14, 16-17) Discussing your emotions with your fellow volunteers could help making sense of your feelings, as well as accept them as appropriate for the situation. Lutz and Abu-Lughod speak of the role of emotions in communities as emotional discourses, meaning that discourses can have "affective content or effect". (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 10) For Lutz and Abu-Lughod it is important to determine that emotions and discourses are deeply intertwined. Emotions are shaped by interaction and communication, and can in turn contribute to shape social reality. (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 10-13) Fassin's description of moral sentiments fits well into this understanding of the role of emotions in the community and the way the world is imagined:

> "*Moral sentiments have become an essential force in contemporary politics: they nourish its discourses and legitimize its practices, particularly where these practices are focused on the disadvantaged and the dominated, whether at home (the poor, the immigrants, the homeless) and farther away (the victims of famine, epidemics, or war).*" (Fassin 2012: 1)

Using the concept "emotional discourse" Abu-Lughod and Lutz suggest that the way emotions are experienced and interpreted within social contexts can contribute to the way in which the world is constituted. If discourses are to be understood as collections of statements that create the objects that they speak of (Foucault 1972: 31-34, Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 9), one can argue that the emotional discourse created in the interactions within the volunteer community in SupportofC created the crisis that was necessary to address, as well as a community of dignity, support and hope in a site that on multiple occasions has been described as a vacuum or a void, or a zone where transgressive bodies had to be stopped from creating fixation points. To explain it in a shorter and more concise way: to organizations like SupportofC, emotions not just spontaneous reactions to the surroundings, but rather, powerful tools.

Speaking to my informants, I realized that they constituted a reality through their practices, through their interaction and through supporting each other through emotionally challenging situations. The importance to make the conditions in the makeshift camps better, and to work

against the effects that the exclusionary policies had on both the material environment as well as the identity of the refugees, was created and substantiated by what Lutz and Abu-Lughod would describe as emotional discourses.

As Redfield argues, humanitarian organizations need the crisis in order to have a purpose – they therefore need it to exist. In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that the humanitarian vacuum in Calais can be an example of this, as it made organizations like SupportofC possible and purposeful. As Malkki demonstrates in her findings, for volunteers and humanitarian workers their work forms their identity. The identity that would be formed through the work (both physical and emotional), would however continue to be important even after the volunteers' stay in the site of crisis. Partly, because as many of my informants discussed, the crisis did not end. However, it was also because the need to help and to take on the role of the volunteer did not really go away, as is suggested in my interview with Sarah and in her concern about volunteers forgetting about the connection that they had to the crisis in Calais.

As Emma said:

> *"It was nice to see that we helped them. Also how nice the refugees were, how caring they were. And you start to want to help them and build relationships. And then you start to realize that you don't want to leave, because what you are doing here is good work and what you are doing here will help someone, if just a little bit. They have so little and you just need to help them in whatever way you can."*

While being unable to change the situation while witnessing continuous systemic exclusion, volunteers could always rely on the opportunity to talk to the volunteers whom they worked and lived together with. The guilt, frustration, sorrow and hopelessness, as well as the joy of being useful, was always shared, and therefore also legitimized. When being returning over and over again to Calais, volunteers were not just returning to a place of structural violence, neglect and liminality. They were also returning to a community where their values, emotions and needs made sense.

Further Research

As mentioned in chapter 1, one of the shortcomings of this thesis is that I was not able to spend prolonged time with my informants in the field, and therefore did not get to know much about the context that they came from. There was only limited and very general information that I got to know about their background, despite the fact that a lot of my informants had a lot in common

with each other. For instance, many of them were students, or had very recently graduated university.

While there have been a lot of written sources to find on the motivation of volunteers who were working in Calais, there was limited information to find about the background that the volunteers usually came from and what it was in this background that motivated them to volunteer. As Alcade & Portos write, the international volunteers in Calais were usually female and younger, often students who had the possibility to come to the cite during the weekends. (Alcade & Portos 2018: 262-263) Alcade & Portos also suggest that volunteers might also be motivated by some of British volunteers was a sense of responsibility that they experienced because of the role that the UK played in the situation that the migrants ended up in. (Alcade & Portos 2018: 262)

This, however, is not enough information to draw any conclusions on the reason for why some people felt the need to volunteer. In her analysis of the motivations and experiences of Finnish Red Cross Malkki suggests that her informants chose to go on physically and emotionally difficult missions in order to help others in order to escape the monotonous, safe and predictable everyday life in Finland, their home country. “The safe, well-ordered, and in principle predictable national home, the welfare society that should have met their social and material needs, had become, for some, burdensome and constraining, and emotionally cold.” (Malkki 2015: 8) The “abroad” or “the world outside” was experienced as a contrast to the cold and predictable life at home. (Malkki 2015: 8)

As I did not spend prolonged periods of time together with my informants, I was unable to gather information on what it was in the “home environment” of my informants that motivated them to volunteer. However, I realized that a lot of my informants and the people whom I read about during online research that the volunteers who travelled to Calais had a lot in common, as many of them for instance were either students or had recently graduated. For deeper insight into the issues that have been explored in this thesis, I think that it would be useful to conduct research where the informants are traced from their home environment, from the point where they gain interest in the idea of travelling in order to volunteer, throughout the time when they are volunteering, and to the point where they travel home again and re-integrate into the environment there. This way, one could gain insight into the ways in which existing relationships and surrounding structures might trigger the need to help or to go away and address precarious conditions. This could also give insight into how individuals who have been

volunteering in these kinds of environments might experience their relationship with their home society in a new way.

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