

TO WHERE THE CLOCK CHANGES

Migrant Illegalisation and its Consequences Along the France-UK Border

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Signed Declaration

I, Victoria Marie Tecca, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The history of British immigration control has culminated in the establishment and growth of informal, camp-like migrant settlements in northern France. Despite their proliferation across Europe, the current literature does not yet provide sufficient anthropological understanding of these spaces. To bridge this gap, this thesis draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2018 and 2019 exploring the intersections of violence and affect in one particular settlement, Dankix. Dankix is continuously built and rebuilt by its street homeless undocumented Kurdish residents, as they attempt to reach the United Kingdom in lorries and small boats.

Since the turn of the century, over 340 people have died along the France-UK border. This thesis examines the circumstances that lead to death in Dankix. It explores the way that different forms of violence are exerted upon people living in the settlement, how they are elucidated through interpersonal encounters, and how residents negotiate such a violent milieu in their bid to reach the UK. In addressing these issues, this research examines how structures of violence become (in)visible and shape the everyday. It focuses on the humanitarian encounter, smuggling and other money-making strategies, arrest and detention, embodiment, and border death to illustrate life and death within a setting to which, as yet, scholars have paid little attention.

This thesis shows that violence transforms the economy of affective attachments through which Dankix residents experience, mediate, and interpret the world around them, and their place within it. It draws out particularities of informal camps to show how key themes in migration literature, such as waiting, are complicated by this setting and its spatial politics. Finally, it argues that Dankix has become a space where death is misrecognised as inevitable. It concludes by making policy recommendations that, if implemented, would enable Dankix residents to seek asylum in the UK safely.

Impact Statement

This research will have a significant impact on the discipline. It is one of the first in-depth, ethnographic studies of an informal migrant tent settlement in Europe that focuses on the experiences of migrants and smugglers. As such, it furthers the conversations in both anthropology and migration studies by paving the way for future research into an understudied but key element of migration. As climate change and other ongoing crises – such as in Afghanistan and Ukraine – continue to force vast numbers of people to flee their homes, immigration policies in the European Union (EU) and United Kingdom (UK) are becoming ever more restrictive. Informal migrant tent settlements will continue to proliferate across Europe, increasing in number, size, and in their propensity for enabling violence against their residents. In addition to two forthcoming publications, I aim to continue to publish elements of this thesis in academic journals. I also aim to continue to disseminate my work to non-academic audiences, as an additional key impact of this thesis lies in its potential for influencing British policymakers.

The UK is currently undergoing a fundamental shift in its approach to immigration. When the UK was a member of the EU, British asylum policy followed the Common European Asylum System. Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU in 2020, British policymakers are faced with the challenge of formulating the post-Brexit plan for immigration. This is currently taking shape in the form of the Nationality and Borders Bill. As of the time of writing (in spring 2022), the Bill has been read in the House of Lords and is currently undergoing consideration of the Lords' amendments in the House of Commons.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has complicated this process. The crisis has led to millions of Ukraine residents fleeing their homes and seeking sanctuary in the EU and the UK. Hundreds of them are currently in northern France as they await a decision on their applications to enter the UK. Several Members of Parliament who previously supported the most restrictive measures of the Bill are now challenging the Home Secretary to create a more compassionate asylum system. This change is driven, in part, by a parallel softening of public opinion about (some) displaced people.

This context provides an opportunity to influence British asylum policy as it is being formulated. This thesis is directly relevant to the policies and measures outlined in the Bill because it provides insights about the needs and concerns of a group of people subject to British immigration and asylum policy. Elements of my research have already been used as evidence in submissions to the Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee, and in online publications written for use as further evidence. Several of my research participants have provided testimony in legal challenges against the UK Home Office for human rights violations committed against them while their claims to asylum were being processed. I aim to continue to disseminate my research in a manner that influences policy and public opinion.

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Glossary of Terms

<p>Kurdish terms</p>	<p>Dankix</p>	<p>Dankix is a phonetic adaptation of the French pronunciation of Dunkerque (Dunkirk, in English), the closest city to the small town of Grande-Synthe in which the tent settlement is located. The Kurdish name refers to a particular spatial relationship to the region and its various embedded mobilities that are specific to undocumented Kurdish migrants who spend time there as they attempt to cross the border into the UK. Dankix unites geographically disparate areas such as a nature reserve in which tents are erected, a gymnasium opened as a migrant shelter by city hall, a bridge under which unaccompanied minors sleep, a Halal shop in a neighbouring suburb and a migrant-friendly bar in Dunkirk's town centre, among others. The term Dankix encompasses these small islands of meaningful spaces and places in a way that the terms Dunkirk, Grande-Synthe, or 'the camp' do not.</p>
	<p>kochber / kochberan</p>	<p><i>Kochber</i> (singular) and <i>kochberan</i> (plural) refer, in Kurdish, to people who have moved abroad. The term does not distinguish between categories of migrant based upon stated intention and reasons for moving. See the Introduction for an explanation of the repeated use of this term throughout the thesis.</p>
	<p>panaber / panaberan</p>	<p><i>Panaber</i> (singular) and <i>panaberan</i> (plural) refer to people who have claimed asylum or been granted protection.</p>

	rega	<p>The <i>rega</i> literally means the ‘way’ but, when used in the context of migration, refers to the route from Kurdistan to and through Europe when on foot and (usually) using the paid assistance of smugglers. Crucially, it refers to the illegalisation of those along the <i>rega</i>. For instance, if someone manages to fly into Europe using a Schengen visa, they are said to have come by airplane, and not the <i>rega</i>. They did not have to run from police, sleep in a tent, or cross rough waters in a dinghy (unless, of course, they did not land in their final destination, and continued onwards on foot). The <i>rega</i>, in this way, connotes hardship while fostering a sense of brotherhood among those who have travelled its path, regardless of exact route.</p>
	derchwn	<p><i>Derchwn</i> literally translates to ‘to turn out,’ ‘to graduate,’ or ‘to pass’ but in this context refers to the mechanics of conducting a border crossing attempt. Once one has <i>derchw</i> they have successfully crossed to the United Kingdom. As a term, it connotes both movement and becoming.</p>
	paqla	<p><i>Paqla</i> is a derogatory term for ‘police.’ It also translates to ‘broad beans,’ which are typically cooked and sold in kiosks on the side of the road in Kurdistan. To call someone <i>paqla</i> is to call them unintelligent and useless. While police in Kurdistan are not often referred to as <i>paqla</i>, people on the <i>rega</i> use it to refer to European police officers.</p>

deport senter	<i>Deport senter</i> is the Kurdish name for an immigration detention and removal centre, itself a phonetic adaptation of the English term 'deportation centre.' For clarity, I use the anglicised term 'deport centre' throughout this thesis.
kaka / xanm	<i>Kaka</i> is a male mode of address. <i>Xanm</i> is a female mode of address.
bra / xwshk	<i>Bra</i> means 'brother' and <i>xwshk</i> means 'sister.' These terms usually refer to biological siblings, but are sometimes used between friends to indicate the closeness of their relationship.
mamosta	<i>Mamosta</i> is an honorific reserved for teachers.
miwandari	Hospitality in Kurdish is called <i>miwandari</i> (derived from the word guest, <i>miwan</i>). <i>Miwandari</i> is considered a moral obligation among Kurds and is commonly boasted about as one of the best aspects of <i>kurdawari</i> (Kurdish cultural tradition). 'Good' <i>miwandari</i> is to welcome someone into one's home, whether that be a neighbour or a foreigner, often for multiple days. In Kurdistan and among Kurds abroad, welcoming a guest is a legitimate reason not to go to work or to attend other commitments. Indeed, it is shameful for the guest to be alone at any point during their stay. Generous expressions of hospitality are intimately entwined with notions of morality. It is deeply insulting to the guest if they are not cared for adequately.
xoydeportkrdnewe	<i>Xoydeportkrdnewe</i> literally translates to 'self-deportation' and refers to return using a state-assisted programme. If not using a state-

		assisted programme, returning to Kurdistan is simply referred to as <i>chwnewe</i> , or ‘going back.’
Places	Kampeka	Literally meaning ‘the camp,’ Kampeka refers to a gymnasium opened by Grande-Synthe city hall on 27 December 2018 and used as a migrant shelter until its eviction on 17 September 2019. Kampeka was chronically overpopulated, and was consequently surrounded by hundreds of tents. The tent area is also referred to as ‘Kampeka.’
	Jangaleka	Jangaleka (a Kurdish adaptation of the Pashto word <i>dzhangal</i> , meaning ‘forest’) is the main area of settlement in Dankix. It lies in a man-made nature reserve known by French locals as Le Puythouck, which features a large lake, paved paths, forested areas intersected with walking trails, and a large car park called Saheka in Kurdish. In Jangaleka, tents are concentrated in forested areas, grassy fields, and dotted throughout peripheral spaces.
	Kampy Swtayeka	Kampy Swtayeka means ‘the burnt camp.’ It refers to the remnants of La Linière (a camp opened by Grande-Synthe city hall in 2016 until it was burnt down in 2017) and consists of a few large, burnt out buildings filled with rubble. Kampy Swtayeka lies just on the other side of the motorway from Jangaleka.
	Saheka	Saheka is Kurdish for a ‘wide, open space’ similar to a field. It refers to the car park in the middle of Jangaleka from where non-profit organisations distribute and provide first-aid medical support. It is, at times, considered a meeting point for those living in Dankix.

	Auchan	Auchan is a grocery and general goods super-store chain. There is an Auchan in a commercial shopping centre a fifteen-minute walk from Jangaleka.
Institutional terminology	UAM	UAM refers to an ‘unaccompanied minor,’ or someone who is under the age of 18 and who is not travelling with a parent or legal guardian.
	IP	An <i>Information Préoccupante</i> (IP) is a report of a child in danger, sent to the appropriate safeguarding body. It is a legal requirement to report a child in danger.
	SP	A <i>Signalement Parquet</i> (SP) is a referral to the judicial authority (e.g., a report sent to the public prosecutor) that a child is in danger.
	OQTF	An <i>Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français</i> (OQTF) is an Obligation to Leave French Territory, or a document stating the bearer must leave France. OQTFs are usually given to kochberan who have entered irregularly and communicate no desire to claim asylum in France. Kochberan use these documents as unofficial train tickets; ticket inspectors often allow migrants to ride trains without buying tickets when they present an OQTF because it can be claimed they are attempting to leave France.
	CRA	A <i>Centre de Rétention Administrative</i> (CRA) is an Administrative Retention Centre. Migrants are detained in these centres as they await deportation.
	PAF	The <i>Police aux Frontières</i> (PAF) or Border Police are a branch of the French National Police tasked with border control.

CRS	The <i>Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité</i> (CRS) or Republican Security Companies are a branch of the French National Police tasked with riot control.
Prefecture / prefect	The Nord department is a region in France encompassing Dunkirk and Lille. It is administered by the prefecture, which is itself headed by the prefect's office.
Subprefecture / subprefect	The Nord department is split into subprefectures. The relevant subprefecture is that of Dunkerque (Dunkirk), which is headed by the subprefect's office.
<i>Mise à l'abris</i>	<i>Mise à l'abris</i> means to 'shelter' and refers to the French term used by public officials to describe evictions. Evictions can only be legally justified if they are shown to shelter the homeless. Hence, evictions are called 'sheltering' operations (<i>mise à l'abris</i>).
KRG	The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is the government of Southern Kurdistan – the semiautonomous region of Kurdistan that lies within Iraq's borders.
PUK	The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is one of the two main political parties of the KRG.
KDP	The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is one of the two main political parties of the KRG.
KRI	The semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq is called the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).
AME	<i>Aide médicale d'état</i> (AME, State Medical Aid) refers to a social assistance programme in France that provides healthcare coverage for people who have had fixed residence in France

		for at least three months. Kochberan are ineligible for AME.
	La PASS	<i>Les permanences d'accès aux soins de santé</i> (la PASS, Healthcare access points) is a social programme in France created in 1998 to facilitate access to the healthcare system for people in precarious situations, as part of a programme aimed at improving access to care. It intended for anyone without health coverage (including citizens and foreign nationals). In practice in Dunkirk Hospital it is used almost exclusively by kochberan because other services are available to those who can prove long-term fixed residence.

Note on Anonymity

All names have been changed to protect the identities of those who participated in this research, except in two instances where it was requested otherwise and deemed ethical and safe to do so. At times, however, the use of a pseudonym did not sufficiently anonymise participants. In these cases, where appropriate, details about their background, characteristics, and circumstances have also been changed. In pursuit of anonymisation, some people presented here as individuals are, in reality, amalgamations of several people.

CHAPTER ONE | Introduction

On the night of the incident that led to his death, Wlat crawled out of his small, one-man tent to look for his cousin. It was nearly midnight, but the temperature had only just begun to fall. It was an unusually hot May: some days that week had seen temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius. What is more, his tent trapped the sun's rays and magnified his body heat. The cool breeze outside was a welcome reprieve from this suffocating warmth.

Wlat began to walk through the maze of tents that surrounded his shelter, picking his way carefully so as not to trip on the guy lines that criss-crossed the pathways between the tents. All around, men mostly in their twenties and thirties were milling about, dimly lit by cooking fires and the occasional burning shopping cart from the nearby supermarket, set alight for warmth as the temperature dropped. He greeted a group of his friends nearby, who were busy building a fire from logs they had hauled over from the nearby forest using one of the shopping carts. They had placed their tents in a circle, facing one another, and dug a hole in the middle. They placed ripped t-shirts, plastic bottles, and other rubbish in the hole, and covered it strategically with thin sticks. After setting it alight, they placed two logs across the top so that they would catch the flames. Once satisfied with their fire, they began chopping onions and chicken liver to cook for their dinner.

He continued past his friends. His cousin was travelling with his wife and children, and so was living in the family area. The tent settlement, while seemingly haphazard in its planning, was organised according to gender and kinship. Single men, who – then and now – make up the vast majority of those living there, set up their tents in one area and single women and families erected theirs in another. To reach the family area from the men's area he had to walk past the smugglers' cafés. The cafés were sprawling, impressive structures, built from logs, tarpaulin, and blankets and containing furniture – even entire sofas. A few of those working in the cafés had acquired generators and used them to power kitchen equipment, such as refrigerators and gas stoves. He stopped by one of the cafés to have a cup of tea, sold alongside coffee, cigarettes, food, and shisha. As he paid for his drink, he caught the eye of his smuggler. He called him over and had a quick chat to confirm that everything was still ready for that evening. His smuggler told him to be at the petrol station just outside the settlement at two o'clock in the morning.

He had plenty of time, and so Wlat continued onwards to see his cousin. As he left the cafés behind, themselves lit by strings of colourful fairy lights, the path ahead through the tents became darker. He pulled his phone out of his pocket and turned on the torch, shining it ahead to avoid tripping on the pairs of flip-flops left outside each tent. He quickly reached his cousin's tent, a tall, round structure, and called out for him. His cousin unzipped the flap and welcomed him inside, where the rest of the family were sitting cross-legged around a long piece of cardboard, atop which was laid a few black bin bags (to protect their blankets) and plates full of food. The family had just returned from attempting a border crossing. They had only had the chance to try one lorry. One of their smugglers had managed to open its back doors, revealing a truckful of tomatoes. Before they could climb inside, however, police showed up and told them to head back to the train station, as they were patrolling that car park all night. Before leaving, the family snuck about a dozen tomatoes from the lorry. When they returned to their tent, they fried the tomatoes in some oil with eggs, and were scooping them out of the pan with pieces of baguette when Wlat arrived.

Wlat took off his shoes and crouched as he entered their tent. They ate and chatted together for just over an hour, recounting stories about their hometown. They are from Soran, a city that lies in the heart of Kurdistan. Technically, it is near the northernmost point of *Bashur* (Southern Kurdistan) – or the region of Kurdistan that lies within Iraq's borders. Driving north takes you across the border into *Bakur* (Northern Kurdistan), the region of Kurdistan controlled by Turkey, and east lies *Rojhelat*¹ (Eastern Kurdistan), or the region occupied by Iran, as the figure below illustrates.

¹ *Bashur* literally translates to 'south,' *Bakur* to 'north,' *Rojhelat* to 'east,' and *Rojewe* to 'west' (which refers to the region of Kurdistan that lies within Syria's borders). Throughout this thesis I refer to these regions as, for instance, Southern Kurdistan, to align with the Kurdish terminology. Rejecting the terms Iraqi, Turkish, Iranian, and Syrian Kurdistan is an intentionally political choice that reflects the notion that Kurdistan is a region split between four nation-states, rather than four separate regions of those nation-states.



Figure 1 - Map of Kurdish-inhabited areas; image by author, adapted from CIA, 2002.

What had left Kurdistan around two years before with the aim of reaching the United Kingdom (UK). He wanted to claim asylum in the UK but had no way of doing so unless he reached the British mainland, the reasons for which will be outlined below. In order to do that, he made his way to and through Europe, partly on foot and partly with the paid assistance of smugglers. This pathway of migration is called the *rega*² in Sorani Kurdish, the language predominantly spoken in Bashur and Rojhelat. The *rega* literally means the ‘way’ but, when used in this context, refers to the route itself and the illegalisation of its travellers. For instance, if someone who aims to seek asylum in Europe secures a Schengen visa and flies directly into the European Union (EU), they are said to have come by airplane, and not the *rega*. They did not have to run from police, sleep in a tent, or cross rough waters in a dinghy (unless, of course, they did not land in their final destination, and must continue onwards on foot). The *rega*, in this way, connotes hardship while fostering a sense of brotherhood among those who have travelled its path, regardless of exact route. What had managed to make it along the *rega* all the way to northern France.

² I repeat certain Kurdish words, such as *rega*, throughout this thesis. While I often include brief versions of their translations, refer to the Glossary of Terms for comprehensive interpretations and explanations.

He had passed through Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Italy, and several other countries before arriving in an area known in Kurdish as Dankix. He had only one more border to cross: that which lies between France and the UK.

After spending some time with his cousin's family, Wlat stood up and hugged their children to say goodbye. His cousin told him that if he was not stopped at border control, to let them know as soon as the clock on his phone changed to British time. When the hour turns back is when one knows that they have crossed into the UK. They are then free to alert the authorities of their arrival and, subsequently, to claim asylum. The title of this thesis, *To Where the Clock Changes*, refers to this moment of passage between France and the UK. Those living in the tent settlement are forever oriented towards and fixated upon this moment. This fixation has a temporal element; the experience of the present is profoundly shaped by aspirations and imaginaries about life on 'the other side' of that invisible line. Indeed, that is what it is called in Kurdish: *lew ber*, 'the other side.' France is called *lam ber*, 'this side.' The experience of *being* on this side is, for those who wish to cross, inexorably about *becoming* by reaching the other side.

Wlat finished saying his goodbyes to his cousin's family and exited the tent, stepping out into the darkness of the night. The petrol station was only a few minutes' walk from the tent settlement. It was the only smuggling territory that was so close by and easily accessible. Most other territories were a few hours' walk away, or required train, van, or bus journeys. He reached it quickly and found the man working for his smuggler, who was huddled in the forest at the edge of the petrol station, with a few other men who would attempt to cross as well. They stayed hidden for a while, away from the floodlights that lit up the car park. Lorries and cars raced past on the A16 motorway heading towards Calais and its two ports of entry to the UK: the ferry and Eurotunnel terminals. The vehicles, however, only seldom took the slip road to the station. After a long wait, a white lorry slowed along the motorway and made its way towards them. It moved around and past the petrol pumps and reached the beginning of the exit ramp. Before returning to the motorway, however, it rolled to a stop, a hiss of air emanating from its machinery. The driver jumped out and stood on the road for a moment, peering into the darkness along the edges of the pavement. Seemingly satisfied that nobody was there, he turned and walked towards the petrol station, entering through the sliding doors.

The man working for Wlat's smuggler quickly darted out from the bushes, broke the lock on the back of the lorry, and opened its back doors. Using his phone's torch, he inspected its contents and read the delivery slip attached to the inside of one of its doors. Before he could signal to the others, however, the sliding doors to the petrol station opened and the driver emerged. The man working for the smuggler quickly pulled the doors until they were nearly closed and ran back into the forest to tell the rest of the group that the delivery slip said the lorry was destined for the UK. They watched as the driver climbed back into his rig and turned on the ignition, readying themselves to run. As soon as the lorry began to move, the men sprung out from the forest and ran towards the back doors. The vehicle's movement swung the back doors open once more. Wlat, running faster than the rest, made it to the lorry just as it was picking up speed. He grabbed the bottom of the freight container and hoisted himself up and inside. The lorry, however, swerved slightly as it made its way along the curved ramp leading back to the motorway. It sped up quickly, knocking Wlat off balance. He fell backwards, out of the container, and landed on his back on the pavement.

Moments later, a woman who had been filling up her car at the station found him as she drove towards the off-ramp to re-join the motorway. He was unconscious and unresponsive. She called the police, who arrived with an ambulance that took him to the hospital in Dunkirk. From there, he was airlifted to the hospital in Lille, which had a better-equipped neurosurgery department. He was found to have a severe traumatic brain injury, was induced into a coma, and placed on a ventilator. He remained in a coma for three weeks until the medical staff were certain that the damage was irreversible and that he would never recover. At this point, they withdrew life support and he passed away.

Wlat's death is one of at least 340 others who died while attempting to reach the UK from northern France from 1999 until the time of writing (Calais Migrant Solidarity, 2022; Institute of Race Relations, 2020).³ Fifty-one of these deaths occurred while I was conducting fieldwork in Dankix in 2018 and 2019. Several months after Wlat passed away, two men named Rebin and Hemn drowned during a boat crossing attempt. My research participants and I were involved in their lives,

³ The time of writing is spring 2022. This number (340) includes only those deaths reported in the media and by state officials. The actual figure could, therefore, be higher.

deaths, and the repatriation of their remains to varying degrees, and these experiences profoundly shaped the research from which this thesis is formed.

In this thesis, I examine the circumstances that led to death in Dankix. I demonstrate the ways that border death lies at the end of a spectrum of violence enabled by the constitution of Dankix – including its spatial extensions such as the Channel – as a ‘space of death’ (Taussig, 1984). In doing so, I analyse an array of different forms of violence as they operate within and present themselves through various aspects of everyday life. Violence might be seen as scalar, in that it is produced in multiple forms that range from the structural and overarching to the interpersonal, yet systemic violence is often experienced in intimate ways. The logic and structures of border control that led to Wlat’s death, for instance, form part of a centuries-long history of global, colonial, and racist violence. Scholars of migration and law comprehensively demonstrate that the very existence of borders and immigration control in the UK is one of the strongest contemporary expressions of Empire (El-Enany, 2020; Mayblin and Turner, 2020). I now turn to the historical and theoretical context framing Dankix and its inhabitants so as to situate my research before outlining its aims.

A brief historical overview

British immigration policy was first developed in its white-settler colonies such as Canada, South Africa, and Australia and, therefore, in the context of white emigration from Britain in the nineteenth century (Patel, I. S., 2021b). As a white supremacist tactic of domination, settlers created immigration restrictions to exclude South Asians – who were racialised as ‘Asiatic’ – from also migrating to these territories (Atkinson, 2016). As Ian Sanjay Patel puts it, there was, and is, a “mutually reinforcing and enabling relationship between migration and empire” (2021a).

This enabling relationship was further solidified in the post-war period with the introduction of various British Nationality Acts. The first, in 1948, was developed as a way in which Britain could maintain its Empire – including the phenomenon of colonial subjecthood – in the new global political system dominated by the nation-state (Patel, I. S., 2021b). The Act attempted to achieve this by defining British nationality: it granted the same rights of citizenship to Britons and colonial subjects,

therefore also granting the same rights of entry and residency (El-Enany, 2020). Part of Britain's imperial strategy of control was to construct its mainland as the 'mother country' of its colonial subjects and, as a consequence, many began to move to where they had long been told was their homeland (Thandi, 2007). After 1948 and in response to this subsequent period of immigration from the colonies to Britain, various racially discriminatory Acts of parliament restricted rights of entry and residency and "saw the tiering of British nationality along racial lines" (Patel, I. S., 2021a). Finally, the 1981 British Nationality Act reversed the 1948 decision entirely and bordered the British mainland – and its inhabitants – as distinct from those in its colonies in a move to prohibit racialised people from entry (El-Enany, 2020). The 1981 Act operated upon and promoted a white supremacist logic that created "Britain as a domestic space of colonialism in which colonial wealth is principally an entitlement of Britons, conjured as white, and in which poor racialised people are disproportionately policed, marginalised, expelled and killed" (*ibid.*: 14).

The contemporary asylum system is now one of the only ways in which people (largely racialised as black and brown) can enter and reside in the UK from non-Commonwealth, non-EU territories such as Kurdistan, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Eritrea, and many others. It is designed to filter those 'deserving' of asylum from 'bogus' asylum seekers. Britons, imagined as a white polity, are constructed as having a right to the spoils of empire through the rhetoric surrounding – and material effects of – immigration policy (*ibid.*)⁴ These spoils are often discussed today in terms of public funds and services. Home Secretary Priti Patel's 2021 speech to the Commons concerning the newly introduced Nationality and Borders Bill exemplifies this well: "[t]he British people have had enough of open borders and uncontrolled migration. Enough of a failed asylum system that costs the taxpayer over a billion pounds a year...Enough of economic migrants pretending to be genuine refugees" (UK Home Office and Patel, 2021).

Irregular Channel crossings are not new. People have crossed the Channel with the aim of securing refuge for centuries, including 250,000 Belgian refugees who landed in Folkestone during the First World War between 1914 and 1918, and amid the Reformation in the early 16th century when thousands on the continent fled

⁴ For a discussion of how Britain's colonisation (and later, occupation) of Iraq has contributed to the creation of the circumstances in Kurdistan from which people in Dankix have fled, see Appendix A.

to England (with Catholics simultaneously fleeing to France) (Davies, et al., 2021). However, over the decades, as British policymakers attempted to close off the UK's borders from those Britain had previously colonised, the perception of and connotations attached to the notion of asylum underwent a significant shift. When the 1951 Refugee Convention was ratified by the colonial and settler-colonial powers in the United Nations (UN), it was done so in a context where refugees were defined solely as displaced Europeans. This was, in part, because racialised colonial subjects were not considered fully human, and therefore not entitled to human rights (*ibid*). In the post-war period, however, more and more states gained their independence from colonial powers and took their place in the UN. Many, including representatives from India, Pakistan, and Chile, for instance, consistently challenged the territorial restrictions placed on refugee rights. These challenges, framed using the language of anti-colonialism, led to the UN lifting the territorial restriction in 1967 (Abuya, et al., 2021).

Since the 1990s, those arriving in Europe after fleeing conflict are largely no longer (non)racialised as white nor coming from neighbouring countries on the continent (Mayblin, 2019). In response, over the past two decades policymakers and the media began to construct asylum not as a humanitarian or political matter, but rather as a system under threat of economic migrants; “[a]sylum applicants are construed as ‘illegal’ or ‘bogus’ irregular migrants who have yet to be found out” (*ibid.*: 57). The Home Office has responded to the presence of would-be asylum seekers at its southern border – like Wlat – by constructing them as an existential and economic threat to Britain and its people. In tandem, it has also created an increasingly militarised border zone with the stated aim of reducing the number of arrivals.

Contemporary policy

This history of British immigration control has culminated in the establishment and growth of migrant settlements in northern France. These settlements, such as Dankix, began with the introduction of juxtaposed controls between the UK and France (as well as Belgium and the Netherlands). This refers to a package of policies (developed through the Sangatte Protocol, 1991; Sangatte Additional

Protocol, 2000; and Le Touquet Treaty, 2003) that effectively have externalised the British border by placing it in France. Border controls now take place before embarking on a journey to the UK, rather than upon arrival as is customary. The initial Protocol gives each state's border agents the power to carry out controls, arrests, and to detain in designated zones in the other states' territories. The UK has since built four short-term holding facilities in northern France (two in Coquelles, one in Calais, and one in Loon-Plage near Dunkirk). These facilities are considered British territory, but articles in the Protocol and Treaty prohibit people from claiming asylum as if they were in the UK. This key policy decision, and its consequences, will be revisited in Chapter Four.

People seeking asylum therefore have no means by which to travel legally to the UK and claim asylum at a port of entry; they must instead reach British territory through irregular means. Upon the establishment of juxtaposed controls, crossing the border became increasingly difficult, and migrants who were unable to cross on their first attempt built informal tent settlements near the ports of Calais, Caen, and Loon-Plage (near Dunkirk), and near motorways leading to these ports. At various times, state actors such as the French Minister of the Interior or the mayor of Grande-Synthe (the town in which lies Dunkirk) have attempted to formalise these camps in partnership with humanitarian organisations. This was the case, for instance, with the Red Cross Sangatte Centre from 1999 to 2002, and the Médecins Sans Frontières-supported camp called La Linière from 2016 to 2017 (see Fassin, 2005).

Since the demolition of the Sangatte Centre in 2002, the UK government, in collaboration with its counterparts in France, has hyper-secured its southern border. Since 2010, the UK has spent at least £484.9 million on the development of deterrence mechanisms such as border security measures, the expansion and application of border technologies and infrastructure, contracts with private for-profit security firms, and support for French asylum seeker reception facilities (Darmanin and Patel, 2021; Parliamentary Answer, 2020; Sandhurst Treaty, 2018; UK Home Office, 2017). These technologies include border fences, infrared cameras and X-ray technology, vehicle scanning equipment, biometric controls, surveillance drones, sniffer dogs, heartbeat detectors, and carbon dioxide probes (Akkerman, 2019; Patel, P., 2021; UK Home Office, 2013). In 2020, the Home Secretary appointed Dan O'Mahoney, a former military commando, to the newly created position of UK

Clandestine Channel Threat Commander. In 2022, the UK government announced that it had commissioned the Ministry of Defence as an operational partner in reducing immigration via small boats in the Channel (Patel, P., 2022). As Thom Davies, et al. argue in their historical analysis of the UK government's aspirational rhetoric of dealing with migrants 'offshore,' these technologies and deterrence mechanisms have a long colonial history: maritime law has always played a central role in managing mobilities within the British Empire (2021).

At the time of my fieldwork in 2018 and 2019, the UK had not yet left the European Union (EU). It was, therefore, still beholden to the Common European Asylum System which largely dictated its policy approach to asylum and routes of passage. A key piece of legislation within this System is the Dublin III Regulation, which is a mechanism used to distribute asylum applications across the EU by identifying the Member State responsible for an asylum claim (EC No 604, 2013). It takes into account a range of factors such as family unity and the best interests of any children involved, but usually determines that the first Member State in which an asylum seeker entered is the State that should deal with their claim to asylum. It does not differentiate between States and assumes that all are equally 'safe' for those seeking asylum. It includes a provision for family reunification but requires that the applicant be an unaccompanied minor and considers only immediate relatives as family.

An applicant's 'first country of entry' is recorded using the Eurodac database. Upon arrival in a Member State, undocumented people may be fingerprinted. Their details are entered into the Eurodac database, which is accessible by all other States. If someone were, for instance, to arrive in Europe via Italy and is fingerprinted at the border but then travels to France and claims asylum, France will usually send a request to Italy for them to take charge of the claim to asylum. This is called a Dublin transfer (named after the Regulation). In the UK, the number of incoming Dublin transfers historically has been much higher than the number of outgoing Dublin transfers. For instance, in 2019 the number of asylum seekers with Eurodac fingerprints who were deported from the UK to their 'first country of entry' was 263, while the number of incoming transfers was 714 (UK Home Office, 2020). Regardless of these relatively low numbers, as will become clear throughout this thesis, many of my research participants were acutely afraid of being fingerprinted because of the related risk of being deported upon arrival in the UK.

This hyper-securitisation and militarisation of the France-UK border, coupled with the Home Secretary's refusal to create other routes by which people may seek asylum in the UK, has made it virtually impossible to cross without the paid assistance of smugglers who have learned how to evade detection by these technologies. It also means that those attempting to cross often make dozens of unsuccessful attempts before eventually making it over the border. These political decisions have led to the growth and persistence of informal tent settlements built as temporary living spaces by people in transit as they attempt to cross the border. In France, both the spaces and their residents are illegalised by state policy.

Theorising the camp

Despite their ubiquity across Europe, informal camp settlements have been largely neglected in anthropological studies of displacement and in the wider migration studies literature. Such studies have instead focused disproportionately on formalised camp spaces such as refugee camps, asylum seeker housing, and reception centres. Much of this research is influenced by Giorgio Agamben's theorisation of the camp as a 'space of exception' (1998). Agamben, who developed his theory through an examination of Nazi concentration camps, argues that the encamped refugee embodies the Roman figure of *homo sacer*, who is exiled from society and denied human rights (*ibid*). In this way, both the refugee and the camp are included in society through this exclusion, defining the camp population in direct opposition to its surrounding locale. The rule of law in the camp is suspended indefinitely by a sovereign power, reducing the *homo sacer* to bare life, stripped of political identity and able only to biologically survive.

Agamben's theorisation of the camp is echoed extensively in the literature on formal camps, or those created and managed by the state or humanitarian organisations. Space and movement in such camps are managed by population counts, restricted entry and exit, or externally designated material distributions (Hyndman, 2000; Ilcan, 2014; Jaji, 2011; Malkki, 1992). These camps are understood as sites of Foucauldian governmentality through spatial, material, and biological control (Lippert, 1999). However, a growing body of work – which scholars have termed 'post-Agambenian' – critiques such a reading of camps as reductive of

“acts of resistance and agency by those in the camp” to “silent expressions of bare life or illegitimate acts of terrorism,” trivialising everyday practice as insignificant (Owens, 2009; Ramadan, 2013: 71). ‘Post-Agambenian’ scholars aim to overcome the dichotomisation of camp residents as *either* entirely subjugated by *or* resistant to the spaces and structures of power in which they operate. They do this by accounting for complex social relations in the camp as elucidated through everyday practice (Feldman, 2015; McConnachie, 2016; Owens, 2009; Redclift, 2013; Sigona, 2015). These studies still, however, remain rooted in Agamben’s initial theorisations surrounding spatiality, power, and exclusion (Martin, et al., 2020). My research takes its place among this growing body of work by centring moments of intimacy, contradiction, and complexity. In doing so, it reveals how Dankix both fulfils the needs of its inhabitants (by facilitating border crossing) while also serving the aims of an authoritative institution (by facilitating the state’s ability to exclude, expel, and control).

Although it remains scarce, the majority of the literature on informal camp-like spaces has emerged from the post-Agambenian turn. Of these informal spaces, the New Calais Jungle (as it existed before its demolition in 2016) arguably has attracted the most attention. Even so, studies of the New Calais Jungle are conducted primarily with the participation not of its residents, but rather of the Europeans who co-populate this space such as French ‘No Borders’ anarchists (see, e.g., Millner, 2011; Rigby and Schlembach, 2013) and aid workers or volunteers (see, e.g., Agier, et al., 2018; Rygiel, 2011; 2012; Sandri, 2018). Research conducted with those living in makeshift tent settlements along (and which form) European routes of migration is beginning to emerge, yet is mostly confined to studies of urban and camp geographies (see, e.g., Davies and Isakjee, 2015; Mandić, 2021; Minca, 2015; Mould, 2017; Katz, 2017).

Consequently, the current literature does not yet provide sufficient anthropological understanding of the particularities of informal camp-like spaces, despite their proliferation across Europe. My research works towards bridging this gap and, in doing so, turns towards existing sub-fields in anthropology that are much further developed, including most prominently studies of violence. The literature on violence provides a wealth of comparable contexts which help to illuminate certain phenomena that may otherwise remain obscured. Throughout this thesis I look, for example, to border zones surrounding the United States and Australia (Boochani,

2018b; De León, 2015; Holmes, 2013). These states share with the UK their use of migration deterrence mechanisms that ‘funnel’ would-be asylum seekers into ever more dangerous settings, such as the desert, the open ocean, and the Channel. I also look to other environments in which people and their living spaces are illegalised, such as in makeshift tent settlements built by people who are homeless in the United States (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009). Often, the forms of violence that permeate life in informal migrant camps are much more similar to those which have been documented among other people living street homeless – rather than among other migrant groups. As a final example, I also look to other instances in which people are dependent on others to fulfil acute material needs. Studies that take place among welfare service users, for instance, also show striking similarities to certain aspects of everyday life in Dankix (Auyero, 2011). Due to the varied nature of the literature upon which I draw, I include below a brief review of the theories of violence that I most commonly apply. I then review relevant theories of affect to establish the way that I conceptualise emotions, feelings, and affect throughout the thesis. Later chapters engage with the literature concerning other key topics.

Theorising violence

I will not attempt to identify exactly what constitutes violence; it is an ambiguous category that is perhaps best understood to be “in the eye of the beholder,” as Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois put it (2004: 2). I am more interested, instead, in how violence – in its many forms – operates, is interpreted, and has a range of affective and evidentiary consequences. This interest in violence was developed through conversations with those who participated in this research. In fact, before setting out for Dankix I had not planned for violence to be my central analytical point. I had initially hoped to better understand how people living in Dankix form and maintain digitally mediated relationships. Yet as I became embedded in the daily lives of my research participants and began to conduct interviews, I was often met with confusion: “[w]hy are you asking me about this? This isn’t interesting. I want to talk about what the government is doing to us.” While, indeed, my topic may have been interesting to anthropologists, it was unimportant to my participants because there was something much more pressing at hand. Almost exclusively, they wanted

me to examine violence. In defining violence, my research participants sometimes framed it as above, “what the government is doing to us,” and at other times simply spread their arms and asked me to look at them, at their clothing, to smell them. Some waved out to Dankix, to the tents, cooking fires, and people walking around. Others pointed to the bruises and cuts they developed after they were beaten by police officers. Still others said violence was their persistent cough and maddening headaches. While violence as a term may be ambiguous, it can be obvious despite its plurality of scale and form. The following theorisations of violence (structural and symbolic) are helpful for two reasons: (1) to wade through this plurality and (2) to identify the processes by which violence is produced. These theorisations are powerful, I believe, because they reveal that violence is the outcome of a series of decisions, and that what is produced can be changed.

Structural violence

The concept of structural violence was first named as such by sociologist Johan Galtung. Despite the elusive nature of ‘violence’ itself as a concept, he formulated a convincing start to its definition: “[v]iolence is [...] the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is” (1969: 168). To cite one of his examples, someone dying from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century – in France, for instance – did not necessarily constitute violence, as such a death was largely unavoidable. Someone dying from tuberculosis in France today, however, can be considered violent as the medical infrastructure exists to avoid such a death. Similarly, Wlat’s death as he attempted to cross a border that thousands of people cross, unharmed, each day, constitutes violence.

Violence, according to Galtung, requires “a subject, an object, and an action” (*ibid.*: 169). At times there is no clear subject of violence – or enactor – that can be traced back to a single person or group of people, but violence still exists. In these cases, violence is likely inbuilt into the political, institutional, and cultural structures that shape our lives. This most often occurs not only when services such as education and medical care are unevenly distributed, but especially when “*the power to decide over the distribution of resources* is unevenly distributed” (*ibid.*: 171, emphasis mine). Structural violence, therefore, is that which is wielded systematically, indirectly, and sometimes latently (Farmer, 2004). As Victoria

Canning puts it in the context of the structural violence inherent to the British asylum system, “[w]hen there is capacity for people to live free from suffering, but no political will exists to implement change to alleviate such suffering, structural violence is present” (2017: 48).

Several times throughout this Introduction I have employed the term ‘illegalised’ in reference to the relationship between migrants, the settlement, and the state as an actor. While the word’s meaning is easily understandable, I am specifically referencing the work of Nicholas De Genova wherein he argues that migrant ‘illegality’ cannot be analysed only in terms of its consequences, but instead as a process of ‘illegalisation’ or “the legal production of migrant ‘illegality’” (2002: 429; De Genova and Roy, 2020). State policy and practice produce illegality by restructuring the way migrants are legally categorised, based upon means of entry and stated intention, while also relying on measures that aim to deter immigration (De Genova, 2006). Violence is, in this way, embedded into the very ways in which the state is imagined as a sovereign power, bounded from outsiders to protect those and their property within (Weber and Pickering, 2011). Illegalisation, upon which border controls rely, is the primary form of structural violence from which all other violence springs in Dankix. From an examination of both the processes and consequences of illegalisation – through the lens of structural violence and other theorisations that follow – begins to emerge how Wlat, Rebin, and Hemn were exposed to death (Mbembe, 2019). As Shahram Khosravi puts it while quoting Jonathan Inda, “borders do not kill or want immigrants to die but are ‘willing to tolerate casualties’” (2010: 29).

Symbolic violence

Throughout this thesis I also continually make use of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence. The unhindered reproduction of structures of violence are in part enabled by their normalisation. In a preface to the English edition of *Masculine Domination* (2001), Bourdieu examines how perceived gendered differences in contemporary Western society become normalised and asks, “what are the *historical* mechanisms responsible for the *relative dehistoricization* and *eternalization* of the structure of sexual division” (vii-viii, emphasis in original)? In response, he developed the theory of symbolic violence as a means by which to understand how the

dominant social order comes to be understood as the way things have always been, and therefore the way things always will and should remain. If, as Galtung argues, violence occurs when the gap between 'actual' and 'potential' realisation is avoidable, symbolic violence is that which works towards making violence seem entirely *unavoidable*. It masks violence by making us believe that today's conditions are inevitable and, indeed, natural.

The theory of symbolic violence is founded upon Bourdieu's assertion that humans perceive the world according to our *habitus*, or our learned and embedded skills, dispositions, and comportment, as well as through *doxa*, our mental structure of preconceptions (1977). In combination, *habitus* and *doxa* as developed in specific social fields render the dominant social order self-evident and natural-seeming. Structures of power, injustice, and oppression involved in this social order are therefore collectively 'misrecognised' as self-evident and are, in turn, reproduced in social practice and everyday interaction (Bourdieu, 2000). This misrecognition is a process by which power relations are perceived in a way that makes them legible and legitimate to the person who confronts them (*ibid*).

I briefly illustrate this by returning to the example of illegalisation. Crucially, illegalisation implies the ability to change one's juridical status. In Dankix, for instance, an undocumented migrant's presence in France is considered to be *régularisé* (regularised or legalised) when she presents herself to the state either to claim asylum or to enrol in a state-assisted return programme. Examining how illegalisation also operates as a form of symbolic violence, then, reveals how it seeks to 'blame' illegalised people for the forms of violence to which they are subject. Illegalisation works by framing the reason for the violence experienced by undocumented people as their decision not to legalise their status. It transforms violence into an issue of the individual, rather than a structural process. This form of violence sometimes seems small or soft: it occurs, for example, when a British immigration official visiting Dankix sighs and laments to me, "But France is *safe*, why do they not just claim asylum? Then their children would not be playing in the dirt; they would not be detained all the time." As will be demonstrated throughout the chapters, many of those living in Dankix express a similar sentiment. Many accept that they have not claimed asylum and therefore agree that they should be subject to arrest and detention. In this way, "the asymmetries comprising the social world are thus made invisible, taken for granted, normal *for all involved*" (Holmes, 2013: 157;

emphasis mine). This is not to say that this is not complex; as will be shown in Chapter Four, those living in Dankix have heterogenous perceptions of their 'place' in Europe.

While I consistently return to structural and symbolic violence as ways of understanding some of the types of violence that are produced and experienced in Dankix, I also make use of Behrouz Boochani's 'Manus Prison Theory' (2018b), Nancy Scheper-Hughes' 'everyday violence' (1993), Achille Mbembe's 'necropolitics' (2019), Jason De León's related 'necroviolence' (2015), and Michael Taussig's 'culture of terror' and 'space of death' (1984). For brevity and clarity, these theories will be outlined in the chapters where they are applied. I now turn to a review of relevant theorisations of affect to establish how I define the relationship between affect and emotions.

Theorising affect

This thesis is primarily concerned with how structures of violence become visible and shape the everyday. It takes wider, overarching narratives – such as illegalisation – and unpicks how they play out through interpersonal encounters in Dankix. These various scales of violence have been aptly conceptualised by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois as a continuum (2004). I aim to illustrate the relationship between the structural and the intimate – how they are bridged along this continuum – through an examination of affect. While some scholars, such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, argue that affect is pre-linguistic, I have found that it has, in fact, given me the *language* to express and examine that which might otherwise be lost or flattened in a study of violence (1987 [1980]).

Violence is articulated and interpreted by my research participants at various times through humour, sensoriality, indignity, joy, and grief. As is referenced throughout the chapters, these emotional states are further mediated and expressed through the digital: through memes circulated via social media, online forums and groups, and in voice-notes, text messages, and video calls. Just as with violence, 'affect' evades definition. It is a discursively slippery sensation that moves through and between people as they encounter one another. Theoretically it is sometimes distinguished from 'emotions,' whereby emotions are considered individual

sensations and affects are seen as preconscious and transmissible. I have found that it is empirically useful, however, instead to collapse these two categories and focus on what emotions *do*, to borrow Sara Ahmed's phrase (2004). For the purposes of this thesis, I consider emotions not as feelings, sensations, or dispositions that are contained within the individual, but as having the ability to move through people (and places, and objects) in tangible ways with concrete effects (Navaro-Yashin, 2009). Affects can be transmitted through our contact with these places, objects, and other people. To put it simply, as Teresa Brennan asks, "Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and *felt* the atmosphere?" (2004: 1, emphasis mine).

Affect's concern with movement provokes a parallel understanding of the body itself not as individual, contained, and closed off, but as "characterized more by reciprocity and co-participation" (Blackman, 2012: 2). Affect flows through us, binding us together or ripping us apart, because the body participates in this movement. Crucially, although affect is considered preconscious, non-intentional, and autonomous, it is not pre-social (Massumi, 1995). As Brian Massumi argues, "[t]he body doesn't just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it infolds *contexts*, it infolds volitions and cognitions that are nothing if not situated" (*ibid.*: 90-91, emphasis in original). In other words, we both affect the world and are affected by it in culturally- and socially-informed ways (Clough and Halley, 2007). The circulation of affect within and between groups of people can be understood as a productive form of encounter that has the capacity to "unravel subjectivity and modify the political body" (Williams, 2010: 246). In theorising how emotions circulate, are unevenly distributed throughout those living in Dankix, and are embodied, I make repeated use of Ahmed's theory of 'affective economies' and engage more deeply with affect in the chapters that follow (2004). Having historically contextualised Dankix and having summarised my theoretical purview, I outline the aims and methods of this research below.

Research aims

I ask the following: What are some of the particularities of informal 'camps'? What leads to and surrounds death along the France-UK border? This question provokes

the following: What forms of violence are exerted upon people living in Dankix? How are different forms of violence elucidated through interpersonal encounters? How are they, in turn, interpreted, mediated, and experienced affectively? Before moving through to the chapters that begin to respond to these questions, I turn to a description of Dankix as a field site, my methodology, and an outline of this thesis.

Dankix

The makeshift settlement in which the research was conducted is referred to in Sorani Kurdish as 'Dankix.' Dankix is a phonetic adaptation of the French pronunciation of Dunkerque (Dunkirk, in English), the closest city to the small town of Grande-Synthe in which the settlement is located. The Kurdish name refers to a particular spatial relationship to the region and its various embedded mobilities that are specific to undocumented Kurdish migrants who spend time there as they attempt to cross the border into the UK. Dankix unites geographically disparate areas such as a nature reserve in which tents are erected, a gymnasium opened as a migrant shelter by city hall, a bridge under which unaccompanied minors sleep, a Halal shop in a neighbouring suburb, and a migrant-friendly bar in Dunkirk's town centre, among others. The term 'Dankix' encompasses these small islands of meaningful spaces and places in a way that the terms 'Dunkirk,' 'Grande-Synthe,' or 'the camp' do not.

Dankix changes location and form seasonally and according to the ever-shifting border enforcement landscape. It has existed in various iterations since 2006, when a group of Kurdish migrants settled in a forested area in Grande-Synthe called Basroch. Grande-Synthe presents a good location from which to try to cross the border because it is intersected by the A16 motorway, leading directly to the port of Calais, and is within an hour's walking distance west to Loon-Plage, housing the port of Dunkirk. It also provides quick access to Belgium, a little over an hour's way east on a public bus. It is served by Dunkirk's free public bus system, making Dunkirk's regional train station easily accessible and enabling travel to and from Paris, Lille, Calais, and other larger cities. By 2018, when I began my fieldwork, there was an ever-changing population of between 400 and 1800, dependent, again, on factors influencing crossing rates such as the weather and intensity of border security.

Increased securitisation and militarisation of the France-UK border, as outlined earlier in this Introduction, led to the formation of various smuggling factions (which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three). From 2006, Kurdish smugglers began to stake claims on car parks, overnight lorry parks, and petrol stations in and around Grande-Synthe as well as Le Mans, Paris, Le Havre, Amiens, along the E40 (the Belgian continuation of the A16), and in various locations in the Netherlands. As securitisation increased, so did the need to rely on smugglers. As smugglers claimed more land and expanded their network, there were fewer and fewer ‘free’ places from which to try hopping a lorry or climbing into a car boot.

Most Kurds prefer to use Kurdish smugglers to cross to the UK. Due to the overwhelming Kurdish ownership of places from which to cross in and around Grande-Synthe, Kurds largely settled in this area rather than in neighbouring Calais (in which reside people from Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Egypt, and non-Kurdish Iran, among others). In March 2016, the mayor of Grande-Synthe opened an official and institutionalised camp called La Linière, with the support of Médecins Sans Frontières.⁵ In October 2016, however, the French state evicted and destroyed the nearby New Calais Jungle (where approximately 8000 people lived). Many who had been living there fled to La Linière, which quickly became overpopulated at a little under 2000 people. In April 2017, La Linière was burnt to the ground by competing factions of the Afghan and Kurdish smuggling networks.

Since the destruction of La Linière, Dankix has existed at different times as a tent settlement, small accommodation centres, a gymnasium, or a mixture of all three. My research is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from July 2018 to November 2019, during which time Dankix was often constituted simultaneously by multiple places. Jangaleka (a Kurdish adaptation of the Pashto word *dzhangal*, meaning ‘forest’)⁶ is the main area of settlement in Dankix. It lies in a man-made nature reserve known by French locals as Le Puythouck, which features a large lake,

⁵ See Agier, et al., 2018 for a brief outline of the various formalised camps established by the municipality and state in partnership with non-governmental organisations and non-profit organisations from 2006 to 2016.

⁶ ‘Forest’ in Kurdish is *daristan* and is unrelated to the term Jangaleka. A *jangal* in Kurdish refers to any forested space used by undocumented migrants to erect tents and sleep. The term connotes difficult living conditions and the necessity of hiding from the police. Jangaleka simply means ‘the *jangal*’ and, when used by someone in northern France, refers explicitly to the *jangal* in Dankix. The British public, policymakers, and the media also often refer to these encampments as ‘jungles.’ In English, the term is sometimes used in a racializing manner that is entwined with British colonial violence.

paved paths, forested areas intersected with walking trails, and a large car park called Saheka in Kurdish. 'Saheka' is Kurdish for a wide, open space similar to a field.

A fifteen-minute walk from Jangaleka sits a commercial shopping centre featuring a grocery and general goods chain super-store, Auchan. Its main hall includes seating areas in which Dankix's residents often rest as they charge their phones and use the free WiFi, especially during the cold winter months. Security guards employed by Auchan patrol the centre and are stationed at each door, sometimes refusing entry to migrants, ensuring they do not use the public toilets, and expelling them from seating areas. They also check the contents of their backpacks and zip tie them shut before they are allowed entry. While the guards assert that this measure is used for all customers, they usually target people with tattered clothing, ill-fitting trainers, and men with dark skin and hair.

Jangaleka and Kamy Swtayeka



Figure 2 - Men cooking on a fire amongst tents in Jangaleka; image by author.

In Jangaleka, tents are concentrated in forested areas, grassy fields, and dotted throughout peripheral spaces further away from Saheka. Saheka itself is largely used as a community meeting place where non-profit organisations distribute material items and provide first-aid medical support. Men spend time in Saheka and the grassy field separating it from the lake in the hours between distribution times and leaving for a crossing attempt. The mechanics of these attempts are called *derchwn*, which literally translates as ‘to turn out,’ ‘to graduate,’ or ‘to pass’ and as such connotes both physical and existential movement. Women and children most often remain in the family area. In all of Dankix’s various settlements, a family area is quickly established as separate from the single men’s areas. Women (and their husbands, if they are married and travelling together) prefer for there to be a space dedicated to them where they are not as likely to be bothered by other men looking at or speaking to women, smoking hashish, or drinking alcohol. Single men also sleep in Kamy Swtayeka (or ‘the burnt camp’), which are the remnants of La Linière and consist of a few large, burnt-out buildings filled with rubble. Kamy Swtayeka



Figure 3 - Kamy Swtayeka; image used with permission from Mobile Refugee Support.

lies just on the other side of the A16 motorway from Jangaleka. In order to travel between the two areas, men usually walk across the motorway. If police vans are stationed there, they must walk around all of Jangaleka and under an overpass, still forcing them to cross a busy slip road down which vehicles careen as they exit off of the motorway above.

These settlements are periodically destroyed during evictions, when various branches of the National Police establish a perimeter around the settlement and encroach upon those inside. Residents often are awakened by police officers who pierce their knives through tent walls while people inside are sleeping. Officers confiscate and throw away all belongings, including tents, tarps, sleeping bags, blankets, and personal effects. As the officers sweep through the settlement, residents are rounded up, sometimes to be placed on buses destined for accommodation centres, sometimes to long-term detention centres, and at other times simply told to disperse on foot. In 2019 alone, 178 evictions took place in Dankix, ranging from between two and four per week (HRO, 2019). Evictions fluctuate in intensity, however, based on the political will of Grande-Synthe city hall and the subprefecture of Dunkirk, sometimes in opposition or conjunction with one another, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four. Within a few hours of an eviction, the first returnees settle again either in Jangaleka or Kamy Swtayeka, depending on the intensity of police activity in each area and their subsequent ability to settle without harassment and arrest. A small minority hide tents and sleeping bags during evictions and retrieve them when it is safe. Many, however, must rely on non-profit organisations to replace what was taken. As soon as an area is established as relatively safe, hundreds of people return to Dankix and the settlement quickly grows to its pre-eviction size.

Kampeka

On 27 December 2018, Grande-Synthe's city hall opened a gymnasium as an accommodation centre a thirty-minute walk east, towards the town centre. While officially named after the gym itself, *l'Espace Jeunes du Moulin*, Kurds refer to this centre as Kampeka ('the camp'). Kampeka rapidly became overpopulated. By 11 January 2019 city hall reported that there were 180 people sleeping in the gymnasium, and 40 tents erected around its exterior due to a lack of space inside.

Eleven days later, there were 134 tents outside the gym. By 22 February, 217 tents lined the exterior. Between 27 December 2018 and 22 February 2019 alone, 570 different people had lived inside the gym, indicating a high turnover rate of residents which is itself revealing of the high numbers of successful crossings to the UK. While numbers fluctuate often in Dankix, in the spring and summer of 2019 there were around 190 people sleeping in the gym and 700 sleeping in tents outside of it at any given time. As mentioned above, women and families also established their own tent area outside to supplement the interior family area.

Kampeka's interior consists of a front desk, a private office for the city hall employee managing the centre (named François), the room for families (who sleep on the floor separated by metal barriers), and a large main hall used as a sleeping area for the men. There is also a small room opposite the toilets in which men are allowed to smoke in the evenings. François explained to me once that this is to encourage the men not to smoke in the living area. The men's sleeping area itself is large, with very high ceilings typical of a sports hall. Blankets are laid down in rows, each designating one living space. Worried about the difficulty of sleeping on hard wooden floors, François bought air mattresses for the men. Most, however, ripped within a



Figure 4 – Kampeka in summer 2019; image used with permission from Mobile Refugee Support.

number of days, and the deflated mattresses are instead used as welcome mats in front of the tents outside.

Jangaleka and Kampeka are easily accessible to one another via Dunkirk's free public bus system. Kampeka also lies directly behind one of the petrol stations (visible in the background of the image above) often used by men for *derchwn* (crossing attempts) – the same petrol station in which Wlat fell from a lorry. Since Kampeka was established on city hall land rather than private land, the subprefecture was unable to order its eviction until city hall itself greenlit a police operation. Kampeka was therefore not evicted until 17 September 2019, an unprecedented amount of time in which a settlement in Dankix was allowed to grow unhindered. Despite this, the population never grew over 1100 people. In comparison, in October 2018 amidst consistent weekly evictions, the population sleeping in Jangaleka and Kampy Swtayeka surpassed 1800.

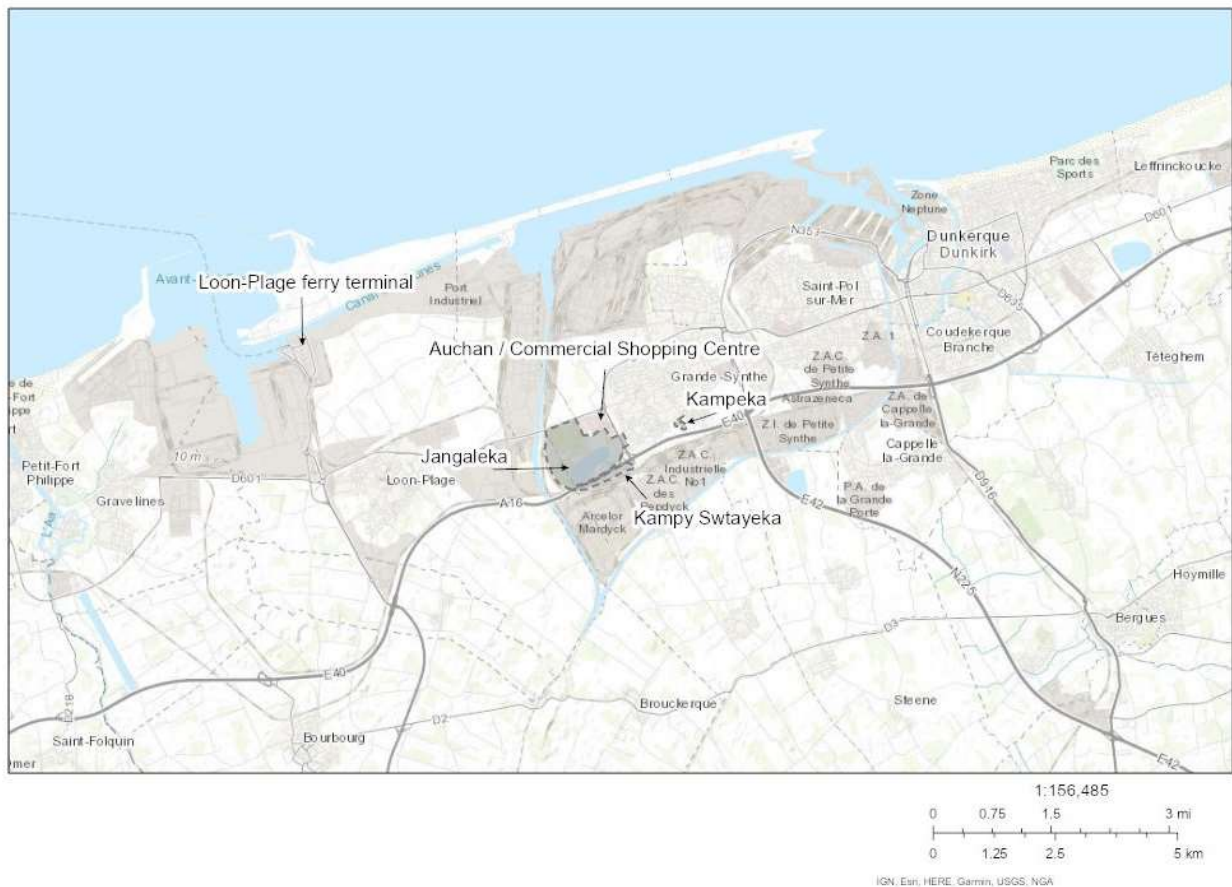


Figure 5 - Large-scale map of Grande-Synthe featuring key areas of Dankix; image by author.

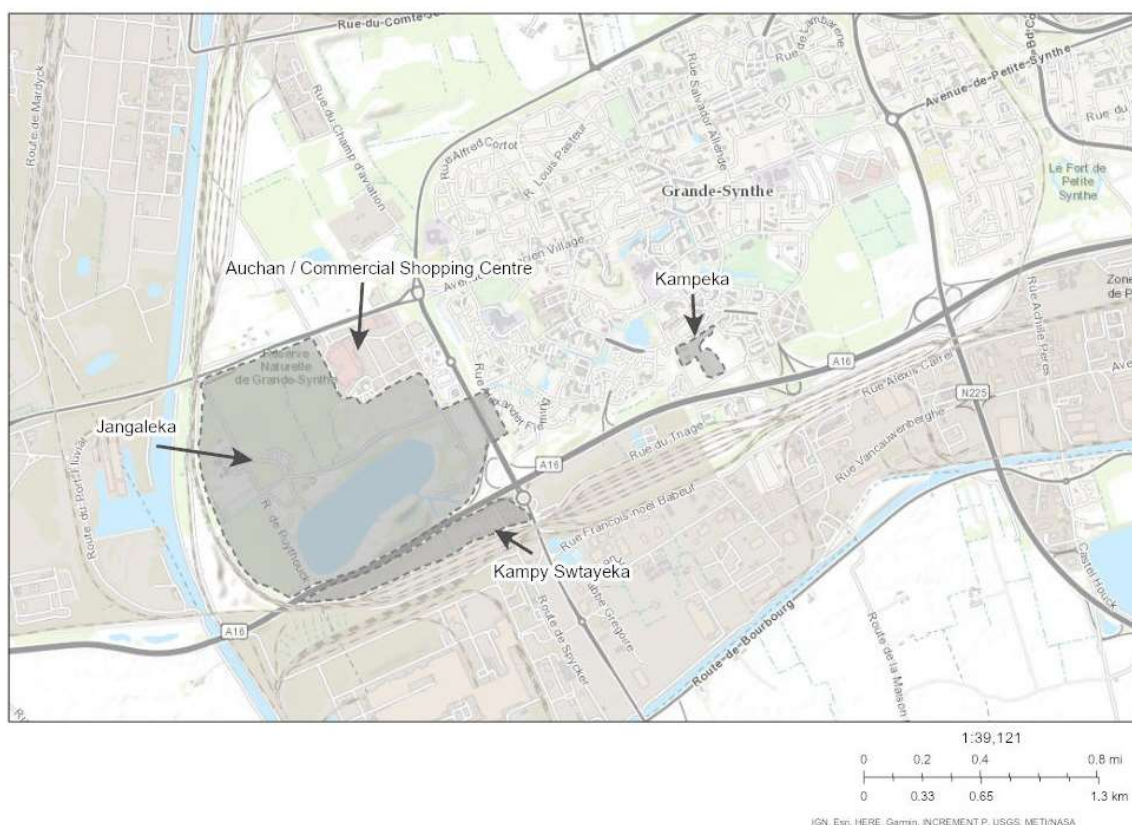


Figure 6 - Small-scale map of Grande-Synthe featuring key areas of Dankix; image by author.

Most of those staying in Dankix are, like Wlat, Southern Kurds, or Kurds from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq. While most are from the cities of Slemani or Hewler,⁷ people come from all major cities and towns in this region, as well as their surrounding rural villages. Others come from Kurdish-majority areas that technically fall outside of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq and are under the authority of the Iraqi state – the most notable example being Kirkuk. There are always a small number of Eastern Kurds present in Dankix, or Kurds from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iran (Rojhelat). On only a handful of occasions throughout my fieldwork did I meet Western Kurds (from the region of Kurdistan in Syria) or Northern Kurds (from the region of Kurdistan in Turkey). The ethnography therefore centres Southern and Eastern Kurdish experiences.

⁷ Hewler is known as Erbil or Irbil in English. Slemani is known as Sulaimani or Sulaymaniyah in English.

Terminology

While the English-language term 'migrant' technically refers to anyone on the move, it is entangled with certain harmful migratory categories including ex-pat, economic migrant, and refugee. These categories are, of course, materially significant as they are usually borne of the filtering practices of nation-states as they dictate who may and may not enter or settle in their country. These terms "[transform] foreign others into political categories...that the state can recognize and use to legitimize their difference" (Giordano: 2014: 10). The term 'refugee,' for instance, is an important indicator that migrants require humanitarian protections in a country other than their own in order to be safe. And yet, these terms do not make room for the complex and nuanced relationship between social, economic, and political factors that influence individual migratory decisions and larger patterns. They hierarchise people on the move in damaging ways and have normalised the public perception that without a well-founded fear of persecution (which must be proven during an asylum claim), a Kurd with an Iraqi passport does not deserve to choose the country in which she lives, while citizens of global north states have no such requirement to be deemed deserving of the right to self-determination.

In Sorani Kurdish, there are two main terms for someone on the move: *kochber* and *panaber*. *Kochberan* (plural) refers to those who have moved abroad. As a term, it makes no distinction based on the reasons for migration. *Panaberan* (plural) refers explicitly to those who have made themselves known to the authorities of the country to which they have moved in order to ask for humanitarian protection. In the European context, a *panaber* is an asylum seeker or refugee, and a *kochber* is anyone who has yet to or will not seek asylum. The terms do not assume varying levels of deservingness, in contrast to the English-language terms for people on the move.

While the younger generation of Kurdish *kochberan* (those who are migrating today) largely reject the distinction between economic migrants and refugees, there are inter-generational tensions and complexities that are useful in understanding the history of Kurdish emigration (a fuller account of which is outlined in Appendix A). Kurds who migrated to Europe and the United States in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the Iran-Iraq War often find it difficult to relate to those who left Southern Kurdistan after the year 2000, and particularly those who left after 2014. It has been

related to me countless times by Kurds who migrated decades ago to France, the United Kingdom, and the United States that those coming now are coming for ‘fun, adventure, and sex.’ Those who left in the 1980s and 1990s largely fit the ideal-typical profile of the ‘refugee.’ They, on the whole, had a well-founded fear of persecution that fit the requirements of the 1951 Convention. They often argue that there is nothing wrong with Kurdistan now, that it has improved tremendously and is, most importantly, *safe*. They lament that the newcomers, to the UK in particular, taint the good reputation of the Kurds by selling cigarettes in the street or getting drunk and fighting with English people, for example.

On the other hand, *kochberan* in Dankix and those who have crossed to the UK are frustrated that the older generations do not understand them. While Southern Kurdistan is arguably more stable today than in the 1980s and 1990s, those leaving Kurdistan now argue that they do not see a future for themselves there, and do not accept that they deserve to migrate any less than those who have migrated before them. The context in which *kochberan* make the choice to leave Kurdistan today is outlined in greater detail in Appendix A. I have attempted to emphasise here, however, that while it is simplistic and inaccurate to say that Kurds unanimously resist against the hierarchy of deservingness imposed upon people on the move to Europe, the complex web of socio-economic and political factors that are significant for the decision to migrate (and to which country) is much more intuitively understood by those migrating. It is, therefore, apt to use terms that reflects these nuances. For this reason, I refer to Kurdish people on the move in Dankix as *kochberan* (plural) and *kochber* (singular) throughout this thesis.

Methodology

The data included in this thesis were generated during fieldwork in Dankix from July 2018 to November 2019. As was discussed above, informal camps such as Dankix are underrepresented in the literature. This is likely due, in part, to the complex methodological and ethical challenges they pose for researchers. The particular dynamics of power in such spaces (including relations between the state and its agencies, humanitarian organisations, researchers, smuggling groups, and people migrating) as well as their unstable and transient nature due to crossing rates and

violent policing, often mean that conventional anthropological approaches are at times inappropriate and dangerous for both participant and researcher (see, e.g., Jordan and Moser, 2020; Minca, 2021). For instance, social structures and hierarchies in Dankix are largely ambiguous and unclear, even to insiders, and there are therefore no traditional community leaders to approach for access and initial insights. Those who have lived in Dankix for several years and are well-known to most kochberan are usually involved in smuggling, and I avoided becoming knowledgeable about these people and networks as much as possible in order to protect myself and my participants. However, as will become clear through this thesis, and especially in Chapters Two and Three, this knowledge is ubiquitous, and it was arguably inevitable that I became aware of certain ‘public secrets’ (Taussig, 1999). There are a number of intersecting factors concerning my positionality that significantly influenced both my experience there as a researcher and the nature of the data that I gathered. These factors included my status as a documented migrant, gender and gender non-conforming behaviour and presentation, language proficiency, various risky practices, and a number of non-researcher roles I assumed to varying degrees.

Documented status

The most palpable facet defining my positionality was my status as a documented person. I am a United States citizen who had, at the time,⁸ a student visa enabling me to study long-term in the UK and had acquired an additional student visa for study and research in France. Kochberan in Dankix often jokingly asked whether I could carry them or their children to the UK in my suitcases or in the boot of my car, and sometimes more seriously attempted to convince me to help them across – requests which I always refused. While the act of border crossing is an ‘event’ that is made possible by my legalised, documented status, for instance during the dozens of times when I travelled between France and the UK, it also exists in subtle ways in everyday life. In Dankix, the border – and more explicitly the differences in experiences of violence and access to rights derived directly from documentation status – is tangible in every moment of every day. Not only is it felt in encounters

⁸ I have since switched to a Family visa.

with medical professionals, with the police who constantly patrol Dankix, and when Auchan security follow people through the supermarket, but Dankix itself is the result of – and contributes to – processes of illegalisation and the unevenly-distributed right to self-determination in mobility. While most people in Dankix make the choice to be there, my choice was made under very different conditions and constraints. On several occasions, when I stayed in the tent settlement in Dankix until late at night or the early morning, passers-by wryly offered me their spare tent: “Why don’t you just sleep here if you like being here so much?” Near the end of my fieldwork, when I told newcomers that I had been in Dankix for nearly a year and a half, they often looked bewildered and asked, “Why don’t you just go home?”

Gender and gender non-conforming behaviour and presentation

In much of Southern Kurdish, or the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq, women who speak openly with men to whom they are not married or with whom they do not share kinship are normatively considered *ayb*, or shameful. It is inappropriate for unrelated men and women to look one another in the eyes, to smile warmly or to laugh with each other, and, for those who follow religious prohibitions in Islam, to shake hands. These expectations and norms vary considerably however with age, class, and rural versus urban lifestyle. That said, women travelling with men in Dankix very rarely speak with or acknowledge men who are travelling alone. Women travelling alone who must organise the particularities of their crossing with (male) smugglers are often derogatorily called *leshfrosh*. *Leshfrosh* translates directly to ‘body-seller’ and refers to someone engaging in prostitution. Women travelling alone are often considered *ayb* for having left Kurdistan without a man, even if what forced them to leave Kurdistan in the first place was an abusive partner or father. The vast majority of *kochberan* in Dankix are young, single men. Modelling my own behaviour on normative Kurdish gender roles and practice was therefore impossible; I was tasked with building relationships of mutual trust with men to whom I was not related. Furthermore, because most *kochberan* spend the nights attempting to cross the border, most of my research participants slept until the early- to mid-afternoon. We therefore spent much of our time together between the late afternoons and evenings.

My methodology, and in particular immersion in everyday life, therefore involved me staying with young men in Dankix until long after dark, at a time in which

anyone who is not a kochber (such as volunteers and aid workers) are expected to have left. Often this meant cooking and eating over a fire in the tent area with a group of men, prompting passers-by with whom I was not yet acquainted to stop and stare, and prompting friends who passed to smile, wave, and quietly tell me I should be getting home soon. As time passed, I experimented with various ways of interacting and conducting research with men in Dankix to discern the effects of my various behaviours on the rumours and gossip spread about me. This is not to say that this gossip did not affect me. Often, I was deeply hurt by some of the things said about me, such as that my research was a ruse and means to have sex with young men.⁹ Yet, experimenting with my behaviour allowed me to cultivate a methodology in which I balanced access usually reserved for men with perceptions people had of me as a shameful woman. Rather than walking with a group of men to our shisha-smoking spot in the forest, for instance, I would drive to a parking lot nearby and walk in from the opposite direction. If I were to return to my car past dark, I would avoid passers-by so that they would not assume they caught me returning from a tryst. This was sometimes made more difficult when research participants spread rumours that we were sleeping together, when, in truth, we were meeting in more private areas to conduct interviews. In these instances, my reputation was severely damaged and it took weeks or months to regain the trust and respect of the community in which I worked. What is more, some would-be research participants attempted to touch and speak to me inappropriately, assuming that participation in research was a euphemism for access to sexual services.

Gossip and rumours about me and sexualised harassment were, at times, overwhelming. While gossip was countered by those who trusted and respected me, I was on countless occasions confronted with the obstacles posed by my gender and gender non-conforming behaviour. These challenges are by no means unique to my situation or my field site (see, e.g., Brown, 2009; Clark and Grant, 2015; Gurney, 1985; Johansson, 2015; Kloß, 2017; Sharp and Kremer, 2006). As Joan Gurney recalls, for instance, “I therefore tolerated things which made me uncomfortable, but convinced myself they were part of the sacrifices a researcher must make” (1985:

⁹ As is shown in Chapter Two, some male kochberan trade sex with female aid workers for food or shelter. I was never made aware of an instance in which a female kochberan traded sex with a male aid worker, but this is not to say that it does not occur. The gossip about me, then, was concretely situated within these dynamics of power.

56). To mitigate this, women conducting anthropological research in male-dominated spaces often assume the role of an honorary male (Ammann, 2018; Schwedler, 2006; van den Boogaard, 2018). Much of the literature argues that women from the global north who conduct research among people from the global south are given this status: “[n]orthern females who find themselves bestowed with this status are in a uniquely advantaged position of being able to access both male and female spaces and informants” (Flanigan, 2021: 5). Yet I did not encounter this in Dankix. Instead, I had to work through a complex gender economy as it intersected with other aspects of my positionality to *earn* an ambiguous status somewhat resembling this position, which, even then, I found to be more an impediment than an asset.

I was able to gain trust and respect among those who eventually participated in my research by mimicking certain aspects of men’s behaviour and speech (which happened to conform with how I most naturally behave, making this a relatively easy if sometimes complicated feat). Although this has its limits, as I never identified as nor was considered a man, some of my research participants indicated to me that they perceived me as masculine. They referred to me by the male mode of address *kaka*, as opposed to the female-specific term *xanm*. I have never heard someone address a Kurdish woman using *kaka*. In Dankix, reversing modes of address only occurs in reference to European or North American women, in line with the experiences of other anthropologists, cited above.

Among the research participants with whom I had close relationships, I positioned myself as a sister (*xwshk* in Kurdish) and referred to them as my brothers (*bra*). By referring to one another as brothers and sister, we categorised our relationships in terms that were easily understandable and carried straightforward expectations for behaviour. Most importantly, siblinghood indicated a nonsexual relationship of mutual trust and care. When alone with a group of men who referred to me as their sister, other men would sometimes join our group and comment on the fact that I should not be alone with men to whom I was not related. My ‘brothers’ would then defend me based on our siblinghood: “She’s our sister, we’re her brothers. We’re family and it’s fine.”

Becoming a ‘sister’ was made possible, in part, by my age. I was in my early twenties when I first arrived in Dankix, and left in my mid-twenties. I was therefore around the same age as, or younger than, most of my research participants. On the other hand, older female local aid workers who built relationships with people in

Dankix were never referred to as sisters. Instead, many of them were called ‘mama’ or ‘mami’ – Kurdish phonetic adaptations of the French *maman* (a term for mother that is similar to the English ‘mum’). At first, it struck me as interesting that I was called a sister using the Kurdish term (*xwshk*) while they were called mothers using the French term. Upon further inquiry, however, participants told me that this was because I speak Kurdish, while the ‘mothers’ spoke mixtures of French and English, prompting Kurds to respond to and interact with them in the French and English that they knew.

Bolstering my status as a ‘sister,’ I also spent hours on the phone with some participants’ families in Kurdistan. Many members of their families also began to refer to me as their sister or daughter. This was further solidified after a trip to Southern Kurdistan (the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq) in summer 2019, when I went to visit a friend who had ‘self-deported’ (as it is called in Kurdish)¹⁰ to Kurdistan from Dankix using a state-assisted return programme. While there, I visited and stayed with several of the families of the research participants to whom I was closest at the time.

Nevertheless, being called a sister (*xwshk*) or by the male mode of address (*kaka*) was not always effective. It was useful for framing relationships with people with whom I was already close, but did not always help to legitimate my gendered behaviour among those with whom I did not have a relationship. To outsiders, I was clearly not a man, and obviously not anybody’s biological sister. I return to this point further below, when discussing the honorific for a teacher, *mamosta*.

For the final six months of fieldwork, my male partner (who had been living in London) came to Dankix and volunteered as an aid worker. We presented ourselves as a married couple and wore rings, another strategy commonly used by unmarried women conducting fieldwork (see, e.g., Mügge, 2013; Ridde, et al., 2019; Warren and Rasmussen, 1977). At times, however, this backfired: I was conducting research with men and my partner was volunteering with an organisation that supported women and families. Consequently, some perceived our relationship as either *ayb* (shameful) or fake because we were openly comfortable with one another being in close contact with people of the opposite gender. To mitigate this, we made sure to introduce one another to those with whom we worked and befriended where possible

¹⁰ In Kurdish, ‘voluntary’ return is called *xoydeportkrdnewe*, or ‘self-deportation.’

and appropriate, and acknowledged and explained our behaviour as conforming to our (American and Scottish, respectively) societies' normative gendered expectations. Even so, I was often considered shameful, mistrusted, and harassed by some. I believe the only methodological solution would have been to bring my partner with me all day, every day to conduct research.

Language proficiency

In preparing for fieldwork, I learned Sorani Kurdish. My proficiency in the language exponentially improved throughout my time in Dankix. Without this proficiency, I would have been unable to conduct meaningful and significant research, not least because most of those living in Dankix do not speak English or French. As I began to speak at advanced levels, however, suspicions about me and why I speak such a 'niche' language (as opposed to Arabic or Farsi) increased in parallel. People with whom I became close, including some research participants, often relayed to me their exasperation with these rumours, and many vouched for my integrity throughout my time in the field. For instance, many of those in leadership positions who remained in Dankix for several years (likely due to being smugglers) thought the idea laughable; they remembered me when I first arrived: apprehensive and asking 'stupid' questions with a terrible accent. And yet, often the fact that I speak Kurdish alone led newcomers to assume that I was a police informant using research as my cover.

Risky practice

In negotiating my own ethical imperatives while conducting research, I attempted to maximise the usefulness of my privilege as a documented migrant who speaks English, French, and Kurdish for those in Dankix. While this most often entailed ordinary practices of advocacy, translation, and emotional care-work, on certain occasions I chose to do things that put myself at risk and increased tensions between myself and certain groups of people in Dankix. This includes, for example, assisting a woman as she separated herself and hid from those allegedly attempting to traffic her; working closely with the families of men who died trying to cross the border as they attempted to gather details about the smugglers involved; and

recurrently visiting a woman in her accommodation centre late at night as she dealt with the loss of her daughter, without permission from the centre staff.

While none of these practices could be seen as risky in and of themselves, my involvement in each of these situations (and many, many others) were inadvertently made public. The consequences often challenged my relationships with people, without whom I would have largely been unable to access the field site. For instance, the group of men whom I accused of attempting to traffic my friend retaliated by starting rumours that I was a French police officer. The smugglers who purportedly organised the crossings of Wlat, Rebin, and Hemn made verbal threats on my life. Lastly, the other men and families living in the accommodation centre assumed that I was visiting so frequently in order to organise my friend's passage to the UK. After one week of regular visits to the centre, everyone in Dankix thought that I was a smuggler, and as a consequence many people cut ties with me, hurt that I would not choose to bring them or their children to the UK. Subsequently, I received more threats from purported smugglers who believed that I was encroaching on their territory.

Non-researcher roles

As was mentioned above, informal camps such as Dankix often have no clear community leaders to approach for initial access and insights. To gain access, therefore, I volunteered initially as an aid worker and later as the coordinator and lead case worker for a French grassroots organisation called the Refugee Women's Centre (RWC). In return, RWC housed me for the duration of my fieldwork in various accommodations and shelters run by organisational partners.¹¹ In this role, I supported women and families who required individual, tailored assistance by helping them access, for instance, legal aid, specialised healthcare (e.g., for pre/postnatal care or abortion), and asylum support for those who wished to claim asylum in France, among many other things. To minimise the risk of coercion, while volunteering I conducted research only with single men as they did not benefit from RWC's work and perceived my role first and foremost as a researcher. After nine months and mid-way through my fieldwork, I ended my volunteering role and began

¹¹ This research is unfunded, which contributed greatly to the need to secure housing gratis.

to also conduct research among women and families. My remaining ties to RWC were seen as inconsequential by my research participants, as the organisation had the capacity to (and did) support all those who fell within their remit. I therefore was adamant in refraining from sending referrals of new families and cases to RWC, and instead directed anyone who asked about their aid provision to the appropriate RWC aid workers and volunteers.

This position gave me access to the field site and a relatively quick immersion into everyday life. Due to the widespread control of smuggling groups over rumours and reputations in Dankix, a cautious approach to the social field was instrumental to my eventual acceptance. By working as a volunteer, I presented myself in a way that was immediately legible and non-threatening, paving the way for the long-term, respectful relationships that enabled me to continue working in Dankix for the duration of my fieldwork.

For several months in summer 2019 I taught basic English lessons to men. I initially asked the municipal staff who managed Kampeka to allow me to teach these lessons indoors in a room separate from the men's living area. City hall, however, declined due to the optics of preparing migrants for life in the UK, rather than for life in France. I therefore held the lessons on the grass in Jangaleka once or twice per week, depending on the weather. It was a relatively informal affair and open to all: sometimes one man showed up, and sometimes a dozen. We sat atop blankets that I kept in the boot of my car and focused on whatever they wanted to learn that day. Often, people would come to 'suss me out,' never to return. Some returned consistently, however, and we were able to build upon previous lessons to a more advanced level. For beginners, the lessons were focused on life in the UK (e.g., how to say "I want to claim asylum" or "I need a doctor" with other lessons going into detail about specific topics such as shopping for food). The lessons were remarkably useful because they reoriented my relationship to the community from a rumoured sexual deviant to a teacher. For the final five months of my research, I was addressed by all newcomers to Dankix as *mamosta*, an honorific meaning teacher. I became associated with a profession in which the norms governing gendered behaviour are slightly altered. Being perceived as a *mamosta* aroused less suspicion when I spoke with men alone, as it legitimated my relationships with men. This was more effective than being called a sister (*xwshk*) or by the male mode of address (*kaka*).

Additionally, my language ability and consequent role as an unofficial camp interpreter led to my involvement with the repatriation of Wlat's, Rebin's, and Hemn's remains. After Wlat's death, I flew with his remains to Kurdistan for his burial and funeral. After I returned to Dankix from his repatriation, many kochberan referred to me as 'Azrael,' the angel of death who guides the souls of the dead to the afterlife and knows the fates of the living. While Azrael is apparently benevolent, a friend told me that many people had become afraid of me for 'guiding' Wlat's body back home. Others believed that my involvement with the repatriation was evidence that I was involved in intergovernmental agencies such as Interpol, which had a significant impact on my ability to conduct research, as is explained below.

Reputations

Many of the factors detailed above, each to different extents and in combination, led to persistent rumours that I was an undercover CIA, Interpol, or Home Office agent whose aim was to gather intelligence in Dankix that would later contradict the asylum-claim cases of kochberan in the UK. These rumours fluctuated and were often mixed with or at odds with rumours that I was a sex worker or smuggler. Depending on the common perception of me at the time – as either police, or a smuggler, or a sex worker – I was trusted by different social groups within Dankix. For instance, for the four months that those in Dankix believed me to be a smuggler, people were much more open with me about the practices involved in crossing the border (*derchwn*). At other times, when rumours that I was a spy or police informant were particularly strong, I would be shut out from all such conversation, except among those with whom I was closest. It is for this reason that I have not included many images throughout the thesis. Taking photographs was perceived as evidence of involvement with the police, and most photographs taken by myself or by research participants included their faces (such as selfies), which would jeopardise their claims to asylum in the UK. I have therefore only seldom included images taken by myself and have instead opted to include several images taken by non-profit organisations where they are a useful means of communication (e.g., as used above when outlining the various iterations of settlements in Dankix).

The reason for these shifts in my reputation was, in part, the fluctuating population of Dankix itself. Particularly in summer periods, when *derchwn* (border

crossing) is a relatively quick accomplishment due to calm weather, the turnover rate can be 100 people weekly. The high turnover rate strengthened the power of rumours to deviate further from the truth, and forced me constantly to rebuild relationships with new people. This did, however, give me the opportunity to experiment with my own behaviour (as I did in terms of my gender-conformity), the way certain behaviours influenced how people reacted to and perceived me, and inevitably the nature of the data I could gather.

The vignettes and interviews included in this thesis were therefore conducted under incredibly complicated conditions. Often, the reason certain people chose to speak with me is unclear. An alleged smuggler recounting to me his experience of police violence, for instance, may be an attempt to convince me that he is not a smuggler or to re-humanise those who participate in smuggling (as they are often dehumanised in public and political discourse). A woman recounting an experience of abuse at the hands of her husband may be doing so as a test of my loyalty to see if I would 'snitch' to the police, or if I would follow the acceptable social norm and keep quiet. For lack of space, there is therefore much left unsaid in this thesis about the conditions under which some people approached me asking to be interviewed. Anything about the particularities of our relationship that are crucial to understanding the context are included in the text.

The politics of representation

This thesis will, on many occasions, portray and analyse often disturbing instances of interpersonal violence. It is not my aim to either excuse or sensationalise acts of violence. It is also not my aim to provide empirical evidence of violence that may be co-opted by anti-migrant groups or political parties. I examine the structural factors involved in the long-term and everyday suffering of those in Dankix not to justify acts of interpersonal violence, which would itself be dehumanising and paternalistic, but to work towards a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of life in the settlement. Some acts of violence are relayed in detail, either through a vignette or in the text of an interview. Many people upon whom violence was inflicted agreed to participate in my research primarily so that these acts of violence would be written, discussed, and eventually published. The writing style of the vignettes has been carefully considered so that the descriptions of violence contains no literary

embellishments and only details significant to the argument are included. Vignettes are written in italics so that they are stylistically identifiable.

It is also important to discuss the political nature of writing about violence enacted by racialised migrants in contemporary Europe. The current political landscape in mainland Europe and the UK privileges anti-migrant and Islamophobic rhetoric. The media often engages in racist discourses about refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants – most particularly using the bigoted trope of Muslim refugee men as either dangerous sexual predators or oppressive misogynists. Such a discursive economy has significant political power. This was evident, for instance, after the 2015-16 New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Cologne leading to hardening attitudes towards incoming asylum seekers, and often credited for precipitating the policy shift that resulted in Germany closing its borders (see, e.g., Koren, 2016). Despite this, I have chosen not only to 'write in' violence, but to focus on it. This is because my research participants and I believe that we cannot move past this discourse, nor can I write anything anthropologically significant about Dankix, without also discussing the multiple forms of violence permeating nearly every aspect of life in this settlement.

Every interview and conversation included in this thesis was conducted in Sorani Kurdish and translated by me into English, except where noted. Some words are generally difficult to translate, and I have therefore inexactly translated them into the English words with the closest connotations where the meaning is preserved. If a significant amount of the meaning would be lost in translation, I leave the word untranslated and include a footnote with a longer English interpretation so as to accurately relay the word's connotations and multiple meanings. Insults, derogatory terms, and swearing have not been omitted in order to accurately represent the dialogue. These were often the most difficult to translate into English, and much of the translation for these types of phrases has been conducted with the assistance of a few research participants who also speak French or English. Finally, I echo Karla Cornejo Villavicencio's words as she explains her method of translation from Spanish to English in her book about undocumented migrants in the United States:

I approached translating the way a literary translator would approach translating a poem, not the way someone would approach translating a business letter. I hate the way journalists translate the words of Spanish

speakers in their stories. They transliterate, and make us sound dumb, like we all have a first-grade vocabulary. I found my subjects to be warm, funny, dry, evasive, philosophical, weird, annoying, etc., and I tried to convey that tone in the translations (2020: xv-xvi).

My aim in translating our conversations as ‘poetry’ is so that my participants are neither infantilised nor othered by the clumsiness of exact translations. A common phrase in Kurdish, for instance, is *bawka ro*. It literally means ‘father’s soul’ but is more appropriately translated to the exclamation ‘oh my god.’ To include this phrase in the text as ‘father’s soul’ would unnecessarily distance the reader from whomever spoke these words, and such a translation does not accurately reflect how it sounded and felt when originally spoken in Kurdish. My choice, of course, comes with its own problematics and responsibilities, as not only have I charged myself with the task of filtering through eighteen months of already subjective experiences to present them in this thesis format, but I have also given myself the power to change the words through which these experiences were conveyed. I am uncomfortable with the power of representation anthropologists, including myself, have bestowed upon ourselves, and have attempted to reconcile this in part by re-translating certain sections of the thesis text into Kurdish and sending them to research participants so that they might discuss with me how they feel they have been characterised.

Characters

Due to the transitory nature of Dankix and its inhabitants, the data that informs this thesis were generated with the assistance of hundreds of people who participated to varying degrees. Most of these participants helped me to gain general insight into certain topics, such as the practicalities of *derchwn* (passage to the UK), the common trajectories from Kurdistan to Dankix, or experiences of police violence. Others generously allowed me into the intimacies of their everyday lives, sometimes permitting me to record a conversation that I felt could be pertinent, to write down some notes as we spoke, to be more formally interviewed, or to later reconstruct events from memories we share together. For the sake of narrative clarity and anonymisation (as nearly all my participants are now in the UK and are still awaiting

a decision on their claim to asylum), some people in this thesis are amalgamations of several different participants. While some names will come up once, others will recur in every chapter. Some names represent one person while others represent many. In this sense, there is not a core cast of 'characters' that make up this ethnography. This reflects the nature of life in Dankix itself: it is a bottleneck in which some get caught for days or weeks, and others for months or years. New faces are always arriving while old faces disappear. Thousands passed through and lived in Dankix for those eighteen months. This thesis is a product of the knowledge that has been shared with me through my interactions, encounters, and conversations with them.

Thesis outline

The first half of this thesis works to establish and examine the relations between different social actors and groups, such as among smugglers, kochberan, and aid workers. The second half then moves through to a more intimate discussion of forms of violence, examining in particular its affective productions and consequences. Each chapter is concerned with a separate type of encounter between these groups, which provides a frame through which to examine violence. Each of them also mirrors the trajectory of the thesis – moving between wide and narrow scales – by focusing on overarching structural factors before then examining how these play out, influence, and are simultaneously shaped by intimate everyday practice.

Chapter Two, following this Introduction, examines the relationship between kochberan and aid workers who distribute food and other material survival items. It does so through the lens of hospitality – which is itself often used to situate the relationship between a migrant and her host country – in order to analyse the particular forms of violence enabled and exacerbated by the asymmetry of power that exists between both groups. The chapter is framed around two seemingly opposed logics of resource distribution: the aid workers' queue and the smugglers' café. Through this I also introduce the concept of smugglers' cafés, which become crucial to understanding social organisation and the relationship of kochberan to smugglers (groups which, I show, are not mutually exclusive) in the following chapters.

Chapter Three examines money. Many in Dankix have spent most of their money getting to France and have just enough left to pay for passage to the UK. This chapter outlines some of the reasons kochberan need money (e.g., *derchwn* or passage, subsistence, substance use, fun), the means by which people make money (e.g., hustling, smuggling, and using sex as a tradeable resource), and strategies used to secure free passage to the UK without working (e.g., by forming strategic friendships and conducting extensive, risky favours). It also demonstrates the risky behaviours and power asymmetries that are worsened by the inability to receive legal and regulated money transfers and discusses the relevance of kinship networks within and outside of Dankix for unregulated money transfers, discounts on *derchwn*, and to diminish the possibility of interpersonal violence or betrayal. This chapter includes classical anthropological theory on kinship, reciprocity, exchange, the gift, and social structure to demonstrate how kochberan are often pushed into situations of exploitation. It ends with a discussion of the precarity experienced by low-level smugglers – those most likely to be caught and arrested – and nuances the categories of migrant and smuggler.

Chapter Four then analyses the police encounter and the relationship between kochberan, the police, and the state, focusing on the ubiquity of arrest, cruelty, police violence, and long-term detention. Police are constantly present in Dankix, and often take people to short-term overnight detention as an exhaustion tactic. Others are taken into long-term detention in a deportation centre, despite their ineligibility for deportation. This acute awareness of one's detainability combined with the carceral violence of detention creates an economy of fear and indignity used by police to leverage power over kochberan. While jokes and humour stem from police encounters, many internalise their condition of detainability through processes of symbolic violence and blame themselves for having entered the country 'illegally' (Bourdieu, 2000).

Chapter Five examines how violence becomes located in and on the body. It outlines issues of access to the healthcare system which, when combined with poor living conditions, means that illnesses thought to be long-gone in France, such as scabies and tuberculosis, continuously circulate throughout Dankix. Evictions, lack of access to healthcare, and arrest while going on *derchwn* mean that long-term illnesses go untreated because of constant involuntary, carceral mobility. Yet, when kochberan are able to access the healthcare system, moral arguments about

deservingness and the nation-state are expressed through and during the medical encounter. Further, untreated pain leads many people to self-medicate using alcohol or drugs, eventually leading to addiction, substance (mis)use, and abuse. Others abuse substances due to mental (ill)health issues that are untreated and unrecognised, especially in the wake of a border death and the ensuing emergence of an affective economy of death (Ahmed, 2004).

Finally, Chapter Six examines what happens after a border death. It focuses on the disappearance and eventual reappearance of Nima, in the form of her remains, and the deaths of Rebin, Hemn, and Wlat. I analyse how information, rumours, gossip, lies, and knowledge are used to leverage power by smugglers, non-smuggler kochberan, police, the UK Home Office, and city hall security guards. The ensuing discursive economy is used as a vehicle through which to enact violence. Deliberately confusing and misleading information leads to a perception of one's life outcomes as entirely out of one's control. Smugglers attempt to control the dominant narrative in Dankix after a death at the border. Counter-discourse from the state then displaces responsibility for deaths from the state to smugglers, erasing the structural factors forcing people to use smugglers and make risky journeys. The chapter then narrows its focus to discuss the disturbed intimacies that arise from border deaths to demonstrate how Dankix can be considered a space of death. It returns to Wlat and follows his remains to Kurdistan, where his family bury him in his hometown.

This thesis concludes by arguing that Dankix operates as a space of death in which killing is not only made possible, but misrecognised as inevitable. While informal camps facilitate residents' existential and physical sense of becoming as they move towards the border, they are also necropolitical spaces in which residents are sacrificed *for* the border. Their deaths are used to reify, legitimate, and justify the border itself. The Conclusion also discusses how violence transforms the economy of affective attachments through which people experience and interpret the world around them. It argues that violence and affective states have particular temporal qualities, whereby they are at times latent, and at others acute. Relations of power and structures of violence are masked in some settings, and illuminated in others. Similarly, kochberan are (in)visibilised by their subjection to power. In this way, key themes in migration literature, such as waiting, are transformed and complicated by the informal camp setting. Finally, the Conclusion identifies current immigration

policies as the source of violence and death in Dankix. It makes policy recommendations that, if implemented, would enable Kochberan to seek asylum in the UK safely.

CHAPTER TWO | The Queue and the Café

O' the Port of Friend, O' the Ship of Enemy

We will dock by you, friendly harbour,
and the sad enemy ships too.
We knew the songs of darkness; our midnights were full
of the lanterns of your drunken guards.
We came to be your refugees.
We all escaped from enemies,
we and our enemies too.
We meet the enemy on your streets
and we know they fled from our arrows.
The enemy sees us and understands
we are strangers and homeless, escaped from their swords.
No one can be a refugee in water ... no one.
We all came to you, distant harbour, to hide from each other,
to conceal ourselves from our ships
which call us and want to know where we went.
We are all eternal refugees in this brightness
on earth.
We are eternal runaways toward light.
Recognise us. You who unload our hopeless burdens,
recognise us, and know with what longing we search for the end.
Receive us. Shelter us
and see how our ships fire at each other.
Open your giant doors so that our enemies and we
can sit with gratitude.
Look, we all came from dark places and dark seas.
We all escaped from mad waves, black storms,
and hostile ships.

- Bakhtyar Ali¹² (2009), translation by Dilan Qadir

¹² Bakhtyar Ali is a Kurdish poet, scholar, and novelist from Slemani who now lives in Germany.

Bryar and I sit outside of the Kampeka gymnasium, on the small, paved road that curves away from the entrance and runs parallel to the tents in the family area. One of the non-profit organisations has parked its white van on the road and has set out a table with some leaflets. Volunteers stand behind the table, chatting with a few men about the leaflets and filling them out together. The leaflets are written in the first person, with an empty space where kochberan are supposed to write their names:

“I,, know that I have a right to medical care, legal counsel, information in my native language, and a phone call to a domestic or international number. I will not speak to you until I have seen a (1) doctor, (2) lawyer, (3) translator, (4) had my phone call.”

As the volunteers encourage the men (in English) to take a few for use during identity checks and arrest, the men examine the leaflets, some taking several copies and filling in their name.

Another man approaches the group and asks about the contents of the papers. Someone responds, in Kurdish: “They’re if you get arrested. See, you write your name here. That way you can give the paper to the police, and they’ll release you.” I interject, explaining the contents and purpose of the leaflets in Kurdish to clarify that they will not lead to their release. Another man interrupts me to joke: “That’s right, the police will read your name and if it’s beautiful enough they’ll bow and apologise for the disturbance!” He grins, and Bryar and I stifle snorts of laughter.

Police sirens wail faintly in the background. We all turn towards the sound as they become louder and louder, until a white Ford transit van emerges quickly on the main road. It zig-zags around slower cars and careens into the grassy area in front of us, right outside of Kampeka’s entrance. It swerves to a halt, almost tipping over, and three men jump out of the van. They leave the doors open and run around the side of the gymnasium, scaling a short wall of bricks and sprinting into the tent area. Two Police Nationale [National Police] cars and an unmarked PAF [Police aux Frontières, or Border Police] van screech to a

halt in the grass behind the Ford. Several officers run out of their vehicles into the tent area behind us. Other officers, holding large automatic weapons, stand in a line between their vehicles and the Kampeka entrance. They watch as a crowd of men gathers in the grassy area. As the growing crowd and the officers observe one another silently, a hiss of air emanates from the Ford van. A man is circling it and discretely puncturing the tyres with a knife to make seizure by police more difficult.

The officers who ran into the tent area now return, dragging handcuffed one of the men who had jumped out of the Ford van. They push him inside the PAF van – which drives away – and return to the tents. The armed officers remain on the grass, watching the crowd. One of the non-profits had just begun a food distribution, and is now quickly packing up, angering those who have not yet had the chance to eat. The non-profit teams, including the food and clothing distributors and various medics, all pack up their vans and drive away simultaneously. Women who were in the food queue hurry back inside the gymnasium or around the back into the tent area, and the crowd of men quickly grows to around 250 people.

Bryar turns to me: “You should leave, it’s dangerous for you here.”

One of our friends, Rebar, approaches me as he ties a scarf over his nose and mouth and puts on a baseball cap, “Hey, stay in my tent for a bit, okay?”

“Why?”

“We’re going to fight the paqla [derogatory term for police].”¹³

At this point only three minutes have passed since the arrival of the Ford van and police cars. The entrance to the gymnasium is blocked by the crowd. I am

¹³ *Paqla* usually refers to broad beans. They are typically cooked and sold in kiosks on the side of the road in Kurdistan. To call someone *paqla* is to call them unintelligent and useless. Police in Kurdistan are not often referred to as *paqla*. This is a term used mostly by young Kurdish men on the *rega* to refer to European police officers.

supposed to meet with one of my research participants, Arazu, but she texts me on WhatsApp from the interior: “Nobody will move, I can’t leave, there’s a problem.”

Five Police Nationale officers, carrying their automatic weapons with both hands, approach the Ford van. Two officers climb into the van and slowly drive it up the street and out of sight, its flat tyres dully slapping the concrete road. After about twenty minutes the standoff between the police and the men ends as the police give up on their search for the two others, get into their cars, and drive away. The men do not attempt to fight them. As the crowd disperses, someone I do not recognise addresses me, “If you’re going to be a smuggler, it shouldn’t surprise you when this happens.”

He then asks, “Do you think smugglers are good?”

I respond noncommittally, a strategy I have had to adopt in Dankix in order to quell rumours that I am working with the police, “Well I think they’re sometimes helping and other times they’re asking for too much money, but I don’t know.”

“This isn’t 2001 anymore,” he replies, “Without them none of us would cross. We need them. To throw off the dogs’ sense of smell, to help with the infrared detectors. They know how to get around these things in ways that we don’t. They’re professionals. They can be arseholes sometimes, but we need them.”

“It’s dangerous work though, isn’t it?”

He shrugs, “Yeah, it’s dangerous. But we’re used to these stakes. This isn’t France, you’re in Kurdistan.”¹⁴

Everyday life in Dankix is shaped by a network of actors, including kochberan, smugglers, local government employees, civil servants, contracted security guards,

¹⁴ As was noted in the Introduction, vignettes are written in italics in each chapter so that they are stylistically identifiable.

volunteers, aid workers, and several branches of municipal, regional, and military police. The above vignette alludes to some of the ways in which these groups of people are positioned through relations of power, and how many of their interactions express these relations. As the police arrive, weapons out, kochberan form an intimidating crowd in an effort to protect the smugglers as they evade capture. Men move to the front of the crowd, while women, including myself, move back and indoors. One of the men tells me afterwards that Dankix is not located in France, but in Kurdistan. Most of those living in Dankix perceive France, which they call the 'birthplace of human rights,' as a democracy in which its inhabitants are protected by the law and its enforcers. It is often said, however, that Dankix is the fifth region of Kurdistan, after the four regions split between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The meaning behind this common phrase is that in Dankix, the law does not exist to protect kochberan, but rather to protect locals *from* kochberan. It exists to expel them.

On the other hand, discourse surrounding Europe's reception of incoming migrants often conceptualises it as governed by the laws and ethics of hospitality. Academics and humanitarian practitioners, for instance, refer to those countries in which migrants settle (including those outside of Europe) as 'host countries.' The Jesuit Refugee Service's mission statement asserts that it operates "based on the values of solidarity and hospitality" (JRS Europe, 2020). The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a series of stories entitled "A Great British Welcome" showcasing examples of people who "are opening their hearts and lives to refugees and saying 'welcome' in a range of innovative ways" (UNHCR, 2020). It is indeed appropriate to frame the reception of migrants in terms of hospitality because at its core, practices and discourses of hospitality are indicative of how a society treats its strangers (Rosello, 2001).

Kochberan also often frame their experiences as migrants in Europe in terms of hospitality – or *miwandari* in Kurdish – a notion to which I return near the end of this chapter. The police encounter, introduced in the above vignette, is often contrasted by my research participants with encounters with aid workers and volunteers, who distribute information, shelter materials, and food, among other things. Volunteers are often spoken of as hospitable and welcoming. Yet, hospitality is fundamentally conditional. As the vignette above shows, the distribution model gives volunteers absolute control over these items. When the police arrive and the

potential for physical violence grows, volunteers distributing food pack up and leave immediately amid protest from those who have yet to eat. I use the notion of conditional hospitality as a framework through which to examine the particular forms of violence enabled and perpetuated by the kochber-volunteer encounter in Dankix.

Western European practices and moral valuations associated with welcoming strangers stem from Kant's law of hospitality, which is itself couched in Judeo-Christian tradition and is derived from ancient Greek practice (Westmoreland, 2008). Kant's law has, in turn, significantly informed the contemporary asylum-border regime in the European Union (EU) (Gani, 2017). Kantian hospitality dictates that all people have the right to be hosted, but that the host may refuse the guest if he is convinced that such a rejection will do no harm (Kant, 1903 [1795]). In the context of the European asylum-border regime, 'harm' refers exclusively to the 'well-founded fears of persecution' in one's country of origin, as listed in the 1951 Convention. Kantian hospitality, while a *right*, is therefore conditional and political (Derrida, 1999; Gibson, 2003). The nation-state – the 'host' country – practices the Kantian right to hospitality. Its welcome is conditional, and most often only temporary, because nation-states are themselves constituted by border control. Only by filtering who can and cannot enter does a nation-state exist as such in relation to the wider international geopolitical order (Derrida, 2002; Parker and Vaughan-Williams, et al., 2009). The "master of the house" (or the immigration authorities) welcomes the guest insofar as the host (-country) maintains his authority as lawmaker (Derrida, 2000: 4). Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh summarises this well:

The possibility of rejection – and overt violence – is always already there, and a neighbour can only ever welcome another neighbour in a conditional way: to offer welcome is always already to have the power to delimit the space or place that is being offered to the other (2016: 466).

This space or place is usually delimited according to the host-country's perception of the guest's (migrant's) intentions and productive potential (Gibson, 2003).¹⁵ For example, Sara Ahmed points out that the differentiation between 'genuine' and

¹⁵ See, for example, the UK's post-Brexit points-based immigration system. This system does not enable a path to settlement or long-term residence for so-called 'unskilled' workers, and privileges those with a doctorate and those specialised in STEM (UK Government, 2020).

'bogus' asylum seekers in British political and public discourse "works to enable the national subject to imagine his own generosity in welcoming *some* others" (2001: 364, emphasis mine).

To extend one's hospitality is about recognising the 'other' as human (Khosravi, 2010). To reject the claim to hospitality is to reject the other's claim to humanity and the 'universal' human rights such humanity affords. Therein lies the hostility inherent in hospitality (Derrida, 2000). As Hannah Arendt shows in her seminal work on displacement in the twentieth century, "the right to have rights" is guaranteed only through citizenship (2017 [1951]: 388). To those who do not belong – the stateless, foreigners – rights are only *granted*, with provisions.

This chapter examines this ever-present hostility in the context of Dankix – and how it enables and empowers violent relationships of subordination – by analysing encounters between kochberan and volunteers where hospitality, racialisation, and bordering practices are deeply entangled. Finally, this chapter examines two seemingly opposed logics of hostile/hospitable aid distribution: the queue and the café. Volunteers often manage material distributions by creating and enforcing a queueing system. In response, a kochber and alleged smuggler named Farhad built a café from which food and materials are given without the need for a queue. These two sites frame the ways in which kochberan acquire survival items, and their comparison further illuminates the relationships of power elucidated in the above vignette.

The politics of distribution

Volunteers

Many kochberan rely on material distributions by French and British non-profit organisations for survival items such as tents, food, and clothing. Other organisations sometimes travel to Dankix from neighbouring countries, most notably Belgium and the Netherlands, but do not come often enough for kochberan to rely on their distributions. Nearly every organisation is underfunded and understaffed. Depending on the organisation, their volunteers often work eight to twelve hour days either without pay or in return for a small stipend. Most British volunteers come to

Dankix for several weeks or months, and on rare occasions stay for a year or longer. The majority are young – between eighteen and twenty-six years old – (non)racialised as white, do not have children, and disproportionately belong to the British middle class. This is likely because most are unpaid (although they are given room and board) indicating that they have the ability to volunteer their time without significant consequence, financial or otherwise. Most of them, at the time of fieldwork, volunteered with grassroots organisations that fell under the umbrella of a London-based parent non-profit called Refugee Aid. On the other hand, most local French volunteers are either retired, or work during the day and volunteer their spare time. Some work outside of Dankix from 9 am to 5 pm before volunteering with French grassroots organisations in Dankix until late in the night. Others offer specialised skills, particularly if they practice law or medicine, and earn a salary through their aid work which enables them to support people in Dankix full-time. Even so, many leave these organisations after a few years, and the burnout and turnover rate is high.

The organisations remain in constant contact with one another and meet all together regularly, but there are often internal conflicts which can stall or obstruct goals. Conflicts most often arise from disagreements about the proximity of the organisations to the state, the extent of their complicity in displacing responsibility from the state to civil society, and about individual volunteers' behaviour. It has only seldom been suggested that kochberan are involved in these meetings. This suggestion has often been refused due to the widely held belief among organisations that kochberan will inevitably elect smugglers as their representatives. There is therefore no direct kochber representation and very little kochber input in the organisations' planning and decision-making processes.

During the time of my fieldwork there were no Kurdish speakers working or volunteering with these organisations, with the notable exception of several women who work with the Refugee Women's Centre and learned Kurdish in Dankix over a number of years.¹⁶ A separate organisation also houses several Kurdish asylum seekers who distribute lunch in Dankix each Friday and are sometimes solicited for help with translation. One of the medical organisations and one of the material

¹⁶ By the time of writing, four organisations have employed interpreters or offer stipends to volunteers who speak Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, and other languages spoken in Calais and Dankix.

distributors for men work with Arabic speakers, but many kochberan in Dankix do not speak Arabic. Kochberan therefore rely on friends with some English, on children (who have often picked up several languages along the *rega*, the route from Kurdistan to and through Europe), or on smugglers who speak fluent French, English, or another European language. Interactions with volunteers can therefore be frustrating for both parties involved and are rife with miscommunication and misunderstanding, as is examined below.

Refugee Aid

One British organisation operating in northern France, Refugee Aid,¹⁷ is widely recognised in the United Kingdom, very well-funded, and has projects across Europe. Despite its resources, it had a confusing and inconsistent presence in Dankix during the time of my fieldwork. Founded by a few British nationals in 2015, those working for the organisation are effective fundraisers and therefore fund various grassroots non-profit organisations operating in the Calais settlements and in Dankix. These smaller organisations usually have a specific demographic focus including women, families, children, and (those who volunteers believe to be) unaccompanied minors. These groups, however, form a small percentage of Dankix's population, and most single men in Dankix have limited options for material distributions of clothing, shoes, shelter, and warm sleeping equipment. Prior to the establishment of Refugee Aid in 2015, the landscape of 'aid provision' in northern France was diverse. Networks of French locals supported people in informal camps in various ways such as by cooking and distributing meals, providing information, and welcoming people into their homes for brief periods of time. The British founders of Refugee Aid, however, used the might of marketing, celebrity-endorsements, and fundraising – in a time when the so-called European 'refugee crisis' was at its peak – to displace these networks. Through this displacement, Refugee Aid has created a dependency on its services in both Calais and Dankix.¹⁸

¹⁷ 'Refugee Aid' is a pseudonym.

¹⁸ This dependency became acutely clear in 2021, when Refugee Aid decided to withdraw its presence and funding entirely from northern France in order to establish itself elsewhere, for instance along the US-Mexico border. The grassroots organisations which had previously relied on its funding are now struggling to maintain their presence and services. There are several reasons for their complete withdrawal, one of which is likely due to new immigration legislation. As will be outlined in the Conclusion, the British Nationality and Borders Bill effectively criminalises aid work in informal

Refugee Aid stockpiles donations in a warehouse in Calais and conducts mass distributions weekly in Dankix. These distributions are often related to current stock levels rather than specific needs, leading to, for instance, the distribution of thin t-shirts during winter. While several volunteers have attempted to adapt their distributions to suit the particular needs in Dankix, Refugee Aid has repeatedly slipped back into this stockpiling model. As is illustrated below, this is due to a combination of inexperience, the high turnover rate in volunteer warehouse managers, volunteers' inability and sometimes unwillingness to communicate effectively with kochberan, perceptions of steep class differences between kochberan in Dankix and migrants in the Calais camps, and a widespread misunderstanding of the role of smugglers and kinship networks in resource distribution.¹⁹ The stockpiling model is also often justified by Refugee Aid workers and volunteers as necessary due to the far larger population in Dankix than in other informal camps, such as those in the Calais area. A further, related argument often posited by Refugee Aid workers and volunteers is that during evictions in Calais (which usually occur on the same times and days each week) migrants usually move their shelters and belongings to avoid confiscation by the police. In Dankix, however, evictions are spontaneous. Consequently, police are more likely to destroy all shelters and material items. The sheer number of items necessary, aid workers often argue, means that their stock would be rapidly depleted were it distributed based upon need. The stockpiling model, in this way, operates in tandem with the eviction model of the state: volunteers anticipate evictions, and therefore withhold material items so that their stock does not run low. The level of stock is, in these instances, prioritised over its distribution. At times when it is difficult for kochberan to access material items outside of volunteer distributions, the stockpiling model has left men sleeping without tents, sleeping bags, or blankets for several weeks after police evictions.

During one such period of intense, produced material scarcity, two new British volunteers, Luke and Rachel, took charge of an old distribution system from the

camps along the France-UK border. It exposes aid workers to prosecution by removing the requirement of financial gain in assisting or facilitating illegal immigration to the UK; anyone seen to be 'helping' those attempting to cross the border – potentially by providing them shelter such as a tent, or information on who to call when in danger during a boat crossing – will be subject to prosecution. As of the time of writing, the Bill is being considered in the House of Commons.

¹⁹ This final point is examined in Chapter Three.

previous year that was designed to tailor distributions to the needs of individual men. They did this in an effort to reach kochberan for whom mass weekly distributions may be inaccessible. Ali's and Hama's interactions with them illuminate the ways in which volunteer hospitality is conditionalized in Dankix.

Shkar, Rawand, and I are sitting on the rocks at the edge of the lake trying to catch fish with a bit of string and pieces of baguette. We have been unsuccessful for a couple of hours, but Shkar says if he has to eat the Brits' distributed food one more time, "I'll lose my mind," so we continue our efforts to catch our dinner. As I hold the fishing line, Rawand lays his head in Shkar's lap, who is deftly threading his eyebrows and beard-line with string. Across the field, Ali calls out to me from Saheka, the Kurdish term for the large car park from which volunteers distribute.

"Victoria, are you free? Can you come translate something for me, please?" I hand the fishing line to Rawand and walk over to Saheka.

Ali is standing with a group of men waiting to receive the shoes they ordered with two Refugee Aid volunteers, Luke and Rachel. Luke and Rachel only recently arrived in northern France but are now in charge of all of Refugee Aid's distributions for men in Dankix. Many of the men are visibly upset, and some are in angry discussion with the volunteers, who shake their heads and repeat 'no' and 'sorry' in English, their faces expressionless.

Ali sees that I have approached them. "Victoria, come here. These new guys changed everything again, and now they won't give me shoes. You know that my shoes are ripped and broken, tell them." Ali is referring to how British volunteers come and go rapidly, and newcomers often like to make their mark by reorganising the distribution system. While I am happy to translate, I dislike being in the middle of interactions between volunteers and kochberan. Both groups assume that I will 'take their side,' so to speak, and tend to be hurt when I express my opinion. I therefore try to play the role of the disengaged and unemotional translator.

“Okay, just tell me what you want me to say in English and I’ll say it. But you have to tell me word-for-word.”

“Fine. Tell them that I ordered shoes on Wednesday. They told me I could come get them today. Why won’t they give them to me?”

I turn to Rachel and translate this into English for her. She replies, which I translate back to Ali, “Hey Victoria, I know. Tell him that I know, okay? But I’m saying that he’s gotten shoes from us before. So, he can’t do it again. You can only get shoes once.”

Ali: “How do you know I’ve gotten shoes before?”

Rachel: “We just know. We remember your face.”

Ali: “Are you serious? Of course you remember my face, I’ve been here for three months. I queue for food every day. I come talk to you every day. That doesn’t mean that I’ve gotten shoes from you.”

Rachel: “You’ve gotten shoes from us before. You can’t get them again.”

Rachel then turns to me and says, “We just don’t have enough shoes to keep giving to people. We can only give them once per person.”

Ali curses at her and walks away, punching the metal skip full of rubbish as he leaves Saheka and walks towards his tent in the forest. The rest of the group takes advantage of this and quickly solicit me for translation as well. A purported smuggler tells Rachel, through me:

“This system doesn’t work. This system only benefits you. If you really wanted to help us, you’d try harder. You’d listen to us instead of just saying ‘no, sorry,’ ‘no, sorry.’ Why are you giving us 200 t-shirts? We need shoes, we need coats, we’re cold. We need sleeping bags. Nobody has tents, only the families have tents. All of the single men are sleeping with nothing, we’re freezing to death.”

Rachel: "I understand that you're angry and that this is difficult. We just don't have enough to give to people twice."

"Then get enough."

Another man asks, "Can I write my name down? I only have these flip-flops"

Rachel: "Sorry, if you have flip-flops we can't give you shoes."

At this point, Hama pushes through the crowd. His left foot is covered with bandages up to the ankle and he limps as he moves towards the front of the group. He indicates to me to translate for him.

Hama: "Hi, my name's Hama. I ordered shoes a few days ago. Are they here?"

Luke: "Your shoes look fine to me, mate. Sorry, we can only change your shoes if you really need it."

Hama: "What? But these aren't mine, they're my friend's. I have trench foot from the rain and my shoes were soaking wet, so my friend gave me his extra pair. When you give me shoes, I'll give these back to him."

Luke: "That's not how it works, you have a pair of good shoes on you now. Can't change them, sorry."

Hama turns to me, stunned, as the crowd behind us shouts angrily at Luke.

"Victoria, tell them. I'm not lying, these aren't my shoes." I tell him that I will speak with Luke on his behalf.

Luke tells me that they do not give people shoes outright, but that they exchange them. If someone receives a pair of shoes from them, they must give them a pair of shoes in return, "This is to stop people from lying and coming back all the time to get shoes they don't need. The things is, they trick you. A

lot of people don't care, they'll try to trick you and lie to you. So, we need to have these systems in place."

Upon hearing this, I am unable to maintain my air of neutrality and I turn away from him so as not to betray my feelings. Some of the men see my flushed face and grimace and ask me what Luke had said. After my translation, they shake their heads and click their tongues.

"Racist."

"I'm not a thief."

"We're not animals."

Hama leaves, and returns some time later with his friend, who is carrying Hama's old, tattered, wet shoes in a plastic bag. They approach Luke, who agrees to exchange Hama's old shoes for a pair of donated trainers. Hama returns his friend's shoes and laces up his new trainers in silence.

Once the crowd disperses, Rachel approaches me, smiling, "Hey, thanks for translating over there. But really, now is not the time to start a conversation about whether you disagree with our methods. If you would like to talk about that, you can call or text any time. But here it's a bit inappropriate, don't you think?"

A few evenings later, Luke and Rachel are invited to the house in which I live for drinks. Luke sits across from me at a table on the front porch and asks about my research. He wants to know more about Kurdish culture, and more specifically what it is about Kurdish culture that makes Kurds act duplicitously.

He tells me that he also works in Calais, and that the Eritreans there have a more egalitarian organisation within the settlements. He can trust them because they would never ask for something unless they 'truly' needed it. They

look out for each other and help each other, he claims, while the Kurds often lie and spend much of their time fighting with one another.

There are two key aspects of the vignette above that I wish to untangle here: the conditionality of aid distribution and Luke's racialisation of kochberan.

Conditionality

Luke and Rachel have created certain conditions upon which receiving shoes is dependent: the shoes of the potential beneficiary must have rips or holes that are visible (to Luke and Rachel), and they must exchange shoes, rather than throwing out their old pair. These conditions are in place because they do not have access to enough donated shoes to distribute to everyone in Dankix, several times. Luke and Rachel are not in charge of ordering stock or arranging donation deliveries, although they have some say in establishing Refugee Aid's priorities and needs-list. At the time, Refugee Aid were stockpiling most of their shoes to be distributed the following month, and most of the shoes available were to be distributed in Calais, rather than in Dankix. One volunteer, who was a warehouse manager with Refugee Aid at the time, explained this reasoning to me, which reveals some of the limitations imposed upon volunteers as they make decisions about how – and to whom – they distribute:

In Calais, you need to understand, people come with nothing. They don't even have sandals on their feet; they're bare. We have to prioritise them, because they also don't have the money to go buy a twenty-euro pair of trainers, not like some of the guys in Dunkirk who have money. We're stockpiling because there's talk of an eviction coming, and we'd rather have enough shoes to distribute when the temperature drops below freezing than now, in autumn.

The conditions attached to their shoe distribution – that old shoes are ripped and must be exchanged before receiving a new pair – work to bolster Luke and Rachel's position as arbiters of 'true' need. The logic of this distribution system implies that kochberan cannot be trusted to understand when they truly need shoes. Their shoes therefore must be examined by the volunteers, whose system of distribution

hierarchises their capacity for judgment as superior to that of kochberan. As was briefly mentioned before the vignette above, organisations have consistently rejected proposals to include kochberan in development and planning meetings. What is more, most of those working or volunteering in these organisations have never raised the proposal of including kochberan in joint meetings, projects, or daily activities in the first place. It is implied that volunteers know what is best for kochberan, and that they alone have the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to provide material support in Dankix.

Luke characterises kochberan as tricksters and liars because, he believes, even when kochberan know they do not need new shoes, they continue to attempt to access Refugee Aid's distribution. He believes kochberan either stockpile shoes or sell them to newcomers. The conditions attached to shoe distributions thus accomplish two things: bestowing the volunteer with the power to judge not only *true* need, but also to filter out those behaving in a way the volunteers deem unacceptable. In returning to the notion of hospitality, the volunteers in this vignette, as masters of the house, have outlined the 'house rules.' Luke believes that kochberan are poor guests because he and his colleagues have created a system of distribution in which to be an ideal guest is to submit to the asymmetry of power between host and guest, volunteer and kochber. As soon as the guest asks for what the host perceives to be too much, or worse, attempts to trick the host into providing more than they were prepared to do, the guest is rejected (Khosravi, 2010: 94). Just as the international asylum regime is predicated upon conditional hospitality, wherein the host is the state and the guest is the asylum seeker, so is the kochber-volunteer relationship. The system of material distribution in Dankix effectively strengthens and naturalises the hierarchy of power dividing volunteers and kochberan, as Hama's experience of distribution demonstrates.

Seth Holmes encounters something similar on a farm in Washington State (2013). Illegalised Triqui migrants pick berries on the farm, and local white teenaged 'checkers' punch the pickers' timecards and weigh their buckets of berries. Checkers' supervisors tell them to watch the pickers closely, as they will try to "get away with" overfilling their buckets (*ibid.*: 70). As one of Holmes's research participants describes: "[checkers were] looking at people and telling them "No!" without speaking Spanish enough to explain what they mean by "No," and just refusing to weigh the buckets of berries" (*ibid.*: 69). The checkers in Washington and

volunteers in Dankix have the power to simply say “no” without offering further explanation. The onus is placed on pickers and kochberan to figure out what is amiss in their interaction, because their dependence upon those withholding the service or resource leaves them with no other choice. Holmes argues that the “limited possibility of relationships between [white, non-Spanish speaking farm workers and Triqui pickers] because of language barriers had become symbolically projected as assumed character flaws onto the indigenous pickers themselves” (*ibid.*: 68). In Dankix, Luke and Rachel (and most other volunteers and aid workers) not only have a limited ability to build meaningful relationships with kochberan who do not speak English, but they also cannot effectively and sensitively distribute in situations depending on complex verbal communication, such as that included in the vignette above. To Luke, who is concerned with levels of stock and is situated as a guard protecting a resource, Hama is trying to ‘trick’ him into giving him a second pair of shoes. Luke attributes the failures of the distribution system to kochberan themselves, as reflective of their individual and collective characters. This process constitutes symbolic violence, or the way in which relations of domination are made to appear natural (Bourdieu, 1977; 2001). The conditions situating both kochberan and volunteers as they encounter one another enable the naturalisation of a hierarchy of power between them. It *becomes* naturalised, however, through a series of ‘small,’ everyday, or “softer” violences – saying “no” without explanation, characterising kochberan as tricksters and liars, and arguing that a man with trench foot does not need new shoes (Scheper-Hughes, 1993: 221). Soft violence, a hallmark of migrant precarity in a plurality of contexts, enacts both the social and symbolic capital of volunteers as legitimised by their access to survival items of which kochberan are in need (*see, e.g.,* Parreñes, et al., 2020). It “cloaks the unequal relationship” – invisibilises it – while simultaneously strengthening their control (*ibid.*: 1).

Racialisation

As the vignette above shows, hospitality is not concerned solely with a single, first encounter. Instead, host and guest constantly encounter and reencounter one another because the border is not a fixed line but is dynamic; it is diffused throughout communities and reproduced through everyday practice by members of those

communities (van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002). This kind of everyday bordering is a key technology of border control and is intimately linked with processes of racialisation.²⁰ For instance, not only are immigrants regarded as temporary guests in their ‘host’ countries, but so are the children of racialised immigrants (Khosravi, 2010: 93). Jasmine K. Gani points out that, while the children and grandchildren of Polish migrants in the UK may be accepted as ‘insiders’ because they are not racialised as distinct from white Britons, the children and grandchildren of racialised migrants may still experience hostility from members of the British polity as ‘outsiders’ who should ‘go home’²¹ despite having been born in the UK (2017). Those “possessing the (visual) markers of Otherness thus are eternal newcomers, forever suspended in time, forever ‘just arriving’” (El-Tayeb, 2011: xxv). Racialisation is therefore itself a bordering practice that is concerned with “projects of belonging” or differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and subsequently bestowing or withholding from people the right to enter, stay, and to belong (Yuval-Davis, et al., 2017: 1049; see *also* Balibar, 2002). Indeed, as was outlined in the Introduction, the birth and development of immigration control in the UK results directly from Britain’s bid to maintain its Empire while denying racialised colonial subjects rights of entry to the mainland (El-Enany, 2020).

In order both to enforce and justify Refugee Aid’s system of shoe distribution, Luke mobilises a racialising discourse. Racialisation is the process of ascribing certain characteristics to a group of people to make them ‘other,’ while, at the same time, ascribing particular attributes to the self. It simultaneously constitutes both the subject and object of racialisation so that, as Frantz Fanon states, “[t]he white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness” (1986 [1952]: 11; Waters, 1997). Luke’s words are evocative of a “new racism” in the UK that constructs asylum seekers as parasites who take more than they deserve (Gibson, 2003: 369). Migrants/asylum seekers accept the offer of hospitality in ways that the host does not expect, and in ways that do not coincide with the host’s constructions of morality, guest-hood, and aid-giving. Simultaneously, in constructing the migrant as parasite,

²⁰ See Yuval-Davis, et al.’s summary of the process of racialisation: “[r]acism, or, rather, the process of racialization, is a discourse and practice which constructs immutable boundaries between collectivities which is used to naturalize fixed hierarchical power relations between them” (2017: 1048).

²¹ Used as a slur, the phrase ‘go home’ is considered a racist hate crime by the UK Home Office (despite the phrase being emblazoned on Home Office vans throughout the country in order to intimidate migrants) (Bulman, 2019).

the host (the taxpayer or, in this case, the volunteer) reads the self as self-sufficient and productive.

Luke also compares kochberan with Eritrean migrants in Calais. He essentialises Kurdish “culture” as encouraging duplicitousness, in-fighting, and trickery, while constructing Eritreans as egalitarian, fair, and humble (all of which are tropes embedded in coloniality, with their own racialising overtones, aims, and effects). The creation of a ‘good’ migrant – or a guest who seems to conform to the host’s expectations – is mobilised to further justify casting out the ‘bad’ migrant (see Shukla, 2017). The (white) volunteer seals the (racialised) kochber in his duplicitousness and incapacity for not only fulfilling his needs, but for understanding what his needs are in the first place. Simultaneously, the (white) volunteer seals himself in his generosity and hospitality, “for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man...his inferiority comes into being through the other” (Fanon, 1986 [1952]: 110). Just as soft, symbolic violence naturalises the hierarchy between kochberan and volunteers, racialisation legitimates this asymmetry by ‘misrecognising’²² the source of miscommunications or tensions. These tensions are taken as evidence of kochberan’s inability to know themselves and their needs. When Luke attributes lying and in-fighting to Kurds, he does so as part of a “racialised regime of representation” (Bourdieu, 2000; Hall, 1997: 249). In this way, symbolic violence generates forms of racialised knowledge that normalise and duplicate further forms of violence against a culturally-constructed Other (Britton, 2015).

Racial violence and border violence are inseparable from one another, and at times indistinguishable. They stem from a common source and serve a common purpose: to objectify, make inferior, and dehumanise the racialised Other in order to naturalise hierarchies of power. This ultimately ensures that the Other is perceived as a temporary guest who is tolerated but not entitled to aid. Indeed, *mundane* practices and discourses are often that which “mark[s] other people as irredeemably ‘Other’ and that license[s] the unleashing of exemplary violence against them” (Gregory, 2004: 16). To understand how constructing Kurds as thieves is a key process of racialisation, Luke’s comments must be situated within their colonial and

²² For an outline of Bourdieu’s (2000) theory of misrecognition, see the discussion in the Introduction.

Orientalist context, as well as within the context of Kochberan's everyday interactions with other Europeans, such as French locals.

In order to illustrate the way processes of racialisation operate in the everyday, Fanon describes an incident in which a young white boy says, "[I]ook, a Negro! Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" and it was at this point that Fanon "discovered [his] blackness...and [he] was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships..." (1986 [1952]: 112). The term 'Ali Baba' is similarly powerful for Kochberan in Dankix. In order to introduce this term, I turn to a conversation I had with Karwan, a geologist from Slemani (a major city in Southern Kurdistan) in his mid-fifties. He tells me:

Anywhere you are in France, French people call refugees 'Ali Baba.' This is how France looks at us, they're scared, like we're thieves. We know this through war, rape, thievery, things that are unclean. If you and I went to Auchan by bus, we can't sit together. If there's an Iraqi sitting, French people don't sit next to us. They're afraid of us, or they say we're not clean.

Because there are no showers or toilets, everyone is ill. There are coughs, fevers. People get diarrhoea. There's nowhere to wash our clothing, the water is cold. It doesn't clean anything.

At the [border] control, I was in a lorry. French police told me to steal what was in the lorry. Why? The lorry is going to England. It's full of clothes. They tell us to steal because they know us only as thieves. This is how they perceive us [...] I went to Auchan and the security said, "come, Ali Baba." They thought I stole this backpack.

The term 'Ali Baba' originates from the main character in *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, a story in *The Thousand and One Nights*.²³ 'Ali Baba' is often used by Iraqis (Kurdish and otherwise) who speak little English and wish to communicate the

²³ *The Thousand and One Nights* is a compilation of folk tales of Arab and Persian origin. The first known text of *Ali Baba* was written in the eighteenth century by a French Orientalist, Antoine Galland, who was introduced to the tale by an Aleppine storyteller, Hanna Diyab (Chraïbi, 2004).

concept of thievery to a European or American (Mahdi, 2016). In Dankix, both volunteers and kochberan who do not share a language use the term in communications with one another either as a noun – e.g., a thief – or as a verb – e.g., ‘He Ali Baba’d my phone.’ The term is almost never used by kochberan with one another, except to mock Western stereotypes about people from Iraq. This use of the term originated during the United States’ and United Kingdom’s invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. During this time, American and British troops, their Iraqi allies, and Iraqi civilians used the term with one another to refer to thievery. The term then morphed into a slur used by troops to refer specifically to Iraqis they suspected of theft, before further transforming into a general racialising slur for any Iraqi civilian (Mahdi, 2016).

Most kochberan in Dankix are aware of the history of the term Ali Baba, particularly if they worked with American or British troops in Kurdistan. Frishta, a woman from Kirkuk, was a child at the time of the invasion and remembers the occupation well. One of her most vivid childhood memories is of soldiers bringing her American candy – Twizzlers – from their military base. They lived in such close proximity to one another that she learned a few of their phrases. I once saw her crying alone in a forested area of Jangaleka. I approached her and asked her what had happened, to which she replied:

A French woman was running on the path when I was walking from Auchan to our tent. She saw me and she did this [she lifts up her middle-finger] and said ‘Ali Baba.’ I told her [in English] ‘fuck you’ and did the gesture back to her, but it really upsets me. I remember that from when I was a child. [Angrily] I’m human too.

The term ‘Ali Baba’ racialises kochberan and fixes (or “seals” as Fanon says) them as thieves, tricksters, and liars (1986 [1952]: 11). In discussing the use of racialisation as a colonial tool during the Iraq War, Daniel Egan argues that these slurs, while initially intended to dehumanise Iraqis to make it easier to kill them on the battlefield, also enabled further forms of imperial violence. The Iraq War, he argues, was made possible through the construction of a colonial subject whereby the coloniser claims to ‘know’ the colonised and subsequently produces a population who deserve to be dominated (Egan, 2007). This exemplifies what Edward Said

refers to as Orientalism, or the ways in which the East and West/Orient and Occident have been imaginatively produced by a litany of ways of discussing, writing about, and otherwise representing the Orient throughout Western history (2003 [1978]). Orientalist representation has produced the Orient as discrete from the Occident, and thus solidifies the Western self as Occidental. Western representations of the Orient – both imaginative and material – compose the unfamiliar/Oriental as lacking and inferior and the self/Occidental as superior in much the same way that racialisation naturalises hierarchy (Gregory, 2004). Orientalism thereby enables cultural dispossession, conquest, and rule by colonial and imperial powers.

To be human is to be recognised as such by others (Fanon, 1986 [1952]). To be classed as a racialised colonial or imperial subject – to be called ‘Ali Baba’ – is to be denied that humanity, as Frishta acutely feels. The Orientalist racialisation of Iraqis during the Iraq War and subsequent occupation is inseparable from the Orientalist racialisation of kochberan in Dankix. As Frishta says, many kochberan remember encounters with American or British troops or indeed worked with them closely. Frishta’s experience exemplifies one of the more blatant ways in which ‘Ali Baba’ and other Orientalist representations of kochberan as thieves and tricksters, such as that which occurred during Refugee Aid’s shoe distribution, reinscribes this colonial²⁴ relationship and fixes kochberan under the colonial gaze.

Others dehumanise kochberan through exoticisation. One (white) volunteer told me in English, as we sat on the floor of a hotel room she had booked for her and Bryar (who was sitting next to us, but did not understand):

He’s getting a bit clingy though. This is how these Kurdish guys are: you fuck them once and they think you’re getting married! Maybe I’ll move on to Egyptians next. Calais has so many of them.

Bryar told me that he chose to sleep with her several times because she suggested she might buy him dinner afterwards. Yet, this volunteer misunderstood what motivated Bryar to see her again and responded by attempting to dehumanise him by both hyper-sexualising him and employing Orientalist tropes about sex and

²⁴ For a comprehensive and compelling argument for the use of the term ‘colonial’ in the context of the American and British invasion of Iraq, see Derek Gregory’s *The Colonial Present* (2004).

marriage. Furthermore, she capitalised on the hierarchy of power that defined their relationship in order to coerce him into sleeping with her regularly.

I will return to the subject of racialisation near the end of this chapter, after an examination of other models of distribution. Ali's and Hama's interaction with Luke and Rachel showcases one example of several distribution systems employed by non-profit organisations in Dankix. Other distribution models include filling a van with items and opening its doors to allow people to collect what they need, a 'free shop' in which a variety of items are placed in the back of a van and organised similarly to a clothing shop, or a system whereby volunteers walk through living spaces in Dankix to assess individuals' needs and return with the items their organisation deems necessary. The most common mechanism for distributing material items to kochberan, however, is the single-file queue.

Each afternoon, kochberan assemble on Saheka, or the car park in Jangaleka from which volunteers normally distribute. They sit or stand on the pavement, chatting with one another or scrolling on their phones as they await the volunteers' arrival. The crowd usually expands to the hundreds before the organisations' fleet of white vans arrive, adorned with A4 information sheets, logos, and a mixture of British and French registration plates. The volunteers' arrival is reminiscent of how Michel Agier describes the appearance each day of aid organisations in Kenya's Dadaab camps: "...the procession arrives in the camps amid a cloud of dust left by their four-wheel drive vehicles, announcing the daily beginning of international assistance" (2008: 47, *quoted in* Khosravi, 2010: 36).

The queue

Volunteers do not distribute goods until kochberan have formed a queue behind their vans, if they have not already formed a 'pre-queue'²⁵ on Saheka in anticipation of the vans' arrival. Once the queue has been formed and is 'orderly' volunteers open the van doors and distribute items one-by-one. For a queue to be orderly, volunteers require that men are in single-file and are not 'cutting Ls.' Cutting Ls is a Kurdish

²⁵ A pre-queue is a queue that has formed before the arrival of the service or good for which the queuers are waiting (Mann, 1969).

term for jumping the queue that recalls the process by which people cut an L-shaped hole into the side of lorries during the process of irregularly crossing the border into the UK. Kochberan cut L-shaped holes in order to access the contents inside lorries. Some lorries carry goods in boxes that are labelled with the shipping address, and Kochberan use these addresses to ensure that the lorry is destined for the UK. If they choose to board the lorry, they crawl in through the hole.²⁶

Kochberan are ejected from the queue if they are verbally or physically aggressive, if they leave the line for an extended period of time, or if they attempt to touch the van's rear doors, its contents, or climb inside. Volunteers patrol the queue, ensuring that queuers are behaving according to these rules.



Figure 7 - Patches sewn onto the side of a lorry covering Ls cut by migrants; image by author.

Kochberan must wait in queues at least twice per day for food, and many more times if they need items such as clothing or bedding. There are queues for medicine, to see the doctor, for soap, and for a single disposable razor. There are

²⁶ I first learned of this practice when I heard a Kochber use the term 'cutting Ls' in reference to someone jumping the food queue.

queues for the showers and the toilets at Kampeka. There are queues to get help topping up SIM cards, to get legal advice, and to get on the list for accommodation. They wait under the hot sun, in downpours, and in freezing temperatures in the hopes of potentially getting a pair of thin cotton gloves or some socks and boxers. If they are too late, however, stock runs out or time is up and the volunteers call out to those remaining in the queue, apologising and asking them to return the following week. Sometimes the volunteers arrive late, come on a completely different time and day, park their van in a different location, or do not show up at all. It is up to kochberan to figure out their often-confusing schedules.

Power

Volunteers have the power to dictate and manage the timing of distributions due to their access to key resources. Subjection to waiting is one of many ways of experiencing power. Waiting is usually unevenly distributed: as Shahram Khosravi puts it, “[w]e all wait, but we wait differently” (2021: 13). The more powerful, such as the upper classes, have other means by which to access an item or service for which most are required to wait (Bourdieu, 2000; Schwartz, 1974). Their experiences of waiting is distinct from the experiences of those upon whom a wait has been imposed (Khosravi, 2021). Even if the powerful must wait, the conditions shaping their waiting time are often very different from those who are continuously and constantly subjected to waiting time (*ibid*). Excessive waiting time is therefore both reflective and reproductive of asymmetries of power, or, as Barry Schwartz puts it, “waiting subserves the distribution of power that it presupposes” (1974: 857). To impose a wait upon another is to deprive the waiter of ‘idle’ time, time that could be used by kochberan in Dankix to plan *derchwn* (passage to the UK), to collect items for and build one’s living space, to collect firewood in time for dinner, or any number of pressing survival activities.

Bourdieu argues that prolonged exposure to waiting moulds the behaviour of the queuer (2000). In other words, “[t]o be able to make a person wait is, above all, to possess the capacity to modify his conduct in a manner congruent with one’s own interests” (Schwartz, 1974: 844). In his analysis of queueing behaviour in Manus Prison – a closed, Australian asylum seeker processing centre which operated offshore on Papua New Guinea before its closure in 2019 – Kurdish journalist, writer,

and theorist Behrouz Boochani calls this a “domesticating process” by which hungry or otherwise deprived people are controlled by a logic imposed upon them by those distributing (2018b: 190). Those made to wait are ‘domesticated’ because their time and behaviour while waiting are regulated through a system of reward and punishment. Just as Boochani observes in Manus Prison, where he was detained for almost a decade, queues in Dankix reward those who ‘cut Ls’ (jump the queue). Cutting Ls can be accomplished by physically cutting in the line, by intimidating others into giving their portion of whatever was distributed, or by claiming to be part of a family (rather than single) in order to acquire more items.

Other rewarded behaviour includes running to form the beginning of the queue as soon as a white van enters Saheka, regardless of whether it is clear which item is being distributed that day. When a van arrives, it slowly circles around Saheka before parking. As it makes its rounds, searching for an empty space to park, men follow its rear doors in a crowd. Once the van stops, they jump into a line. A man named Aryos whoops and whistles when he sees the food van arrive during our English lessons. He and his friends laugh, “the animal feed has arrived!” referring to both the quality of the food and the behaviour of those who run after the vans. And yet, those who get to the front of the queue will always eat before the food runs out, will be seen by the doctor, or will manage to top up their SIM card.

Organisations that employ the queue frown upon organisations using alternative methods to regulate waiting time. For instance, as one aid worker and I watched a Belgian organisation haphazardly throw pairs of shoes out to a crowd of at least 100 men on Saheka he murmured to me, “This is disgusting. This turns people into animals.” And yet, as Aryos jokes by characterising pre-queueers as animals, the orderly queue for dinner distribution does the same. In order to examine the experience and implications of waiting time in Dankix, I turn to a discussion of two critical aspects of the queue: queueing as a manifestation of Ghassan Hage’s notion of “stuckedness,” and the ways in which the queueing system is reflected upon and interpreted by Kochberan (2009: 97).



Figure 8 - A queue for men's clothing in Auchan's parking lot; image by author.

'Stuckedness'

Bryar is standing in a long queue of nearly 100 men. It snakes around the perimeter of Saheka, and as men walk into Jangaleka they wander to the end of the line in groups. There are no white vans in the car park yet, so this is a pre-queue. Pre-queues sometimes form when a volunteer suggests they will bring a coveted item that day, such as winter coats or blankets.

As we wait, Bryar and I take selfies on his phone, using Snapchat filters to 'beautify' our features and add butterflies and sparkles to the image backgrounds. After a few dozen selfies Bryar becomes bored. "Ughhhh," he groans, "what should we do?"

We discuss the best way to pass the time and decide that we will create a 'secret' handshake.²⁷ Once we come up with one, we spend ten minutes perfecting it. The man in front of us watches and rolls his eyes. He looks back

²⁷ This refers to a handshake known only to Bryar and me, consisting of different gestures, that we used to greet one another thereafter.

down at his phone. The man behind us laughs and asks Bryar to teach him the handshake.

The novelty of our new handshake soon wears off. We stand in silence.

Bryar tries calling his mother on Facebook Messenger. She is not online, and the call does not go through.

Somewhere in the queue someone plays an Awat Bokani²⁸ song using YouTube. Someone a few dozen men back shouts, "Shut that shit off, it's garbage!"

A bird calls out. "That's a crow," Bryar says. "Mmhm," I agree.

I pick at my cuticles and Bryar stares blankly at the lake.

A couple of men fishing by the lake reel in a fish. "They caught a fish," I say.

"Yep," Bryar replies.

The man behind Bryar asks him how long he has been waiting. "I don't know," he responds.

Another man says, to nobody in particular, "I heard they were distributing sleeping bags." Bryar replies, "Me too."²⁹

Twenty minutes later a white van arrives. The volunteers distribute boxers and t-shirts. When Bryar realises this, he sighs and says, "Kwre fshaya [whatever,

²⁸ Awat Bokani is a Kurdish singer-songwriter who performs and records music in friends' and colleagues' living rooms, rather than in a studio. This type of music is often improvised, marked by nonsensical lyrics and sexual innuendos. While not controversial, this type of music is known to be either loved or hated, or, as the British say, 'marmite.'

²⁹ Bryar heard this from a volunteer who had, the week before, told several kochberan that while they could not distribute sleeping bags that day they should return the following week, because perhaps the organisation would be distributing sleeping bags then. For an examination of the way power is exercised through delay and deferral see Auyero, 2011.

man' or 'it doesn't matter, man'], time goes by for free here in the queue or out of the queue."

As the vignette above illustrates, queueing is usually rather boring. What is also significant, however, are Bryar's comments upon realising that he has been waiting for something that he does not need, and that he will not receive an item that he desperately needs, despite the time that he 'spent' waiting. He says that time goes by for free (in Kurdish, *kat ba lash aroat*) whether he is queueing or not. This expression – that time goes by for free – is repeated frequently by Kochberan. It is used similarly to how Khosravi's research participants and friends use the phrase "dead time" to describe prolonged periods of waiting, uncertainty, and arbitrariness as an undocumented person or as an asylum seeker awaiting a response on their claim (2010: 91; 2014; 2021). Ghassan Hage refers to this sense of "existential immobility" as "stuckedness" (2009: 97). Stuckedness, Hage observes, is "a situation where a person suffers from both the absence of choice or alternatives to the situation one is in and an inability to grab such alternatives even if they present themselves" (*ibid.*: 100).

This is not to say that those experiencing stuckedness have no agency. They can express and practice agency in numerous ways, including by 'sticking it out' and heroizing this endurance, or by migrating in order to seek a way out of a series of interrelated immobilities imposed upon them (*ibid.*). Kochberan can be understood as doing both of these things simultaneously. They endure the stuckedness manufactured by their illegalisation in Dankix, while also seeking a way out through attempted border crossings. Their presence in Dankix is itself a result of seeking a way out of the stuckedness they experienced in Kurdistan, prior to embarking on the *rega*, the irregular route to and through Europe. Indeed, in recounting their experiences in Kurdistan, Kochberan often describe the time they spent there as 'going by for free' and sometimes say that they 'did not start living' until they arrived in Europe. Bryar does not interpret the time he spent queueing for something he did not need as a significant loss, because even if he were engaged in other activities time would still be going by for free; he would still be 'stuck.' By uttering a phrase often used by Kochberan to describe generalised existential immobility, Bryar implies that time spent queueing (particularly when the waiting time does not result in the item or service expected) emphasises the stuckedness that he feels as an illegalised

person in Dankix. In this way, queueing is an everyday manifestation of the condition of immobility and uncertainty.

Blame deflection and symbolic violence

To understand the ways in which kochberan ascribe meaning to the queueing system, it is important to demonstrate how volunteers present both themselves and systemic queueing failures. Lasse Hansen provides a useful framework for analysing the interactions between waiters and those imposing a wait in his study of a welfare activation site in Denmark by identifying when supervisors deflect blame upwards or downwards (2020). I borrow from his model here in order to capture volunteer self-representation. During most mass distributions regulated by queues, organisations run out of stock and the queuers at the back do not receive anything. In these situations, volunteers tend to deflect blame both upwards and downwards.

Responses that I recorded constituting upwards blame deflection include: “It’s not my fault we don’t have any more sleeping bags, I’m sorry,” “We haven’t received a donation in weeks, I don’t know why,” and “I know as much as you, I only just got here last week.” By shifting blame upwards, volunteers disassociate themselves with failures in distribution and place responsibility on organisation managers and unnamed donors, who never step foot in Dankix and are therefore unable to be held accountable by kochberan. In a similar way that a welfare officer might blame the computer system for an error or late payment, this type of blame shifting depersonalises those responsible for systemic failures and enables volunteers to present themselves as powerless (Auyero, 2011). Other responses shift blame downwards and include the following: “There are hundreds of you, we can’t cope,” “You didn’t understand me,” “I thought you could read English?”³⁰ While volunteering, I have also deflected blame downwards. Often, kochberan complain that some families have multiple tents while most single men have no shelter materials. In response, I have said versions of the following: “It’s because there are fewer families, it’s easier to distribute to them. But there are almost a thousand single men, so it’s harder for the volunteers working with men to keep up.”

³⁰ Some organisations attempt to communicate with kochberan about when and where they will distribute, but almost always send communications in English. Kochberan who do not speak and/or read English therefore miss distributions or news about what items will be distributed.

Hansen argues that such blame deflection builds a trustful relationship between those waiting and those imposing the wait, while simultaneously encouraging those waiting to blame one another for prolonged extensions in waiting time (2020). I observed something similar in Dankix, where I recorded the following responses from kochberan who queued for over one hour but did not receive the item they expected (or did not receive anything at all): “It’s not their fault, they’re doing their best,” “They’re just volunteers, these poor people are working for free,” “It’s our fault, some people take more than they need. That’s why they run out,” and “What can I do? That’s just the way it is.” The nature and tone of these responses vary significantly from that framing the interaction recorded between Ali, Hama, Luke, and Rachel. In that vignette, one man tells them angrily that the distribution system does not work for kochberan, and that if they run out of items they should work on acquiring enough to distribute to everyone. Luke and Rachel’s distribution system is not regulated by the queue but instead attempts to approach kochberan as individuals with particular needs. Volunteers regulating single-file queues during mass distributions, however, trade their material donations for compliance, patience, and passivity. The queue as a mode of social organisation does not allow for negotiation with those imposing the wait (Auyero, 2011). Instead, volunteers’ recurrent downward blame deflection is echoed in kochberan’s own responses to significant failures in material distribution.

Volunteers’ downwards blame deflection, and kochberan’s lateral blame deflection, constitute another form of symbolic violence. Not only does symbolic violence normalise and naturalise inequity, but it also leads to the internalisation of inferiority by the dominated group (Bourdieu, 2001). Symbolic violence allows structures of power – here encompassing both volunteers and kochberan – to be invisibilised and collectively misrecognised as self-evident. In examining the responses concerning distribution failures recorded above, it is clear that failures are most often attributed to kochberan themselves. They are constructed as a problem which volunteers are struggling to solve. Many kochberan, too, perceive failures in the queue to be the result of their own shortcomings, whereby they are obstacles in the way of “poor” volunteers who are “working for free.” As we see below, the normalisation of the attribution of distribution failures to kochberan can have far-reaching consequences.

Spectacular violence

Deflecting blame to other kochberan who are perceived to be taking more than they need often leads to physical assaults and fighting in the queue, as is illustrated by the vignette below:

It is Friday, which means lunch is chicken, rice, and beans. A couple hundred people have already gathered at the Kampeka entrance, waiting for the non-profit organisation to arrive. Everyone is excited to eat something other than pasta, curry, and carrot salad. The volunteers eventually arrive – twenty minutes late – and drive their colourfully painted transit van into the small, paved car park at the entrance. Volunteers jump from the van and set up queueing areas with metal barriers, into which everyone rushes to get a space near the beginning of the queue to make sure they eat before the chicken runs out.

I stand alongside the family queue, chatting with a few women while they wait. After fifteen minutes or so, we hear a sharp cry to our right and everyone in the queue turns to watch the commotion. Pshtiwan has taken off his shirt and is circling another man, whom I do not recognise. He scowls as he tightly grips a butterfly knife. A few dozen men leap out from the queue and surround them, shouting. Rekar rushes over to Pshtiwan and puts his arms around his chest from behind, pulling him backwards. He breaks free and the men run towards the Kampeka gymnasium. Just before they reach the entrance, Pshtiwan swipes the other man with his knife, cutting deeply into his shoulder and dragging it towards his neck. The crowd of men surrounding them pull them apart, and Pshtiwan runs inside the gymnasium while the injured man falls to the ground, blood seeping through his grey t-shirt. Before Pshtiwan makes it to the living area, another man takes out a can of pepper spray and discharges it at close range into his eyes and nose. He cries out and stumbles backwards, before running back outside and into the tent area. Minutes later an ambulance arrives and takes the first injured man to the hospital. I find Pshtiwan leaning on my car behind Kampeka.

“Hey, can you take me to the train station? I need to get out of here.”

Tears are still streaming down his face, so I pour a few litres of water over his eyes and nose before helping him into my car and driving him into town. We wait at the train station in Dunkirk until he can orient himself and see again. He then boards a train for Paris, where he stays for a week or so before returning to Kampeka.

He is not running from the police; they are not looking for him. They were never called after the fight because kochberan, including victims of assault, usually do not want them involved.³¹ On those rare occasions when kochberan call the police and wish to press charges for assault, local policemen do not take the investigation seriously and do not follow up. Pshtiwan is instead running from the victim’s friends, who will attempt to retaliate when he returns.

I later ask Rekar what the fight was about.

“Over the bananas. Pshtiwan thought the guy took too many and wasn’t saving enough for the families. Also, earlier that day he’d taken Pshtiwan’s Bluetooth speaker and wouldn’t give it back. It was his own fault; he shouldn’t have stolen. And those guys that pretend they’re part of a family to take 100 bananas are arseholes. What do you need with 100 bananas? You’re one person. Leave the rest for people who actually need it.”

In the vignette above, Pshtiwan assaults a man who stole from him only after he witnessed this man take more than what Pshtiwan believed to be his fair share of bananas. Pshtiwan is considered by most in Dankix to be a respectable and fair person. He is from Said Sadiq, a small city of about 60,000 between Slemani and Halabja, and has been in Europe for nearly a decade. Although he has humanitarian protection in Italy and speaks the language, he has decided to cross to the United Kingdom, where he claims there are more work opportunities. Before he crosses, however, he is said to be working as a smuggler to earn enough money to buy a car

³¹ The reasons for this are illuminated in Chapter Four.

wash in Manchester. This way, if his asylum claim is refused, he will have money saved away to avoid destitution. When Pshtiwan returned from Paris to Dankix, I asked him why he assaulted that man during distribution. He responded,

Look, I'm tired of these guys taking more than they need. Is that respectful? No, it's not. That's some really fucked up behaviour if you ask me. These volunteers are trying their hardest, they cook us food and bring us what they can. There's not enough to go around because of people like that guy. If there's only ten cartons of bananas and he takes one whole carton, there will be people that go hungry later down in the queue.

There is a strong dislike among most kochberan for people who take more than they are perceived to need, and most failures during mass distributions – such as when people in the back of the queue go hungry or do not receive a sleeping bag – are attributed to greedy behaviour and cutting Ls.³² The fight illustrated above is not an exceptional example, and the queue is often the setting for such spectacular forms of interpersonal violence. While most kochberan assign blame for material shortages laterally, towards others in the queue, the excerpt from an interview below exemplifies the opinion of a vocal minority who deflect blame upwards, to volunteers and their respective organisations. Dana is an Eastern Kurd (from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iran) who had recently arrived in Dankix after receiving a refusal on his asylum application in Germany. After another, unrelated fight in a queue he offered the following:

When things like this happen, it is first and foremost the fault of the people giving things out. You know why? There are 500 people in the camp, 100 of them need t-shirts, and you brought fifty. The first time it's your own fault.

³² Pshtiwan's actions were, consequently, understood by most kochberan as morally legitimate. While tangential to my main argument, there is a wealth of literature about the North and South American context analysing the moral economy of interpersonal violence (see, e.g., Part One of Auyero, Bourgois, and Scheper-Hughes, 2015). Similarly, studies of vigilantism and pluralism also illuminate the relationships between structural violence, interpersonal violence, and collective moral valuations of justice and deservingness (see, e.g., Nivette, 2016; Penglase, 2014; Scheper-Hughes, 1993). Many of these studies are informed by Primo Levi's seminal work examining moral ambiguity in Auschwitz concentration camp (1988).

You need to learn how to better distribute, how to make queues, or how to make a system where everyone who needs something can come and get it. The first time it's your own fault, like with the government. They need to find economic solutions, political solutions and then only after can they subject people to their systems.

Dana argues that shortages during distributions are manufactured. They derive principally from the failure of non-profit organisations to acquire enough material items. Yet, as I noted above, this perception of queueing and other systems of distribution is uncommon among kochberan. Unlike Dana and several others I met while watching fights in the queues, who deflect blame upwards to volunteers themselves, most kochberan deflect blame laterally, and perceive material scarcity to be a result of their own large population size or of a few 'bad apples' cutting Ls. They sympathise with volunteers who present themselves as powerless to acquire more items, solve cross-linguistic communication problems, or to involve kochberan in planning and decision-making processes.³³ The queue is therefore interpreted as a necessary evil, something kochberan must begrudgingly engage with, and in which time 'goes by for free.' For many volunteers, the queue is equally perceived to be an inevitable mechanism of distributing to several hundreds of men. The queue's failure to consistently deliver is understood to be the responsibility of 'higher-ups' or the fault of kochberan themselves, as we see reflected in the following excerpt from an interview with a Refugee Aid volunteer:

Volunteer: "This is the best we can do in these circumstances. There are what, 1200 guys in Dunkirk now? We want to get more donations in, but apparently there have been some problems because the warehouse is empty. So, we're making do."

Victoria: "Is it possible to buy tents until you get more donations in?"

³³ It is important to note that most organisations focus their funds and energy on material accrual. Many have multiple volunteers and/or workers in designated positions dealing with donations and stock. On the other hand, as has been discussed above, most do not seriously attempt to involve kochberan in planning processes or daily operations, and many do not prioritise translation or cultural mediation.

Volunteer: “Oh, I don’t know. I’m not in charge of the financial decisions. But I’m sure whoever is in charge is trying everything they can.”

The regulations governing kochberan’s waiting time are further examples of the conditionality of volunteer hospitality. In order to receive an item, kochberan must wait patiently and passively. The queue creates a space wherein kochberan are discouraged from criticising either the volunteers who design and enforce the distribution system or the system itself. When waiting time is organised using a different logic – such as that of Luke and Rachel’s shoe distribution – kochberan assume a critical stance, and (to an extent) express their dissatisfaction and bewilderment with the system of distribution when it fails. To return to Boochani’s analysis of the queue, the single-file line enabling volunteers to conduct mass distributions domesticates those upon whom a wait has been imposed by conditioning them to behave in a way amenable to those distributing (2018b). The queue functions for volunteers only if kochberan are compliant, and yet when kochberan are compliant the queue sometimes does not function for them. In order to mitigate failures in the queueing system, some kochberan cut Ls, and in turn provide a scapegoat for both volunteers who deflect blame downwards and kochberan who deflect blame laterally.

Farhad, who has been in Dankix for over a decade, believes that the logic of the queue is reproductive of colonial relations of dependency, whereby kochberan are controlled by French and British organisations and volunteers in their bid for survival.³⁴ As a form of resistance to the queue, he built a café in Jangaleka. Comparing these two methods of distribution, and the distinct modes of hospitality informing them, sheds light on the particular forms of violence embedded in each.

³⁴ For a brief history of French and British colonial violence and occupation in post-Ottoman Southern Kurdistan, see Appendix A.

The café

I am on my way to see the café that has been built by Farhad. He learned fluent French in prison, where he had been incarcerated on smuggling charges (although he now claims that he is no longer involved in smuggling).

I walk along the muddy path into a dense thicket in Jangaleka. It rained last night, and my boots sink deep into the wet sludge. With each step, I need to wrench my foot out before it gets sucked in too deep. As I slowly make my way along the path, I pass two men struggling to push an Auchan shopping cart full of thick tree branches through the mud. They give up and carry it together, sweating and swearing under their breath.

Farhad's café is made up of wooden slats along its perimeter and is covered by several large blue tarps under which he has strung fairy lights. There are a few white plastic chairs and a small fold-out table in the middle of the muddy floor. On the far end sits a long rectangular table, behind which is a gas cooker and a man preparing something that smells unmistakably like lamb. Another man places aluminium atop shisha pipes before poking small holes in the foil with a toothpick. A few blackened teapots and boxes of instant coffee, sugar, and Do Ghazal tea (popular in Iraq and Iran) rest on the long table.

The only sound is the whirl of the generator powering the fairy lights and various charging points for phones. Over a dozen men sit in plastic chairs lining the perimeter of the café, charging their phones as they scroll through Facebook and open Snapchat videos. The meat sizzles in oil on the gas cooker and the men murmur quietly to one another. Once the shisha pipes have been prepared, their quiet discussion is occasionally interrupted when they take a long pull from the pipe, a distinctive bubbling sound emanating from the pipe with each inhale. There is no heater, but our body heat and the smoke are trapped by the tarps above and warm us, and thick brush separates the café from the path, providing a bit of privacy.

I ask if I am permitted to sit with the men, who nod and pull up a wicker chair around the fold-out table. A man nicknamed Aziz brings me a plastic cup of steaming, sugary tea. I chat and smoke cigarettes with the men for a while, who are all from Slemani. When I see the men behind the rectangular table are no longer busy, I approach them and ask for Farhad.

He emerges from a tent behind the café, and we introduce ourselves. He asks, in French, how I found this place, and I explain that a family living about 100 metres behind the café told me about it yesterday. He seems satisfied with this and agrees to an interview. Not today, though. He is busy.

“Do you have a car?”

“Yes, why?”

“You can return tomorrow but do me a favour.” He picks up a plastic thirty-litre jerry can, “Fill this up for me. Get petrol, but get the nice kind. It’s for the generator.”

He tells me that it is difficult to continuously acquire the petrol and water necessary to run this place, especially since the petrol station near Auchan banned him from filling up his jerry can on foot. He hands me a baguette cut in half and filled with liver, tomatoes, onion, and mayonnaise and sends me on my way.

About an hour later I return. I have driven my car as far into Jangaleka as possible, but I am afraid my car will get stuck in the mud. I get out and lug the full jerry can behind me, until a couple of men see me and take it from my hands, offering to carry it to Farhad. The café is now much busier. At least twenty men are engaged in heated conversation and shouting with one another. One of them sees me and signals to the others to quiet down, “Tawaw, tawaw, aw kche hat [That’s enough, that’s enough, that girl has arrived].” Their suspicion of me indicates that I am not welcome, but Farhad invites me to stay, “You should stay until dark. It gets fun here at night.” That

sentence immediately makes me uneasy, so I make up an excuse and leave to prepare for our interview the following day.

A few days later I arrive to see the police have ripped up Farhad's tarps and destroyed his cooking equipment. He is in the middle of rebuilding when he sees me, so he takes a break and comes to sit in my car to get out of the rain. I ask if he is exhausted, having to rebuild his café every three or four days.

[In French] "I'm prepared for this. I've built my café to be self-sustaining. It's not about the materials that 'create' the café, so to speak, it has an essence in that it's an idea that will sustain, regardless of the actions of the flics [French slang term for police]. I don't need a café, I don't need a business, and I don't need money. Really, I'm losing 2000 euros per week with this place. I can build it quickly, whenever I want, this is the easy part. Do you know why I've made this café? Why I don't care that it's destroyed and I'm harassed by the police all the time? Because someday soon, these idiot, dirty Iraqi Kurds [Farhad is an Eastern Kurd from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iran] will realise that they don't need those non-profit organisations for food, for clothes, for all that bullshit. We only need each other. They only need me.

I'm already selling food, and I give it to the poor for free. I have charging points for phones. Soon I'll get tents and sleeping bags and ship them up from Paris. You'll help me with that, won't you? Then I'll give them to new families and other poor people. You see [he points to a few families in tents near his café] I already help them. Now they worship me. I don't care if the organisations leave, instead I have a plan. I will relieve us from the relations of colonial dependency that these organisations thrive upon. [His voice rises to a shout] Once I finish my plan, once everyone here realises for whom these organisations are really here, what will happen? They are not here for us, they are here for themselves. They will have nothing to stay for.

[He quiets down and pauses] There are no bosses at this café. If I die, the system continues. If the prefect [of the Nord region] is murdered, this system continues. It has been built this way."

We drive over to Auchan to pick up some pistachios. He also buys a small bottle of whiskey. It warms him up, he says, and keeps illness at bay. It is so biting cold outside at this point in the year that my feet and hands are always numb. I cannot remember the last time my throat was not swollen and my nose was not blocked. When we return to the café, we see the men working for him have already finished rebuilding. Farhad laughs, “See? This is what I’m talking about! The system continues! It’s an ideology that persists in peoples’ minds. The café is just its current physical incarnation. I have the backing of the people of the jungle.”³⁵ And who has the backing of the people, has the power.” He shoves fistfuls of pistachios into my coat pockets before I leave, “One for you, one for your husband,³⁶ and one for the flics.”³⁷

Farhad perceives the queue to be a mechanism used by volunteers to reproduce and express their power over kochberan. In a separate interview, Farhad said of the volunteers, “They think they’re saviours.” While many volunteers are self-reflexive and aware of the prevalence of saviourism in aid work, some organisations and volunteers do not distance themselves from this type of self-representation. For instance, front-and-centre in the About Us section of Refugee Aid’s website is a quote from a journalist that says, “If it weren’t for Refugee Aid, there are people who would otherwise be dead.”³⁸

The queue and the café have several obvious distinctions, the first being that the café’s distribution is class-based. The “poor,” as Farhad calls them, receive free food and shelter items. On the other hand, those who are either known or perceived to be able afford to pay for a sandwich do so. Farhad was arrested and imprisoned again before he was able to ship sleeping bags and tents up from Paris. It therefore remains unclear how mass distributions would have been structured, or how subsequent waiting time would have been regulated. Organisations, on the other hand, do not differentiate between kochberan by class (but do differentiate based on

³⁵ Here he uses the French term for ‘jungle’ rather than the Kurdish term for the settlement, Jangaleka.

³⁶ As was discussed in the methodology section of the Introduction, as a strategy of risk management during fieldwork I falsely claimed that my partner and I were married.

³⁷ Farhad says this to indicate his mistrust of me by implying that I work with the police.

³⁸ The exact wording of this quote has been changed to protect Refugee Aid’s anonymity as an organisation. The meaning and connotations remain the same.

gender, ethnicity, and age). Class-based analyses of need and vulnerability are therefore never conducted by volunteers; they would likely be problematic were they attempted. The café also regulates waiting time according to cultural practice in cafés in Kurdistan: the customer orders what they need, sits in a chair, consumes the item while sitting, and pays (or does not) at the end of the transaction. If the café is busy and waiting time increases, customers leave to conduct other errands and return after an appropriate amount of time to see if their food or drink is ready, just as customers at a Kurdish bakery, butcher, or café would.

Officially, all volunteers are allowed to enter Farhad's café. In practice, however, few ever do (the reasons for this are outlined further below). Farhad explains that volunteers and aid workers are welcome because the norms of Kurdish hospitality dictate as much. Hospitality in Kurdish is called *miwandari* (derived from the word guest, *miwan*). *Miwandari* is considered a moral obligation among Kurds and is commonly boasted about as one of the best aspects of *kurdawari* (Kurdish cultural tradition). 'Good' *miwandari* is to welcome someone into one's home, whether that be a neighbour or a foreigner, often for multiple days.³⁹ In Kurdistan and among Kurds abroad, welcoming a guest is a legitimate reason not to go to work or to attend other commitments. Indeed, it is *ayb* (shameful) for the guest to be by themselves at any point during their stay. Generous expressions of hospitality are intimately entwined with notions of morality. Refusing to adhere to the normative practices briefly outlined here is deeply insulting to the guest, as they would not be considered to have been adequately cared for. In returning to Farhad, he says in a separate interview (in Kurdish),⁴⁰ "Everyone can come here because we're Kurds and we take care of guests, unlike Europeans." Yet the practices associated with *miwandari* stem from a moral duty, and it is therefore bound by an imperative outside of itself. It is comparable in this way to Kantian hospitality, as was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in that it is conditioned and finite.

³⁹ It is rare to see a hotel in a Kurdish town or village because people passing through are usually able to knock on a stranger's door and be invited as a guest for the night. There are some hotels in larger cities, such as Slemani, Hewler, and Soran, but they are usually booked as a luxury rather than out of necessity for somewhere to spend the evening.

⁴⁰ As is indicated in the above vignette, Farhad and I often switch between French and Kurdish when speaking with one another. When we first met, we did this in an effort to keep our conversations private: when among Kurds we spoke in French, and among French locals we spoke in Kurdish. It was also useful while I was still learning Kurdish, as we were able to switch languages to explain a particular phrase or idiom that I did not recognise. After several months, my Kurdish became better than my French, and we naturally shifted towards speaking only in Kurdish.

For instance, although Farhad argues that his café operates upon the regulations of a less hostile form of hospitality, the café is a deeply exclusive space and its logic of distribution is conditional. For many kochberan the café does not represent a viable alternative to their dependency on the organisations. First, in Farhad's café the *mafiyeh* (taken from the Italian term 'mafia'; an organised network of human, drug, and arms traffickers who are allegedly distinct from most human smuggler networks operating in northern France) are more concretely present through the presence of firearms and drugs. Heroin, hashish, and tramadol are sold and used openly at the café in the evenings. Firearms and other weapons are also sold and discharged or otherwise used openly, and disputes often lead to stabbings and shootings. Farhad himself is habitually intoxicated and, when arguing with someone, waves his gun in the air or shoots upwards into the trees above as a display of his power. He uses his implied proximity to the *mafiyeh* as an unspoken threat against anyone who might try to contest his powerful position.

Second, while many kochberan frequent the café when planning *derchwn* (the practicalities of crossing to the UK) with smugglers, or to drink tea and charge their mobile phones during the day, most men that I met stay away from the café in the evenings. Women never set foot in the café, during the day or night, because it is a men's space. A woman's presence in the café would signify that she is dishonourable and perhaps selling sex. My own presence in the café quickly led to rumours that I was sexually involved with Farhad – rumours which he himself fuelled. I was simultaneously perceived as shameful and dangerous for the time that these rumours persisted.⁴¹ Patronage of the café is therefore gendered and productive of risk.

Finally, there are several men who work for Farhad, including those he and I watched rebuild his café after the eviction in the vignette above. Work roles include maintaining the café's physical structure, serving customers, and procuring items at Farhad's request (such as bread and other food ingredients, petrol, or charging cables, to name a few examples). This work is rarely remunerated and is instead conducted based on the unspoken understanding that working for a few weeks or

⁴¹ Because Farhad was, at the time, a powerful figure in Dankix, my perceived close proximity to him led certain groups to trust me. While these rumours damaged my relationships with some kochberan (particularly women), they strengthened other relationships which became useful for the remainder of my fieldwork.

months will secure free passage to the UK. Others work without remuneration because they or their family are indebted to Farhad in one way or another.⁴² As was mentioned above, aid workers and volunteers rarely visit the café. It is commonly understood that to be seen at the café is to associate oneself with these exclusionary practices.

Farhad has successfully created a client-patron relationship with many of the men dependent on him, especially his ‘employees.’ He is a powerful figure in Dankix with access to resources that are vital to many of those among whom he lives. Men who need these resources exchange them for their services, and the families who “worship” him, as he says, trade them for their visible loyalty. Farhad uses these clients to bolster his power and prestige within the settlement. By creating an exclusionary place marked by the constant undercurrent of violence and simultaneously providing limited food and shelter to his followers, he uses tactics well-documented in the literature on patronage. The Sicilian mafia, for instance, has been shown to use intimidation and the promise of reward to shape the behaviour of their clients (Schneider and Schneider, 1994). Drug traffickers in Brazilian favelas exchange limited goods with residents for their silence (Arias, 2006). Although he claims to have built his café according to the rules of *miwandari* (Kurdish hospitality) clientelism pervades his resource distribution system.

Despite their seeming differences, however, the queue and the café are not distinct oppositional systems. In fact, their logics are similar in that people in need are dependent upon aid that is selectively given. Both the queue and the café discourage complaint or criticism from kochberan receiving material items. While some volunteers regulating the queue present themselves as powerless and encourage kochberan to blame other kochberan for failures in the distribution system, Farhad instead presents himself as too powerful and dangerous to challenge. The café is not a rejection of hierarchal organisation nor asymmetries of power. Instead, it is a rejection of what Farhad perceives to be coloniality and the oppression inherent in forcing kochberan to adhere to a Western European logic of orderliness, waiting, and deservingness. The logic of the queue is incongruent with the turmoil of hundreds of people in acute need of materials for their survival. It is for this reason that the organisations insist on the queue-as-dignified. But, as Farhad

⁴² This type of work is examined in more detail in Chapter Three.

argues, dignity for whom? On a separate occasion he argues, “Queueing is not dignified for us. It is dignified only for them.”

Conclusion

Much of kochberan’s daily lives in Dankix are shaped by their encounters with volunteers and their respective organisations. In attempting to untangle the various tensions and violences that engender these interactions, this chapter has situated the kochber-volunteer relationship within the context of hospitality, a theme often used by volunteers and kochberan alike to describe the motivations compelling people to work in aid. As we have seen throughout this chapter, the conditionality of Kantian hospitality renders the guest-host encounter hostile. Conditional hospitality moulds the guest’s behaviour for fear of a retaliatory withdrawal of aid, and requires that they be unendingly grateful (Khosravi, 2010). In Dankix, this fear is well-founded. When volunteers in organisations feel that there has been a ‘security risk’ they often withdraw from Dankix for several days or weeks. While a security risk might entail an open shooting or stabbing in or near the distribution area, it is sometimes as innocuous as a kochber climbing into the back of the van from which items are being distributed to a queue.

When the aid being offered is necessary for the guest’s survival (usually because they were denied something in the first place, be it food or shelter) and the mechanics of its distribution steepen the hierarchy of power between host and guest, guests are domesticated (Boochani, 2018b). This is often accomplished through a complex system of reward and punishment, as we see take place when kochberan cut Ls and risk interpersonal violence because they are scapegoated by both volunteers and kochberan. The very context framing the kochber-volunteer relationship as guest-host leaves little room for any other kind of interaction. Nevertheless, alternative ways of situating the encounter are possible and have been developed and practiced by several volunteers in Dankix in the past. These are usually practiced by French volunteers and aid workers in local organisations, many of whom have been present in Dankix for decades, in contrast to most British volunteers who spend only weeks or months in northern France. These alternative approaches to aid work include, for instance, tailored distributions that take a holistic

and intersectional approach to ‘vulnerability,’ anti-distribution models such as the use of mobile ‘free shops’⁴³ and online grocery orders,⁴⁴ and collective use of donated goods through e.g., communal cooking. Many of these seemingly alternative framings, however, which have sometimes been called a ‘solidarian’ model, continue to draw from and reproduce inequities because “[a]ll societies determine the scope of the solidarity they implement by defining who has a right to what” (Fassin, 2004: 206). As was discussed in the Introduction, human rights are culturally-informed and determined by the geopolitically powerful. For this reason, ‘rights-based’ motivations for aid and solidarity work are still implicated in conditionality and hospitality.

Additionally, the hostile host is not only embodied by volunteers, but also in the form of the ‘host’ country. The hostility kochberan experience as ‘guests’ marks their lives in innumerable, intersecting ways as they negotiate the EU asylum-border regime. Hospitality, as it is employed today in Western Europe, merely creates the illusion of acceptance and welcome. The limitations Kant set forth which made hospitality conditional are now used to turn migrants away at both Europe’s and the UK’s borders, and to deport those who manage to reach a European country. Furthermore, the EU border regime – and that of the France-UK border – enables these states to claim not to hear would-be guests’ assertions to their right to hospitality (their claim to asylum) by making conditions along the border so inhospitable that they are very unlikely to reach the EU or the UK in the first place. Hospitality, therefore, reinforces pre-existing asymmetries by placing the power to determine and curate both humanity and difference in the hands of the already-powerful (here being the EU and the British nation-state, and volunteers and aid workers). In Dankix, the France-UK border regime reserves the right to bestow humanity upon kochberan. Border practices and discourse ultimately include or exclude them from the European vision of ‘universal’ humanity, and therefore as deserving or undeserving of ‘universal’ human rights.

As we have also seen illustrated in this chapter, the border is not a fixed line but is diffused throughout communities. The guest therefore repeatedly encounters and reencounters the host each day. This kind of everyday bordering often makes

⁴³ A free shop displays clothing as if in a clothing store, whereby kochberan choose their own clothing and hygiene items (and in which all goods are free).

⁴⁴ One organisation, the founder of which has worked in Dankix for nearly a decade, offers a service whereby kochberan order groceries via a mobile app, which are later delivered by their team.

use of racialisation to essentialise and differentiate between who has the right to exist and belong in a place, and who does not. The hosting volunteer sometimes mobilises racialising discourse in order to remind the guest/kochber not to overstep the boundaries that the host/volunteer has drawn around the aid that they selectively distribute, as we see in Luke's case.

Racialisation and rejecting one's claim to hospitality are both concerned with recognising the humanity of the other, as well as the rights such humanity affords (Fanon, 1986 [1952]; Khosravi, 2010). This is most obviously exemplified by the slur 'Ali Baba,' which originated as a colonial tool of dehumanisation, imperialist violence, and murder. In Dankix, racial violence and border violence are often intertwined in complex ways. Karwan speaks to this when he argues that the double-violence of his illegalisation and racialisation in northern France amplify one another both imaginatively and materially. Both also create and reinforce already-existing racial hierarchies of power that are naturalised through processes of symbolic violence. These hierarchies are internalised by kochberan, who often blame themselves (due to their large population size or those who cut Ls) for material shortages, further strengthening the asymmetry of power between themselves and the volunteers. Others attempt to mitigate shortages through L-cutting, but this provides both volunteers and kochberan with a scapegoat, and leads to spectacular bursts of interpersonal violence, as we see in Pshtiwan's case.

Lateral blame deflection when the systems of distribution fail obscures the manufactured nature of material scarcity in Dankix. Scarcity is produced through the illegalisation of those living in the settlements, and their subsequent denial of the right to shelter, water, and food. Michel Agier alludes to this when he asks:

How can one be surprised that a culture of aid, made up of begging and dependence – what French writers have called *assistancialisme* – so rapidly permeates camp life, when aid is their only *raison d'être* and the sole authorised resource of the refugees (2008: 47)?

Farhad recognises this and attempts to implement an alternative vision for distribution, which he hopes will fundamentally alter the dynamic of power and thereby abolish what he considers to be colonial violence through dependency and the organisations' monopoly on resources and social capital. However, the way in

which he structures the café and the norms governing acceptable social behaviour within it produce their own violence. Women are either excluded from the café's benefits or deeply shamed for participating. Those who work for Farhad usually do so out of debt-bondage or because they cannot afford to pay for their passage to the UK. Farhad's beneficiaries trade material goods for loyalty and are indebted to him as a result. Many kochberan recognise the hostility inherent to Farhad's clientelist distribution system, and in the volunteers' conditional hospitality. In response, they often choose to access material items and food by different means. The following chapter examines these means, and includes, for instance, hustling practices, gaining favour, and occasionally working as a human, drug, or cigarette smuggler.

CHAPTER THREE | Money

Each night little by little
I eat myself
Because I do not know where they went
nor where I
go tonight
Do not travel
Do not travel
My heart says I will not see you again
My heart says I will not see you again

- Excerpt from *سەفەر مەگه* (*Do not travel*) by Selam Hemadî⁴⁵ (2009), translation by author

“Come on, you know I’d make a good match for her. You have to help me out,” Shalaw pleads with me, somewhat forcefully. Over the past couple of weeks, he has become fixated on a volunteer named Elsie with whom I am close friends. Shalaw puts his arm around my shoulder and squeezes me tightly. I lift his arm from my body and wriggle out of his embrace, “Don’t do that.”

“Sorry, sorry. You’ll talk to her for me, won’t you?”

“Shalaw, I’ve already told you a thousand times, she doesn’t want to be with you.”

A group of men who had been standing nearby approach and encircle us to better hear our conversation, smiling and raising their eyebrows at me, “Yeah Victoria, what’s wrong with Shalaw?” One of the men turns away to stifle his laughter. Shalaw is the butt of many jokes in Dankix. He is well-known for his fascination with women and for bragging about having three or four wives in

⁴⁵ Selam Hemadî (سەلام هەمادی) is a Kurdish singer-songwriter who lives in Southern Kurdistan (the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq). *سەفەر مەگه* (*Do not travel*) is a popular song that laments the out-migration of loved ones and the possibility of death along the route.

Kurdistan (the number varies). He often wears an ill-fitting suit and tie around Jangaleka and Kampeka, and posts photographs of himself in sensual poses on Facebook. And yet the jokes never go too far, as he has close ties to most of the mid-level smugglers⁴⁶ and is therefore a useful friend to have.

I respond to the men who have gathered around us, “Look, there’s nothing wrong with Shalaw. She just doesn’t want to be with him, I’m sorry.”

“When you talk to her, tell her that I have money. I have a house in Kurdistan, I’ll buy her a new car. A BMW. I can take care of her, that’s not a problem.”

“It’s not about the money, Shalaw.”

“Of course it is! She sees me here, where I’m dirty and look older than I am. When I get to the UK, I’ll buy a house for us to live in together. I can take care of her.”

“It’s really not about the money. Look, British girls like Elsie work and have jobs.⁴⁷ She doesn’t care about your money, or your cars, or your house because she makes her own money. She cares about your personality and your looks. You two don’t share a language, how can you talk to each other and how can she know who you really are?”

“Oh, she’ll learn Kurdish.”

“You won’t learn English?” I laugh.

⁴⁶ Mid-level smugglers, as will be elucidated further below, are generally responsible for recruitment, communication with kochberan, arranging meeting points during crossing attempts, and everyday operational organisation, among other things.

⁴⁷ Near the end of my fieldwork, out of exhaustion and under stress, I sometimes parroted my research participants’ generalising assumptions concerning gender roles, income, and spending practices. Research participants – both men and women – usually characterise the relationship between women, work, and marriage as one of the most significant differences between Kurdish and Western European normative cultural practice and resulting social organisation. In this example, I was also attempting to deter Shalaw from pursuing Elsie further as she told me she was uncomfortable with his aggressive advances.

“[Smiling] What do I need English for? Anyway, you tell her about my money, okay?”

“Shalaw, money is nothing. It’s not important.”

One of the men listening to our conversation steps forward, “Money is nothing? Stupid girl, you don’t know anything. Money is everything. If we had money my family wouldn’t be living in the dirt in a tent, we’d be living in a hotel. I wouldn’t have to queue just to get nappies for my daughter. Do you know how degrading that feels? If I had money, I could take care of my wife and children.” He turns and walks away, spitting on the grass at his feet.

This chapter examines money. Money, above all else, shapes one’s experience in Dankix because it determines the nature and timing of passage to the United Kingdom (UK). More specifically, it determines what must be done to *secure* passage – and for how long. Many of those living in Dankix come from a relatively new middle class of white-collar professionals in Southern Kurdistan, the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq. In the mid-twentieth century, differentiation of the Kurdish economy led to rapid urbanisation, during which time farmers moved from villages to urban areas and began to work as wage labourers or street vendors (Hassanpour, 1994). The expansion of the oil and manufacturing industries, investment in infrastructure, and newly introduced professional trades (including mechanics, electricians, plumbers, and public transit workers) led to the formation of a working class in the cities (*ibid*). An urban-based middle class also emerged at this time and included civil servants, engineers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and journalists (Hassanpour, 1992). In 2015, however, the war with Daesh led to economic crisis and acute food insecurity, which was further exacerbated by inflation, political conflict and corruption, lack of agricultural assistance, and the withholding of payment for public sector workers (Mathieu-Comtois, 2017). Most kochberan in Dankix during the time of my fieldwork left Kurdistan during this ongoing economic crisis while they still had access to a considerable amount of wealth. Coming to Europe along the *rega* (or the irregular, illegalised journey from Kurdistan to and through Europe) usually costs tens of thousands of pounds per person in payments to smugglers as well as subsistence and travel expenses. For a

family with children, this can mean that they spend between £30,000 and £70,000 by the time that they arrive in Dankix.

Wealthy families often finance the *rega* by selling their homes and belongings in Kurdistan. Single men (who almost always live with their parents until marriage or their departure for Europe) usually finance the *rega* by saving some of their income over several years and selling their vehicles before they leave. Their parents may sell one of their homes if they have multiple or downsize into a smaller home. Some in Dankix, however, were working-class wage labourers in Kurdistan, or are estranged from their middle-class families. They often move very slowly along the *rega* because they cannot afford smugglers. They must either navigate by foot using their phone's GPS or earn smugglers' favour in each settlement along the *rega* until somebody allows them to cross for free. What would take a wealthy person one year may take them two or three. Others, who were middle-class professionals in Kurdistan, have spent their wealth crossing previous borders on their way to Dankix and therefore must find a way either to acquire funds for their crossing to the UK, or to secure free passage. The French state allows only those whose presence in France has been *régularisé* (regularised or legalised) to apply for the right to work. Upon claiming asylum, however, migrants still must wait nine months before making a work permit application, itself a confusing, arbitrary, and lengthy process.⁴⁸ Kochberan are therefore excluded from the right to legal work.

This chapter examines alternatives to legal work: practices of currying favour, making money, or calling upon kinship networks when funds have run out. I discuss these practices as key mechanisms for the reproduction of transnational relationships spanning Europe and Kurdistan. I also demonstrate some of the ways in which the reliance of kochberan upon these alternative methods exacerbates their susceptibility to exploitation, extreme forms of interpersonal violence, and incarceration. Finally, this chapter aims to nuance the distinction between smugglers and non-smugglers to demonstrate how the systematic arrest and incarceration of certain types of smugglers disproportionately targets working-class migrants and has little impact on reducing smuggling activity. First, however, I provide an outline of the costs of the *rega* for four different research participants (including one couple) –

⁴⁸ A discussion of the temporality of money, debt, and credit comes later in this chapter.

each with varying levels of access to wealth – to illustrate how wealth impacts their experiences and decisions.

The costs of the *rega*

The *rega* presents different challenges and dangers depending on socioeconomic factors. For example, Frishta and Sangar (introduced in Chapter Two) left Kirkuk in 2016 having agreed that the UK would be where they would claim asylum. After several months on the *rega*, however, Frishta became pregnant. They had managed to make it to Germany by then, and, fearful of the dangers of the *rega* for both Frishta and their future child, the couple claimed asylum there. They remained in Germany for one year during which time their son was born. They received a refusal on their asylum application, and both of their requests for an appeal were rejected. ‘Failed’ asylum seekers in Germany are sometimes given the option to voluntarily leave the country. Some, however, are forcibly removed. Before they could be deported back to Kurdistan, Frishta and Sangar left the camp and travelled by bus, train, and foot to Dankix to try their luck on *derchwn* (the practicalities involved with being smuggled) to the UK.

So far, they estimate that they have spent around £55,000 since leaving Kirkuk in 2016. They no longer have enough money to pay for *derchwn*, and every day their remaining savings dwindle as they pay for their subsistence. As with all *kochberan*, when *derchwn* is unsuccessful – which may occur if their lorry goes to an unexpected country such as Belgium or the Netherlands, or if the French maritime agency finds their dinghy before they arrive in British waters – they must pay for train and bus tickets to return to Dankix in the morning. Whenever the police evict them from Dankix, they are placed in accommodation centres in other regions of France and must therefore pay hundreds of euros in travel fares to return to Dankix so that they can continue attempting *derchwn*. Single men can more easily slip onto trains without paying for tickets, but families with small children, such as that of Frishta and Sangar, do not have the benefit of stealth. Others, however, may arrive in their chosen destination relatively quickly, such as Pshtiwan.

Pshtiwan, who is featured in a vignette in Chapter Two, was fortunate enough to be granted a Schengen visa while in Kurdistan. As soon as his visa was granted,

he left for Istanbul on a flight from Slemani. From Istanbul he flew to Frankfurt, and from there to Milan. He arrived in Italy with clean clothes and a rolling suitcase full of belongings. The entire journey from Kurdistan to Italy took two days (due to lengthy layovers) and cost around £2000 in last-minute flight tickets. In addition, he had already paid several thousand for both legal advice and the Schengen visa application itself. After years of living in Italy, he decided to move to the UK and so travelled by train to Dankix. Since he had prepared the funds for *derchwn* by working in Italy, he managed to cross to the UK after only two months of living in Dankix, unlike many others who are stalled for months or years as they attempt to raise the necessary funds. In those two months, he purportedly worked as a smuggler to increase his savings and avoid destitution in the UK were his claim to asylum rejected. Since, upon his arrival in Dankix, he already had enough money to cover his passage, he did not agree to work as a smuggler without pay (as many do in return for the promise of eventual free passage). Instead, he was able to negotiate a substantial commission-based wage that increased with each successful crossing.

While in Kurdistan, Pshtiwan worked as a police officer and later as a soldier with the Peshmerga.⁴⁹ While the Kurdistan Regional Government only paid him sporadically (a common occurrence among those working in the public sector), his pay was above the national average (Mathieu-Comtois, 2017). Pshtiwan is also unmarried, and therefore lived with his family until he left for Europe. While in Kurdistan, much of his income went towards household costs and his family's subsistence, but he was also able to save enough to cover the costs of the *rega* completely. Frishta and Sangar, on the other hand, come from wealthy middle-class families who contributed significantly to the costs of the *rega*.

Sangar is now purportedly working as a low-level smuggler⁵⁰ without remuneration, with the understanding that his family will eventually be repaid with free passage. He opens lorry doors and checks their destination address, before ushering others in and keeping an eye out for police. He hopes to soon become a mid-level smuggler, at which point he would arrange meeting points, crossing schedules, and money transfers with kochberan, exposing him to less risk of arrest

⁴⁹ The Peshmerga refers to the Kurdish branch of the Iraqi military.

⁵⁰ A low-level smuggler, as will be explained further below, is responsible for transporting kochberan and dinghies, opening lorry doors, and reconnaissance trips to beaches before a crossing attempt, among other things.

and earning him a cut of the profit per crossing. He claims that he wishes to be promoted to this level in order to protect his family from his work, which can have devastating consequences if caught by the police including incarceration and rejection of a future asylum claim in the UK. By reducing his risk of arrest, he increases his family's chances of successfully, permanently, and safely settling in the UK. Otherwise, he says, he would never have chosen to become a smuggler nor aspired to rise within their ranks. There are countless stories in Dankix like that of Sangar, some of which will be further examined later in this chapter to demonstrate why people choose to smuggle and the coercive forces that factor into this decision. To exemplify the way in which a middle-class background offers different trajectories for those in Dankix, Frishta, Sangar, and Pshtiwan's experiences of the *rega* can be contrasted with that of Aryos.

Aryos left Slemani in 2016, when he was twenty years old. He has nine siblings, of whom he is the eldest. His siblings are so young that the income they generate for the household is negligible, and they therefore rely almost entirely on their father's income. After finishing a two-year degree at the University of Sulaimani⁵¹ in 2015, Aryos could not find work. Since he could not find work, he could not marry, and, as Aryos and countless others in Dankix tell me, "for Kurdish men you have two choices: you get married, or you go to Europe."

This phrase is repeated often by my research participants and is echoed widely in social media from discussions on Kurdish diaspora Facebook pages to humorous Instagram meme accounts. Many young Kurdish men perceive marriage as increasingly unattainable because of the wealth, stability, and forms of capital required to raise and maintain a family. Without the financial means to support a potential spouse, girls' and women's families would be unwilling to accept a marriage proposal. Men who are chronically unemployed or who have not received their salaries for months cannot afford *naxt* (money given by the groom to the bride and her family) nor a home for their wife and future children. In order to accumulate the wealth they require to marry, some leave for Europe.

Most of my research participants from Southern Kurdistan – the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq – blame the region's economic precarity on corruption

⁵¹ This is an alternative spelling of Slemani.

within the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).⁵² While discussing the 2017 Kirkuk Crisis, sometimes called the Battle of Kirkuk,⁵³ one research participant, named Dawan, told me:

When they [government officials] started selling oil independently, they didn't put the money back into the government. They bought oil wells privately and got rich quick. They then invested in property abroad, in Europe, in the US, so that their money would be protected. They're greedy, and we didn't see any of the profits back then, and still don't now. Now all their sons go off to university in Europe to study. They can travel as much as they want. There is a big divide in Kurdistan between those whose passports work and whose passports don't. And these opportunities are driven by money.

Separately, Aryos blames his own precarity on rampant clientelism. The KRG consists of two main opposing political parties: The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Kurdistan is split into two: each party controls their own region and has their own military and security forces. Having fought in a civil war from 1994 to 1997, they are still commonly hostile towards one another. Each party is run by a single family: Barzani of the KDP and Talabani of the PUK. Most resources are controlled by these families and the duopoly (Leezenberg, 2006; van Bruinessen, 2016). As Aryos once said to me:

If you have connections with the parties – and not just [the KDP] but also with [the PUK] – you receive your income. That means that businessmen

⁵² As is outlined in the Introduction, a minority of kochberan in Dankix are Eastern Kurds (from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iran). Their stated reasons for fleeing Kurdistan vary significantly from those stated by Southern Kurds. Most commonly, they cite religious and political persecution as forcing them to leave.

⁵³ Despite being majority-Kurdish, Kirkuk technically lies outside of the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan and therefore outside of the remit of the KRG. Kirkuk lies on oil-rich ground, making it a key strategic territory for political actors. As such, it is a long-disputed territory between the KRG and Iraqi state. Before the war with Daesh, Iraq's military controlled the region. During the war, they withdrew, and Peshmerga drove Daesh from Kirkuk and took control of its oil fields. The KRG then began to sell its oil independently of Iraq (Salih, 2015). In 2017, a Kurdish independence referendum saw 93% of voters supporting the formation of an independent Kurdish nation-state that would encompass the semi-autonomous region and all Kurdish majority-inhabited areas in Iraq. The Iraqi state denied the validity of the referendum, and the Iraqi military took Kirkuk from the Peshmerga during a 5 day battle between the two military forces in October 2017.

and community leaders make money off the oil even if the rest of the country doesn't. You know that I studied at university for years? I got my degree. And then what do you think I did? I sat on my arse. There was no work, even after I had spent all that time and money and learned how to work a good job.

Those with political connections receive a cut of the oil revenue, and those excluded from the patronage system are left with very few employment options (van Bruinessen, 2016). Appendix A outlines how the war with Daesh and disputes between the central Iraqi government, KRG, and within the duopoly have led to acute economic instability. This has developed into socioeconomic pressures on young people in terms of marriage and sexual relationships. While driving late one night, another participant, Chya, explained this to me:

Victoria: "Aso [our mutual friend] told me that you can either take a wife or go to Europe."

Chya: "That's true! That's very, very true. There are no other options. There's no other way [...] if you're poor you will never marry. This is why a lot of men come to Europe, and a lot of men can't get married in Kurdistan. But it's not just money, it's status. I had money, but [a woman] didn't want to marry me because all I did was drive tankers. Some men don't want to get married, like Aso, and that's why they leave, but others can't get married and so they have to leave. But really, there are so many more problems. Did you know that in 2012, a lot of Kurdish people who lived in Europe went back to Kurdistan?"

Victoria: "No, I didn't know. Why?"

Chya: "There was a lot of money that came into the country after the Americans came and the sanctions ended. For one roundtrip with a tanker, you could make around twenty wereqa [2000 USD]. If you did three roundtrips in one month now, you could make maybe three wereqa [300 USD]."

Victoria: “What changed?”

Chya: “The Daesh war. That changed everything, everything. Everything is different now. The Peshmerga would go to fight Daesh and they would only get paid every two weeks, sometimes even less. And they would get paid half of their salary. All of the money is gone. The state takes it for themselves. If you’re connected with [the KDP] in Hewler, you’re comfortable and you’ll never have anything to worry about. The rest of us have no work, and when we do work there’s no money in it. We can’t rely on our government for social support or welfare. Then, in our culture, they say ‘get married’ but we can’t because we can’t work or take care of our wife and children.”

Chya discusses these factors – the patronage system amongst KDP and PUK members, marriage and sexual relationships, unemployment, withholding of income, and education – in a way that reveals their inseparability. He discusses them using a single interwoven narrative that illuminates how the war with Daesh exacerbated political tensions and socioeconomic inequality within Kurdistan and the impact of social and political conflict on traditional kinship relations. Indeed, migration scholars have increasingly shown that economic, social, and political elements are intimately entwined, complicating the distinction between forced and voluntary migration (see, e.g., Bhimji, 2018). For young Kurdish men who cannot afford to marry, settling in Europe is a culturally acceptable alternative lifestyle choice. It is a way out of the “stuckedness” they experience in Kurdistan, as was first mentioned in Chapter Two (Hage, 2009: 97). It can also sometimes help them to acquire the wealth necessary to later marry.

In returning to Aryos, he responded to these issues by going to Europe, hoping to eventually being able to send remittances⁵⁴ back to his family in Slemani. He left with next to nothing, however, and the disadvantage in which this put him was clear from the start. He took a bus to the Turkish border with a friend who promised

⁵⁴ Remittances are explored in further detail later in this chapter, examining reciprocity, kinship, and the affective nature of indebtedness.

to smuggle him gratis. Despite his friend's assistance, they were unsuccessful and were arrested at the border and sent back on four separate occasions. Once he finally made it into Turkey he walked for nearly three weeks to Istanbul, using his phone's GPS and subsisting on sporadic, donated meals distributed at mosques. In Aksaray, a neighbourhood in Istanbul allegedly used as a base of operations by Kurdish smuggling factions, he slept on the streets until a smuggler who knew Aryos' cousin took pity on him and helped him cross to Greece. He spent weeks sleeping in *Jangalekay Kominizia*, the Kurdish name for a settlement in a forested area in Igoumenitsa, Greece, unsuccessfully attempting to board lorries destined for Italy. Finally he decided to walk, again using his phone's GPS, through Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia until he arrived at Trieste. These 2000 kilometres took him twenty-six months. Exhausted from walking and his constant hunger, he took a couple of months in northern Italy to recuperate, eating food distributed by non-profit organisations in Ventimiglia. "I was so hungry I ate grass and drank from dirty puddles in the street," he once told me, before laughing and adding: "Slovenian grass tastes the best! What I would do for another taste..."

He was not alone during his twenty-six month-walk. For a few months in Serbia and Bosnia he, Wlat (who is featured in the Introduction), and several other men walked through the snow together. For several weeks in Croatia, he spent his evenings with a local woman who gave him food and money in return for sex (the result of a tacit agreement between the two of them). He remembers her fondly, and she still sends him a few hundred euros when the need arises. After months of going on *derchwn* in Ventimiglia (which, for him, entailed walking along the train tracks to France, getting caught by police and driven back far into Italy, traveling back to Ventimiglia, and trying all over again) he finally made it to France. He walked across the country to Dankix, where he arrived three years and 2 months after leaving Slemani. He estimates that he spent around £1200 on the *rega* in total. Since meeting one another in Serbia in 2018, each time Aryos crossed into a new country, he found Wlat had made it there before him. Wlat, whose family in Kurdistan is wealthy, was always able to cross ahead of him.

Every time I'd get to a new jungle, Wlat would be there. We'd see each other and laugh, and he'd say 'you are so slow, are you crawling through Europe?' Then, after about a week, he'd pay smugglers and cross, and I

would still be stuck. It took him ten days to get through Italy. It took me months. I was in Italy when Wlat died. We had been joking that he needed to wait for me to get to Dankix, and only then would he make it to the UK. We used to say I brought him luck. I'm really lucky you know; I just give all my luck to other people.

Because there is no walkable route to the UK, Aryos engages in hustling practices to make the money he needs for his subsistence and builds strategic friendships with key volunteers and smugglers in his attempts to secure material aid and eventual free passage to the UK. Some of these common practices are outlined below.

Hustling practices and strategic alliances

There are several ways kochberan can cross to the UK if they lack the £2500 - £6000 it takes to do so.⁵⁵ Some kochberan who cannot afford *derchwn* attempt to cross without a smuggler by using a lorry park that is unclaimed by any smuggling faction. The last remaining unclaimed lorry park in Dankix is the Dunkirk ferry port at Loon-Plage, the name of which has been phonetically adapted in Kurdish to sound like 'No-Flash.' Only an hour's walk from Jangaleka, No-Flash is unclaimed because of the steep odds against a successful crossing. It is heavily patrolled and securitised by both the French and British border forces and is reportedly covered in CCTV cameras.

In 2017 and 2018, because of the unlikelihood of crossing at No-Flash, kochberan sometimes pooled their money together to buy speedboats for around £15,000, or dinghies and motors for less. By 2019, however, all viable beaches were claimed by smuggling factions and were no longer accessible without payment. During the time of my fieldwork, smugglers allowed one person per boat to cross for free if they agreed to navigate during the crossing.⁵⁶ While this practice is risky for

⁵⁵ This figure changes depending on how much demand there is in Dankix for smuggling services and the climate of border control. If the border is heavily patrolled – whereby each lorry is checked (by private contracted workers) or there is a heavy police presence on beaches, for instance – the price of *derchwn* rises. If border controls are relaxed, the price lowers.

⁵⁶ This practice has since changed. At the time of writing, it is more likely that whoever knows how to use a GPS and the boat's motor takes the lead. In some cases, this person is offered a discount.

the navigator, who is sometimes accused of smuggling either upon arrival in the UK or if intercepted by the French maritime agency or police, it is often a last resort for those who cannot otherwise afford *derchwn*. Those who are filmed at the boat's helm by UK Border Force drones have historically been accused of smuggling and incarcerated (see, e.g., these cases of kochberan convicted of facilitating illegal immigration, who navigated dinghies in return for free or cheaper passage: BBC, 2020a; BBC, 2020b; BBC, 2020c).⁵⁷

While smuggling via irregular boat crossings has occurred between France and the UK for centuries (Daly, 2007; Davies, et al., 2021; Morieux, 2016), smugglers professionalised this route in direct response to increased securitisation of the France-UK border. This causal relationship is so clear to all involved that it has been acknowledged by former Home Secretary Sajid Javid himself (see UK Government, 2019). Since 2020, the Channel has become the primary route from Dankix to the UK. For many, the dangers involved in the Channel crossing route far outweigh its benefits. Those who are averse to crossing by boat (or those whose families in Kurdistan forbid them to do so) are left with very few options if they cannot afford *derchwn* by lorry. If the above strategies fail (crossing via No-Flash or navigating during a Channel crossing), kochberan earn money by, for instance, using sex as a resource⁵⁸ or selling beer and cigarettes. Others do not attempt to secure *derchwn* through money-making, but instead focus on building strategic relationships with smugglers by conducting extensive and often risky favours for the 'right' people who will eventually allow them to cross for free. The following section examines in more detail widespread strategies of resource acquisition, including through (1) emphasising one's vulnerability, (2) calling upon kinship networks in Kurdistan or abroad, and (3) working as a smuggler.

⁵⁷ In December 2021, however, a judge quashed these convictions on the basis that all involved immediately claimed asylum upon arrival in the UK, and that there was, therefore, no 'illegal immigration' to facilitate (Dearden, 2021).

⁵⁸ During my time in the field, I became aware of three instances in which kochberan systematically used sex as a resource to earn money in Dankix (and many more instances to acquire non-monetary resources). I believe that were I to attempt to build relationships with these three individuals it would endanger them far more than do them any benefit. I therefore did not attempt to discuss this topic with them, and it is for this reason that I only briefly mention it here. More common is sporadically trading sex for material items or nights in hotels, such as was briefly discussed in the previous chapter, and as Aryos did with a Croatian woman. Systematically using sex as a resource is referred to in Kurdish as *leshfroshtn* (body-selling) and is perceived as distinct from sporadic practices, which are moralised very differently.

Vulnerability as strategy

Scholars have long critiqued the humanitarian assumption that refugees and forced migrants are inevitably 'vulnerable.' Instead, migrants who are perceived to have migrated through force are "vulnerabilized" or made vulnerable, and humanitarian institutions use this manufactured category as a mechanism of governance (Otto, 2020: 425; see *also* Agier, 2011; Enloe, 1993; Turner, 2019). Most kochberan in Dankix have experienced several sites of humanitarian governance throughout the *rega*, including Frishta and Sangar, who were encamped in Germany. In response to his experiences in both Germany and Dankix, Sangar once told me:

In Europe there are four tiers of human rights. First, at the top, there are children. Then, just below, are women. Then, dogs. Then, all the way at the bottom, are men. They treat us worse than dogs.

Sangar is referring primarily to the material disparity in Dankix between single men, and women and families, as was discussed in the previous chapter. Women and families fall under the remit of the Refugee Women's Centre (RWC), who usually meet with new arrivals on their first day in Dankix and provide them with a tent, sleeping bags, blankets, shoes, and clothing. They also attempt to provide a tailored – albeit imperfect and resource-limited – service for those in need of legal advice or medical support. If a family's tent or sleeping bags rip or are confiscated by the police, RWC replaces them. The organisation's volunteers aim to avoid situations such as those described in Chapter Two whereby volunteers distribute only once to each person or group using a queueing system that encourages kochberan to be subservient to volunteers. This does, however, sometimes lead to situations in which families stockpile tents and sleeping bags by claiming that they were confiscated. They then sell these materials to single men as a money-making strategy, inflating the price after evictions when shelters are destroyed. In this way, families subvert the vulnerability ascribed to them by non-profit organisations working in Dankix to meet the need for other resources (including money). Volunteers are aware of this but recognise the difficulty in creating an equitable distribution system when materials are scarce. One RWC volunteer's words echo the arguments found in academic literature on vulnerability and forced migration:

I don't know how to respond when the guys say, 'the families each have seven tents, we have none, there's no human rights for men.' Because they're right. Yes, women and people with children are more vulnerable, but often it's not *material* vulnerability. And it can't be solved with material items. Often vulnerability comes from the same vulnerability that the guys experience: being homeless. Ideally, everyone would have what they need all the time. But just because they don't doesn't mean we can stop giving women tents.

In order to mitigate their status as 'least vulnerable,' single men in Dankix with youthful features sometimes present themselves as unaccompanied minors (UAMs), a common practice documented in similar contexts around the world (see, e.g., Beneduce, 2015; Bohmer and Shuman, 2018). UAMs, or children under the age of eighteen travelling without a parent or guardian, are perceived by both aid workers and the state to be acutely vulnerable. At the time of fieldwork, there were two organisations in Dankix specifically created for UAMs, reflecting the perception that UAMs require particular forms of support. Volunteers in both organisations assess an individual's age based upon their perception of the men's and boys' physical features. If they believe someone to be a UAM, they give them a document stating as much and send an SP or IP (*Signalement Parquet* or *Information Préoccupante*, or a report that there is a child in danger) to the prefectural government.⁵⁹ Despite sending hundreds of SPs and IPs annually, the prefecture has never responded unless the situation is extraordinary (if the child is an infant, for instance). The document given by organisations to UAMs (referred to as a *wereqay mndal* or 'child paper' in Kurdish) is valuable because if its bearer is detained by police or border agents, they are usually either released immediately or after only a few hours. Furthermore, one of the UAM organisations distributes sleeping bags, shelter materials, and clothing exclusively to UAMs. It is therefore to single boys' and men's advantage to emphasise their vulnerability by acknowledging or claiming to be a UAM when they have limited recourse to survival items. For those whose physical

⁵⁹ For further information about this process, see La Cimade, 2017.

features are not read as youthful by volunteers,⁶⁰ it is more common to acquire items and funds through remittances sent by kinship networks, which are examined below.

Kinship networks

One of the most common ways of acquiring money is by calling upon friends and family in Kurdistan or abroad, usually on those who sought asylum in other countries in decades past. When family members send money to kochberan on the *rega*, there is typically no expectation of future monetary repayment. Yet if a friend sends money it is understood to be a loan that will not be repaid until the recipient has claimed asylum and found work, often several years after the initial loan. Many people in Dankix are therefore indebted by thousands of pounds to loved ones who have sent them money here and there along the *rega*.

While family usually do not expect repayment, the recipient becomes indebted to them in other ways. The vignette below features a phone call between a man and his parents in Slemani that begins to illustrate the expectations of reciprocity inherent in these money transfers:

One warm evening at around 7 pm I receive a call from Zryan inviting me to drink with him by the lake next to Kampeka. Zryan is playing PubG⁶¹ on his phone while the sun sets over the water, the sky dotted with pinks and purples. We lay on the grass, each propped up on one elbow as we eat sunflower seeds and drink the beer he had bought earlier from Dlashad, the birafrash [‘beer-seller’] who sells cans of beer from a shopping cart among the tents of Kampeka for a euro each. The birafrash does not drink alcohol himself but sells it to save up enough money for derchwn.

⁶⁰ Those who claim to be unaccompanied minors are subjected to similarly arbitrary and subjective age assessment procedures by the state when they claim asylum. In France, this process has been outsourced by the state to the Red Cross, whose procedures have been heavily criticised by other civil society and humanitarian actors as entirely subjective (see, e.g., GISTI, 2019).

⁶¹ PubG is a popular multiplayer mobile phone video game. Players can speak to each other live on the game as they play, and kochberan often play with friends living in Kurdistan.

After a few rounds of PubG, Zryan puts down his phone and looks out at the lake in silence. He is normally lively and talkative, so this is unusual for him. He then says matter-of-factly:

“I’m really sad here. Why did I go back to Kurdistan? I was so stupid.”

This is the second time Zryan has been in Dankix. In 2014, when he was 19 years old, he spent one year on the rega and reached the UK, where he settled in Manchester. By 2016, however, he still had not received a decision on his asylum application⁶² and self-deported to Slemani using a state-assisted return programme. In 2019, he made his way back to Dankix, where he has been for 2 months now as he continues trying for derchwn.

“I don’t even know why I went back [to Kurdistan]. I just missed it a lot. A month after I went back, I woke up and said ‘oh my god, where am I? I’m in Kurdistan?! What am I doing, I was in the UK a month ago...’

I drank a lot there, in Kurdistan. I drove a lot too. I got into a huge motorcycle accident when I was drinking. I was driving and thought there was an alley to my left so I turned left, but it was just a wall. I woke up to my father beating the shit out of me [he gestures as if he is beating someone with his hand and mimics his father’s deep voice] ‘What are you doing? Are you insane? Are you stupid?’ That’s why my nose is like this [he presses the tip of his nose, which has no cartilage.] I broke my nose... This is a horrible place.”

Zryan lapses into a long silence. He cracks a sunflower seed with his front teeth and flicks the empty shell away. His phone vibrates and he pulls it out of his pocket.

“It’s my dad, I haven’t spoken to him in a week.”

⁶² The backlog in cases awaiting a decision by the Home Office in the UK has increased significantly since 2010 (The Refugee Council, 2021). At the end of 2020, 7 in 10 people who had been waiting for over 6 months had been waiting for over one year (*ibid*). Most of the research participants included in this thesis crossed to and claimed asylum in the UK in 2019 and 2020, the majority of whom are still awaiting an initial decision at the time of writing in 2022.

“Why not?”

“He’s calling to yell at me, I know it, since I haven’t crossed yet.”

He answers the Facebook Messenger video call and speaks with his father for a few minutes, during which time Zryan also asks for a couple hundred dollars,⁶³ “I ran out of what you sent last time, you know how it is here. I spent it all on trains and buses.” He winks at me and gestures to the bottles in front of us, indicating that he really spent it on alcohol. Eventually his father passes the phone around to his sisters and his mother. At this point, Zryan beckons me over with his hand, so I wipe some sunflower seed shells from the grass and sit next to him. “Talk to her!” he says. After some conversation, his mother tells me:

“Take care of my Zryan, look after him. He drinks so much, tell him to stop drinking and start going for derchwn. You know this is the second time he’s travelled?⁶⁴ I’ve sold my house twice for this boy. Once back then and once this time around. I’ll be living in poverty and dirt if he doesn’t get to the UK soon. You tell him to stop drinking and start going for derchwn. I don’t even know why he likes the UK anyway. He hated it the first time. Zryan tell me why you’re going again?”

Her tone drips with sarcasm, and Zryan takes the phone from my hands and quickly says goodbye. He hangs up⁶⁵ and smiles, “Let’s call some more friends and make this a party. Where are Bryar and Hakim?”

Zryan’s conversation with his parents illustrates the strings attached to their money. His parents fund the *rega* with the expectation that he will repay them not in remittances but by doing all he can to successfully reach the UK and work towards

⁶³ Money is usually sent in US dollars. It is received in euros.

⁶⁴ She says *sefrkrdn*, which is a Kurdish appropriation of the Arabic word *sefr*, meaning a trip, journey, or travel. It is the same word used by Selam Hemadî in the song *سەفر مەکە* (*Do not travel*), and excerpt of which is included at the beginning of this chapter.

⁶⁵ For a discussion on digitally mediated intimacies and relationships, see Chapter Six.

the life both he and they envisioned for him.⁶⁶ To think through these expectations of reciprocity, it is useful to discuss his parents' money through the framework of Maussian gift exchange (Mauss, 2002 [1954]). The gift of money both reflects and reproduces obligations between the parties involved and strengthens transnational bonds between them, particularly when the gift is returned with another gift (Cohen, 2011; Strathern, 1988). Repayment, however, does not necessarily occur as an equal exchange between two people but exists along a continuum and can take various forms. Among migrants and their families, this commonly takes shape as a circular flow of food, clothing, services, money, information, ideas, and behaviours (Levitt, 1998; Mazzucato, 2011; Petrou and Connell, 2017).

Additionally, Marshall Sahlins argues that the form of repayment is related to degrees of social and kinship distance (2004 [1974]). For instance, Zryan's mother characterises her money transfers as gifts, and does not expect her son to repay her in an equal monetary amount. Yet were a friend to transfer Zryan money he would be expected to fully repay the exact amount, even if he takes several years to do so. David Graeber's distinction between the gift and the commodity is suitable here in coming to terms with the differences in a money transfer from family versus a friend (2001). Both gifts and commodities are transferred, but the 'contract' of the gift is invisible, while the commodity contract is visible and concrete (*ibid*). This is not to imply that gifts and commodities are morally distinct as 'good' or 'bad,' but merely that gifts demand reciprocity in subtle ways that are sometimes hidden from those not directly involved in the exchange (Miller, 1995).

In Zryan's case, he is expected to reciprocate by using the funds in a way that fulfils the moral duty imposed upon him by his reception of the gift. As we see in the vignette above, money is frequently moralised by those who send remittances in that they expect it to be put to 'good' use (Simoni and Voirol, 2020). This means money should be used for basic needs including food, rent, car repairs, or in Zryan's case, subsistence and travel. If the sender discovers that the recipient uses the funds in

⁶⁶ Although Zryan's parents do not hope that he will 'repay' them via monetary remittances in the future, some kochberan migrate to the UK for this reason. Many people – especially those from working class backgrounds – leave Kurdistan for the purpose of making money and sending remittances back to their families. Some of them begin to send remittances as soon as they arrive in the UK and find work, sending the majority of their income to their families. Financial remittances from Europe to Southern Kurdistan were, however, more common in the 1990s after economic sanctions were imposed upon Iraq in the wake of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, contributing to extreme poverty in Southern Kurdistan (Paasche, 2020).

what they perceive to be a morally improper manner – such as on alcohol – the relationship is at risk of breaking down. Both sending and receiving money is therefore moralised and entangled with perceptions and norms about familial responsibility, trust, and respect (*ibid*).

Some kochberan attempt to untangle themselves from the expectations that arise from receiving money transfers and the moral economy of which they are reflective. Bryar, for instance, often tells me that he has not accepted money from his family:

I have been on the *rega* for over one year and I never asked anything from anybody. When you ask for money that's when they put heaviness [pressure] on you, like 'Have you crossed yet? Why not? Why aren't you trying hard enough?' They don't understand life in Dankix. They don't understand how hard it is here. And I don't want them to know. If I ask for money, they know there's a problem. So, I don't ask. Plus, my cousin in the UK has not once asked how I'm doing. I don't want his money, that arsehole.

Bryar teases out some of the nuance involved in asking for money from one's kinship networks. Just as there is a politics of exchange at play for those who do accept money transfers, there is a politics of giving: who gives money, and who does not? As gifts, remittances are widely understood to reflect the values and priorities of both senders and recipients, and through this are mechanisms by which transnational links are maintained (Carling, 2014; Mazzucato, 2011). When someone once thought to be an ally – either friend or kin – does not participate in these exchanges, the ally contradicts normative moral behaviour and the social ties bonding the two groups are severed. Although Bryar does not accept money from his family, the extension of their offer sustains their relationships by demonstrating to him that they care for his safety and wellbeing. His cousin in the UK has neither offered money nor asked after him, two things that are interrelated to Bryar, who discusses them in tandem. Since claiming asylum in France and settling into housing in 2020, Bryar still refuses to speak with his cousin. On a separate occasion he explains to me more explicitly his perception of the relationship between money lending and morality:

I don't talk to my cousin because he never offered to help me. When I came to Europe, I learned who my real friends are; some offer to send money like that [snaps his fingers], even if they've only just arrived in Europe and started working themselves. But others are *razil* [parsimonious or cheap]. They're not generous. They're not good people. I'll never talk to those people again.

Both Bryar and Zryan speak to the affective experience of indebtedness. Zryan's family calls just as he acknowledges the deep sadness that he feels being in Dankix for the second time, and how his recklessness in Kurdistan that resulted from his time on the *rega* threatened his relationship with his father. He and his parents communicate in veiled language; what seems to be his mother's candour is, in fact, a probe – an attempt at reading our reaction to her guess that he is heavily drinking. After hanging up the phone, Zryan does not wish to discuss what has just occurred but instead prefers to move on to light-hearted conversation.

In contrast, Bryar likens indebtedness to feeling 'heavy' when he says that those sending money put 'heaviness' or '*qwrsi*' on him, rather than using the more common phrase to put 'pressure' or '*fshar*' on him. Debt can feel heavy in the same way that anxiety and dread can psychosomatically weigh upon people, dragging them down. Crucially, debt, anxiety, and dread all orient one towards the future. Debt (and credit) "can weld people to particular temporal regimes" as the indebted work to pay off their debt (Peebles, 2010: 230). The future demands something of the indebted as payment for the actions or circumstances of their past (*ibid*). This feeling will be familiar to those who have experienced periods of chronic debt: earning money brings no satisfaction because it immediately disappears, channelled away into repayment. For others, this 'heaviness' is tied inextricably to guilt (Graeber, 2011). Aryos, for instance, had to choose between working as a smuggler or becoming indebted to secure his crossing. In the end, several friends each loaned him hundreds of pounds to pay for his place on a dinghy. Now that he is in the UK, he often tells me a version of the following:

I can't start living my life until that money is repaid. The first thing I'll do when I find work is pay them back...I will starve if that's what it takes. I don't want them to struggle because they helped me.

The guilt Aryos feels about his debts means that he aims to repay his friends before he spends money even on basic needs. Debt and credit are, in this way, experienced through different sensorial and temporal attachments. Receiving money may happen in an instant – a conversation leads to a bank transfer or the handing over of cash – while its repayment is physically tolling. It can mean spending three years washing cars, burning one’s hands and inhaling chemicals, while watching a pile of money grow day by day until it disappears into the hands of one’s creditor. Yet, as it disappears, as does the ‘heaviness’ of which Bryar speaks. Until his debt disappears, Aryos feels that he “can’t start living [his] life” revealing how his indebtedness is intimately related to feelings of “stuckedness” or “dead time” (Hage, 2009: 97; Khosravi, 2010: 91). These two distinct but interrelated notions were introduced in Chapter Two, and refer to intersecting forms of existential immobility, waiting, and uncertainty. All aspects of Aryos’ life – having fun, personal growth, building relationships – are on hold until he repays his debts.

We can understand receiving gifts, and their attached expectations of reciprocity, as fundamental to recreating transnational social ties. Yet they also have profound affective implications for those who feel the pressure to reciprocate and cannot yet do so. As was outlined in the Introduction, affects refer to socially- and culturally-situated forces that are transmitted by coming into contact with people, places, and objects (Massumi, 1995). Here, money comes with a host of affective attachments – which Bryar collectively describes as ‘heaviness’ – that encompasses a temporal repositioning, guilt and shame, and transformed relations with others. Affect “sticks” these attachments to money as it circulates between people in Kurdistan, various countries in Europe, and in Dankix, thus circulating affect along these same channels (Ahmed, 2004: 120).

As he tells us here, Bryar does not accept money transfers. He therefore acquires the items he needs for survival by building both sexual⁶⁷ and non-sexual relationships with volunteers, and forms similarly strategic relationships with smugglers in a bid to secure free passage. While some, including Bryar and Sangar, accomplish this by working (without pay) as low-level smugglers, others choose to work in smugglers’ cafés. To better contextualise the significance and purpose of

⁶⁷ For a brief discussion on Bryar’s sexual relationship with a volunteer, see Chapter Two.

cafés within smuggling factions, I first turn to the social organisation of these groups, and their relationship with the wider community.

The social organisation of smuggling factions

Smugglers are widely regarded by *kochberan* as professionals who have the knowledge necessary to facilitate *derchwn*, or the practicalities involved in crossing to the UK. As was discussed in the Introduction, the French and British states collaborate to increasingly tighten border controls through the development and application of technology, increased deployment of border agents, and by hiring private contractors to search incoming vehicles. Tightening controls has not led to fewer asylum seeker arrivals in the UK. While the annual number of new asylum applications in the UK peaked at 84,132 in 2002, applications decreased dramatically to 17,916 in 2010 (Sturge, 2021). From 2010 through today, however, applications have steadily increased (excepting a dip in 2020 that resulted from consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic) and are now at 37,562 as of the latest statistics published by the Home Office, which includes data up to September 2021.⁶⁸ Rather than resulting in reduced asylum seeker arrivals, then, tightening controls has created a demand for smuggler assistance without whom it would be nearly impossible to pass through border security undetected. This is not unusual; the positive correlation between border security and demand for smugglers is well-documented in borderlands around the globe (Kyle and Koslowski, 2011). At any given time in Dankix there are dozens of smugglers actively working, and many more working in the spring and summer where *derchwn* tends to be more successful. There are various smuggling factions usually separated by town of origin, each of which has claimed their own territories in northern France, including car parks, petrol stations, lorry parks, and beaches.

These factions are loosely organised but hierarchical, whereby low-level smugglers usually also attempt to cross to the UK and are working to eventually secure their free passage (such as Sangar). They drive *kochberan* in cars and vans

⁶⁸ According to the Home Office (as of September 2021), the annual number of new asylum applicants in the UK of Iraqi nationality (unfortunately an imperfect method of identifying Kurds who pass through Dankix, who are categorised by either their Iraqi or Iranian citizenship) grew from 378 in 2010 to 3042 in 2021 (UK Home Office, 2021).

to the faction's territory, open lorry doors, check the lorry's destination address, and watch out for police as kochberan climb inside. They are also responsible for transporting boats, motors, petrol, and people to beaches and conducting days-long reconnaissance missions on beaches, recording police activity in advance of a crossing attempt. As they are the most visible members of smuggling factions, they are the most likely to be arrested and incarcerated, at which point mid-level smugglers recruit new workers to fill their positions. Their incarceration therefore has little long-term impact on smuggling activity, and instead results in the faction pausing operations for only days or weeks.

At the mid-level are those smugglers who manage the practicalities of *derchwn*, including securing money transfers, acting as the main point of contact for kochberan, delegating work to low-level smugglers, and recruiting new workers. These men (smugglers in Dankix are typically men) often live outdoors in Dankix among kochberan or in hotels and apartments in Grande-Synthe or Dunkirk. Many of these smugglers have refugee status or humanitarian protection in other EU countries (like Pshtiwan) or the UK and return to Dankix to work seasonally at times when work is especially lucrative. Others do not yet have refugee status but began as low-level transporters, lorry door-openers, or look-outs and have worked their way up to their current position. They will likely make money over the course of months or years before eventually crossing to the UK themselves, claiming asylum in France, or settling in another EU country. While most kochberan, including low-level smugglers, reside in Dankix for between two and seven months before successfully crossing,⁶⁹ these smugglers remain in Dankix for one to five years (or longer, as with Farhad), or return annually. Depending on their personality and level of (dis)trust, many therefore have good relationships with long-term volunteers, security guards employed by city hall, and locals in Grande-Synthe and Dunkirk. Many of these mid-level smugglers carry firearms, and some brandish or fire them openly to display their power during disputes. They are less likely to be arrested than lower-level smugglers because they are less likely to interact with police. When they are incarcerated, however, they are replaced either by lower-level smugglers or by those who manage them from a distance, a group described in the following paragraph.

⁶⁹ By the time of writing, the interval between arriving in Dankix and crossing to the UK has fallen dramatically. The professionalisation and overall 'success' of the water route means that many remain in Dankix for only a few months, and some for only days or weeks.

According to research participants, mid-level smugglers' incarceration therefore also has little long-term impact on overall smuggling activity.

Mid-level smugglers often answer to smugglers who live in Paris, the UK, the Netherlands, Poland, or other EU countries. These 'upper-tier' smugglers are rarely, if ever, involved in the day-to-day operations of *derchwn* except to occasionally travel to Dankix to check-in with their mid-level employees. Some, such as Sarkawt who is featured below, are the head of their faction yet maintain close involvement in everyday operations and live in Dankix among mid- and low-level smugglers. Those in the upper-tier usually worked as mid-level smugglers themselves before ascending the ranks after their boss was killed, incarcerated, or chose to retire. Smugglers in this category often have indefinite leave to remain, permanent residency, or citizenship in their European countries of residence. They usually get a very large cut of the profit and are responsible for distributing payment throughout the faction and making overarching decisions about crossing routes or territory disputes.

Smuggling is a profitable business because demand is great. Since, as was discussed in the Introduction, there are no other viable routes to claiming asylum in the UK, *kochberan* only have the option of crossing through irregular means. Due to the hyper-securitisation of the France-UK border, it is nearly impossible for *kochberan* to make this crossing without professional smuggling assistance. While some police operations may lead to the incarceration of several dozens of smugglers in quick succession (this usually occurs annually at summer's end), this generally slows smuggling operations for only around six weeks, as was observable during fieldwork by charting periods of rapid population growth in Dankix (caused by a 'bottleneck') and confirmed by research participants. Smuggling operations continue despite the annual arrest of thousands (and incarceration of hundreds) of individual smugglers and the dismantling of dozens of smuggling networks each year (Caulcutt, 2021; UK Home Office, Border Force, and Patel, 2020). The profitability of smuggling, combined with constant incoming migration from Kurdistan and an ever-increasing demand for smuggling, means that as smugglers are incapacitated by police operations they are quickly replaced by fresh faces.

Finally, there are numerous satellite factions that do not have territory in Dankix but instead work from territories which are similarly strategically located, including in Le Havre and Le Mans. These factions invite *kochberan* to stay in their

owned or rented property. They therefore have only limited spaces, sometimes allowing only thirty to forty kochberan to go for *derchwn* with them at a time. Kochberan sleep in sleeping bags on the floor of these properties by day and leave for *derchwn* all together at night. Depending on who is running the faction at the time, these smugglers sometimes provide food for kochberan, cooked by someone who trades their labour for eventual free passage.

The role of smugglers' cafés

Mid- and upper-level smugglers who choose to live among other kochberan in Dankix, such as Farhad, sometimes build cafés from which they conduct their business. Soon after Farhad's arrest and imprisonment, a new café was built on the basketball court outside of Kampeka, the gymnasium opened by Grande-Synthe city hall to house several hundred kochberan, as explained in the Introduction. This time, it was built and run by Sarkawt. Sarkawt profited from the power vacuum created by Farhad's incarceration, and quickly worked his way up to the mid- and then upper-tier. He is now in charge of all *hawala* money transfers⁷⁰ for those who need cash transferred from their families and friends in Kurdistan (with a 30% commission charge). The illegalisation of kochberan by the state means they are excluded from licit methods of money transfer, including Western Union and Moneygram. While Western Union has offices in Kurdistan through which to send money, kochberan in France require ID to receive money, which most do not have. For the minority who still have their Iraqi or Iranian passports with them, border agents and refugee status determination officials in the UK can use evidence of a Western Union money transfer as proof that they were in France and can subsequently argue that their claim to asylum is inadmissible on the grounds that they travelled through a 'safe third country.' Kochberan therefore must rely either on non-profit organisation volunteers in Dankix to receive money in their stead and give them the funds in cash

⁷⁰ *Hawala* is a system of money transfer that exists in parallel to that of banking institutions. It relies on an enormous network of money brokers in *hawala* offices throughout the world. *Hawala*, as is used for *derchwn* by Kurds, requires two 'OKs' or transfer requests for the transfer to be completed. The first OK is given by the person attempting the crossing before they leave for *derchwn*. They will not be taken on *derchwn* until their OK is given. The second OK is given by the person receiving the money once the person crossing has arrived in the UK. Money for *derchwn* is usually held in a *hawala* office in one's hometown in Kurdistan and is never physically handed to smugglers by kochberan themselves.

or must use the *hawala* system. Sarkawt knows that kochberan do not have viable alternatives to his service, and he therefore inflates the commission charge with little consequence to him or his business. This disproportionately affects those with limited access to wealth, whose families are less likely to be able to afford the commission charge.

Sarkawt also purportedly organises a special type of *derchwn* called *itifaqa* which costs between £10,000 and £14,000 depending on the year, season, and border security landscape. If paying for *itifaqa*, a car comes to your living space, takes you to a private smuggling territory from which you enter a lorry whose driver has been paid off⁷¹ leading to a high success rate. Where it may take around thirty-five attempts of normal lorry *derchwn* to reach the UK, which costs between £2500 and £6000 upon arrival, *itifaqa* might take one, two, or three attempts. In addition to the success rate, crossing by *itifaqa* is considerably safer. Since the lorry drivers are remunerated, they will not make overnight stops before crossing the border (significantly reducing the chances of hypothermia or asphyxiation). There is also no risk that, if found by the driver, kochberan will be beaten or threatened with a firearm as sometimes occurs. *Itifaqa* was established as a direct response to increased securitisation at the border, as it became more and more difficult to cross without the drivers' assistance. This option enables the wealthy to reduce their time spent in Dankix but is inaccessible to those without the funds required to pay, mirroring the way that waiting time is unevenly distributed according to power, as is discussed in Chapter Two.

In returning to Sarkawt, between his *hawala* commission charge and *itifaqa* he is said to have amassed a significant amount of money, which he allegedly launders through a network of car washes in the UK. When he first built his café in Kampeka, it was erected in similar fashion to Farhad's:⁷² using tarp, wood chopped from the surrounding trees, plastic chairs, and cheap gas stoves designed for camping. Soon after, rumours spread that Kampeka was not going to be evicted until at least the end of Ramadan, which was still two months away. As a result, five other cafés quickly sprung up. One of them, known as Little Darbandixan because it is run by the

⁷¹ Some kochberan claim that contracted workers who check lorry contents at the border are also paid off, but this has not been reliably corroborated by many research participants.

⁷² Farhad's café is described in Chapter Two.

Darbandixan smuggling faction,⁷³ sells liver sandwiches and tea from a tarp shelter built alongside one of the gymnasium walls. Another was built by a friend of Farhad's across from Sarkawt's café on the other side of the basketball court. He sells traditional Kurdish rice, beans, okra, chicken, and chickpeas from a plastic pop-up greenhouse covered in tarp. The third consists only of a man selling Belgian cigarettes and tobacco from his tent, and tea heated up over hot coals placed in a metal wheelbarrow outside of his tent entrance. The fourth was constructed just behind Sarkawt's café and offers games of dominos and cards. Sarkawt eventually bought the dominos café for a few thousand euros and expanded his own area to encompass both. The fifth and final café is run by a man named Karzan.

Karzan speaks impeccable English due to having lived in Peterborough since childhood. He was deported to Kurdistan after serving time in prison for assault and returned to Dankix to make money as a smuggler before crossing to the UK again



Figure 9 - Kampeka in summer 2019, featuring four of the cafés: (1) long, grey tent structure parallel to the gym wall (2) and (3) structures opposite one another on the basketball court in grey and green tarp, and (4) to the right, built with white, grey, and blue tarp against the triangular building. Image used with permission from Mobile Refugee Service.

⁷³ Many people choose to work with smugglers with whom they share a hometown to reduce the possibility for betrayal and violence in the future. This is in large part because kinship networks in one's hometown can be mobilised to enact retribution against the smuggler's kin as a result of such an event.

and living 'black' (the Kurdish term for living without documentation and not claiming asylum). Karzan's is the most elaborate and impressive of the cafés.

You can tell when Karzan's café is open because of the music he blasts from his speakers until 5 or 6 in the morning. He plays contemporary Kurdish music, always quick-paced and lyrically witty songs marked by blaring zirne (a relative of the oboe) and improvisation. The music wafts out alongside smoke from the barbeque over the tent area and the grassy field beyond, audible from the street 200 metres away.

It is spring and finally getting warmer. Everyone is in t-shirts and leaves their coats in their tents or in the gymnasium. Soon they will need them only on derchwn, while waiting in a freezer lorry or on the beach. Karzan has built and re-built his café countless times over the past few weeks, aiming to improve it with new materials and equipment. While it began similarly to Sarkawt's and Farhad's cafés, he has now constructed his café from thick tree branches, tied tarp taut against the branches with rope to create a wind-proof shelter, and has full-size refrigerators and enormous restaurant-grade stoves. The seating area features a rectangular table surrounded by white lawn chairs and an old, ripped couch. Customers sink into the cushions as they smoke cigarettes or shisha and wait for their food.

Below the ceiling tarps hang colourful fairy lights with large bulbs, reminiscent of the cafés and storefronts lining main roads in Kurdistan that have been erected to receive travellers on long journeys. Karzan laughs and says the lights make him feel like it is Christmas. He is standing behind a counter facing the entrance to the café, wearing plastic gloves and shaping minced lamb stuffed with herbs along a rectangular shish, readying the kebabi mahshi⁷⁴ that I have ordered for dinner. The counter is covered in peppers, tomatoes, onions, and lettuce, which he keeps looking fresh by regularly flicking water on them with his gloved fingers. Above the counter hangs a leg of lamb, wrapped tight in cling film. To his right, his employee stirs an immense pot of white beans

⁷⁴ *Kebabi mahshi* is a Kurdish lamb kebab made with chili, parsley, and other herbs.

cooked with water, tomato paste, onions, cumin, salt, and citric acid. Karzan laments that he cannot make proper Kurdish bread with the resources that he has and apologises for serving my dinner with a baguette from Auchan. To his left, Aso prepares a pot of Du Ghazal tea, adding cinnamon sticks and cardamom pods to the pot. When he is satisfied with its aroma and colour, he pours some into a short, curved Kurdish tea glass called a pyalla. When he turns and hands it to me, he places a comical paper forage hat atop his head and smiles at me, “Ey, ey? How do I look? I’m a chef!”



Figure 10 - Remnants of one of the cafés sitting among sunflower seeds and cigarette butts after the 17 September 2019 eviction of Kampeka. The sign reads, "Everyone's teahouse." Image by author.

The cafés quickly became cornerstones in the lives of many, some of whom spend nearly every waking hour smoking shisha, playing dominos, and charging their phones in these makeshift shelters. The cafés' opening hours mimic the sleeping patterns of kochberan, who usually sleep into the afternoon due to going on *derchwn* at night. Since Kampeka was not evicted for ten months (from its opening in

December 2018 until 17 September 2019)⁷⁵ the cafés evolved to be much more developed and permanent structures than did Farhad's. Before the emergence of cafés, most men in Dankix would spend their days hanging out in Saheka (the car park in Jangaleka made significant by the non-profit organisations who distribute and bring generators for phone charging there). Even in the cold winter months, between 200 and 400 men would walk for thirty minutes to Saheka each day.

After the sudden proliferation of cafés in Kampeka, however, men stopped going to Saheka. Instead, their material and subsistence needs were largely met not by non-profit distributions, but by the cafés and by the abundance of tents, sleeping bags, and blankets left around Kampeka by those who had crossed to the UK. Since the police were not evicting Kampeka, there was no need to continuously gather new materials for shelter. Instead, the shelters became semi-permanent as people crossed to the UK and newcomers occupied the emptied tents. Kochberan therefore had more time to spend gathering other resources, material or financial, and had a degree of respite from the intense and exhausting activities required of meeting the basic need for shelter. Since Kampeka's eventual destruction, however, evictions began to occur at startling rates: often multiple times weekly police destroyed all shelters, food, and sleeping materials. Those who could not afford the time it took to queue for donations, or the money needed to stockpile in anticipation of evictions, were most likely to sleep without shelter or sleeping bags in the days and weeks following evictions. In this way, Kampeka's semi-permanence brings into sharp relief the violence of the eviction-detention cycle.⁷⁶

While the shift away from reliance on non-profit organisations was caused by the lack of evictions rather than the cafés themselves, Farhad's vision – discussed in Chapter Two – came to fruition: people in Dankix began relying on the cafés, and their dependence on organisations became considerably reduced. This did not cause the non-profits to pack up and leave, as Farhad had predicted (most kochberan remained reliant on food distributions), but rather they split their distributions between Kampeka and Saheka and were under far less pressure to quickly provide tents to new arrivals.

⁷⁵ As was outlined in the Introduction, Kampeka was built on land owned by the Grande-Synthe municipality. For the time Kampeka was open, city hall did not allow the subprefect of Dunkirk or the prefect of the Nord to order evictions.

⁷⁶ This is examined further in Chapter Four, in relation to encounters with the police.

Karzan's was one of the more successful cafés in Kampeka, which led to a rivalry between him and Sarkawt. Additionally, Karzan was said to have encroached on Sarkawt's smuggling territory several times, which led to incessant fighting between the two factions. One morning, Karzan's eyes were red and puffy. I asked what happened, to which he responded, "That motherfucker, he pepper-sprayed me in the face, like he's *paqla* [derogatory term for police] or something." I had a good relationship with Sarkawt because I had helped his wife and children access legal aid resources for claiming asylum in France before they eventually chose to cross to the UK instead. I therefore asked him about this incident with Karzan. He responded:

Karzan causes too much trouble. He's always high and drunk, waving his gun around. We're not animals here. We all have guns; you don't have to wave it around like that. This isn't the *mafiyeh* [term derived from 'mafia' referring to organised groups of drug, arms, and human traffickers].

This perception of Karzan is echoed by many in Dankix. He often practices grand displays of generosity towards the community, which many perceive as hollow attempts to construct himself as a community leader – kind to those who defer to him, but powerful enough to hurt those who refuse to extend their respect. Certain alleged smugglers often use violence as cultural capital, as the social field that constitutes Dankix operates on contestations of power, as we see in the previous chapter (*see also* Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Some discharge their firearm in the middle of Saheka – the car park in Jangaleka – while aid workers and volunteers distribute food, proving that they are unafraid of potential consequences, are more powerful than the Europeans who co-populate this space, and do not care if the volunteers end their distribution early. These displays of power are also used in territory disputes, as is the case between Karzan and Sarkawt, and are supposed to intimidate rivals. They are not, however, good for business. Most *kochberan* say that they prefer to use smugglers who are level-headed instead of erratic. Additionally, as Sarkawt implies, gunshots attract police, which "causes too much trouble."

Both Karzan and Sarkawt run cafés from which *derchwn* is ostensibly planned. The violence Karzan uses to maintain and display his power is therefore looked upon with disdain by Sarkawt, who views Karzan's unpredictable behaviour and drug use as dangerous liabilities to their businesses. Karzan draws unwanted

attention from volunteers, security guards, and the emergency first responders who are sometimes called after a stabbing or shooting. Both Sarkawt's and Karzan's cafés also act as pipelines to *derchwn* for men who do not have the money they need to pay a smuggler for passage to the UK. Aso, who prepares and serves tea in Karzan's café, is one of these men.

Working in smugglers' cafés

Aso's family owns a large farm in a village about an hour's drive south of Slemani. He has eight siblings, all of whom are old enough to work and two of whom are married men, meaning that their income returns directly to the family through a system of pooling and redistribution. Although his father is ill and can no longer work, his siblings work and manage the farm,⁷⁷ which generates enough income for them to live comfortably. Aso had also worked on the farm his entire life until he left for Europe in early 2017:

Aso: "I miss my tractor! When you go to Kurdistan, take a photo of it for me. But don't touch it, eh! Nobody has touched it since I left. My family knows how hard I worked for that, and for them. They paid for the *rega* so far, but my father is getting angry that I haven't made it to the other side [the UK] yet. I can't ask them for any more money. You know how much I've spent? 20,000 [USD] and I spent a lot of it in the clubs in Istanbul [laughing]. So now I work for Karzan. I make tea and clean up. I work for over twelve hours, sometimes fifteen hours every day."

Victoria: "How much do you get paid?"

Aso: "Fifteen euros."

Victoria: "Per day? That's nothing."

⁷⁷ Married sons, particularly in rural settings, traditionally continue to live within their parents' household compounds with their wives and children rather than branching off as a separate nuclear household unit. Income and resources continue to be pooled with the main household. This is less prevalent among urban households.

Aso: “I know, but where else am I supposed to work? And sometimes I don’t even get that. But he gives me all the alcohol I want as a thank you for my work and... other stuff. Like ‘green.’ You know?”

Victoria: “Yeah, I know what you’re talking about.”

Aso: “Not just ‘green.’ ‘White’ too! [laughing] Anyway, I’ll work for maybe two months and then I’ll cross with Karzan for free. After Ramadan is over. I like the work anyway. What else is there to do?”

The way Aso is compensated for his work is common. Café workers are remunerated poorly, and are sometimes paid in alcohol, ‘green’ (marijuana), ‘white’ (cocaine), heroin, and tramadol. Most importantly, there is either a promise or an unspoken understanding that the true payment for their work is eventual free *derchwn*. Kochberan can also gain favour with smugglers by cooking for them or running Belgian and Kurdish tobacco and cigarettes from Dankix to smuggling outposts throughout France. Unfortunately, smugglers are not always forthright with those doing them favours or working in their cafés, as Aso eventually found. Several weeks later we had the following interaction:

Aso stumbles towards me in a side-street outside of Kampeka, “My sister,⁷⁸ how are you?”

“Hey, what’s up?”

“I’m fine. Am I fine? Is anything fine? [Laughing] who knows?” As he approaches, I see that he has red stains around his mouth and is holding a bottle of whiskey.

⁷⁸ As was discussed in the Introduction, some research participants referred to me as their sister (*xwshk*, in Kurdish) and I referred to them as my brothers (*bra*). I positioned myself as a sister with some of those with whom I was close to indicate that we had a nonsexual relationship of mutual trust and care.

“What happened? Is that blood on your mouth?”

“This? Oh, no. I ate some berries, here have some,” he extends a handful of freshly-picked berries towards me, “You know what happened? Fuck Karzan, that’s what happened. He’s an arsehole, he’s gay too. Now I can’t go to the UK. I’ll never get to the UK. I’m going to just stay here.”

“Aso, explain to me what happened, I don’t understand.”

“He called me a thief. He said that I stole his shish, the one he uses to make kebab. But we both know I’m not a thief. He just wants an excuse not to take me on derchwn. Just like he did with Abdullah.⁷⁹ He raped him, did you know that? He raped him by the toilets outside and we saw it so he came into our tent with a gun and I had to chase him away even though I only had a knife. He was too high to shoot us even if he tried.”

At this point, Elsie, a volunteer, arrives in her car, so Aso puts a finger to his lips, “Shhhh” and stumbles away, back towards Kampeka.⁸⁰

After months of working in the café, Karzan attempted to renege on his unspoken agreement with Aso by accusing him of thievery. This conversation was also the first time I was made aware of Karzan’s widespread raping of boys and young men in Kampeka. At first, Karzan’s sexual violence was known only to the survivors, their friends, and a handful of witnesses including Aso. Karzan threatened many in the way he threatened Aso, and this was effective at keeping his actions from the rest of Dankix. After several months, however, many of these friends and witnesses crossed the border and became emboldened to tell others. Word spread quickly back to Dankix and fewer young men and boys chose to work for him. After Kampeka’s eviction in September 2019, Karzan set up another café on Saheka. Three months later, however, due to both constant evictions and his deteriorating reputation, he closed his café and crossed to the UK.

⁷⁹ Abdullah works alongside Aso in Karzan’s café.

⁸⁰ Aso later, when sober, clarified that he would like me to include this conversation in this thesis.

Despite the incident between Karzan and Aso, Karzan still allowed Aso to cross to the UK for free later that summer. The conditions of his employment in Dankix (long hours and low pay or payment in alcohol and drugs) make the prospect of working in the cafés undesirable for many. Yet the inability to pay for *derchwn* leads some kochberan to precarious working conditions that put them at risk of extreme interpersonal and sexual violence, as we see occurring in Karzan's café. Some café workers, or those who would prefer not to work in the cafés at all due to the particular forms of violence this type of work entails, instead become involved in smuggling to secure their passage, as is illustrated by Shkar's experience outlined in the following section.

Becoming a smuggler

I first met Shkar in 2019 on Nawroz, or the Kurdish⁸¹ celebration of spring that marks the new year. I am standing by my car with Aso, attempting to connect his phone to my car's speakers to encourage people to start dancing. Two men approach us. I recognise one of them as the man who sells Belgian tobacco from his backpack, shouting at the top of his lungs, "Tobacco! Cigarettes! Come get it cheap!" He says,

"Excuse me, we need fuel to start the bonfire⁸²..." he glances at my car. Not knowing how to say 'siphon' in Kurdish, I mimic siphoning petrol from my car, "Is that what you mean?"

"Yes! Is that okay? Don't worry, everyone here does it all the time on derchwn, we know how."

He is referring to how both kochberan and smugglers often siphon diesel and petrol from lorries and vans while out on derchwn, or the process of attempting to cross to the UK. Kochberan wait along the periphery of lorry parks and petrol

⁸¹ Nawroz is celebrated in various ways by groups across parts of Asia and Europe.

⁸² A non-profit organisation had brought wood that day to Saheka for this purpose. Lighting bonfires is a traditional Kurdish practice on Nawroz.

stations until a vehicle is unattended, and quickly siphon diesel. This is used to fuel the vehicles with which smugglers transport kochberan from a meeting point in Dankix to the smuggling faction's territory.



Figure 11 - Nawroz bonfire on Saheka, 20 March 2019; image by author.

“That’s fine,” I reply, “What’s your name, by the way?”

“Skhar.” He takes a long plastic tube and empty Coca-Cola bottle from his backpack, “What are you doing after the party? Do you like shisha?”

Over time we develop a strong friendship and meet nearly every day in Jangaleka or Kampeka, and every evening in Dunkirk at migrant-friendly bars and shisha cafés. Despite being in Dankix, Skhar wants to have as good a time as possible. He would rather continue living life on his own terms by “going out

and spending money,” as he tells me once, rather than to “feel awful and sad all the time.”

A few weeks later, I meet up with him and three other men at a shisha café in Dunkirk. When I arrive, they are fighting over what song to play on Shkar’s phone. One of them succeeds in grabbing the phone from Shkar’s hands and plays Adele.

“I love Adele,” he says.

One of the others responds, “It’s pronounced ‘Adel-ee.’”

Everyone else erupts in laughter, “No it’s not, you idiot.”

Shkar’s phone rings. He sees the number and tells everyone to be quiet – it is their smuggler. After a short conversation, Shkar looks up and asks the others if they would like to try crossing by dinghy later tonight. They nod, and Shkar says into the phone, “OKyan da” [‘They gave their OKs,’ referring to the process by which people send the first of two messages to their respective hawala office ordering their money to be released]. Shkar then asks the men around us, “Where?” The men reply: “Ranya,” “Qalat Dizah,” “Hajiawa” indicating through which hawala office their money was transferred. After he hangs up the phone, Shkar asks me,

“Do you think there’ll be waves tonight?”

“Maybe...today’s been really windy.”

One of his friends chimes in, “But it should be good enough to get us to the border at least. When the clock changes we’ll just call the British police.” Another man opens an app on his phone which tells him the maritime forecast for the English Channel. “Tonight they’re 1.8 metres, but tomorrow they’re 0.6...I think we should wait.” Everyone agrees.

Shkar calls the smuggler and explains that they would prefer to wait until the following day. He puts the phone on speaker, and we hear the man attempting to reassure him, “Don’t worry. It’s only six people⁸³ and we have the proper equipment. We have life jackets.”

“I don’t know, I think we should go tomorrow.”

“If that’s what you want. Be ready at 11 tomorrow.”

Several months later, Shkar (whose attempts at derchwn that night and subsequent nights were unsuccessful), Bryar, and I meet in Jangaleka. It is sunny and warm, so we lay a thin red blanket on the forest floor in the shade of the trees and eat the pistachios and dates we had bought earlier at Auchan. One month before, I travelled to Kurdistan, where I spent some time with Shkar’s family⁸⁴ and brought back to France his tall, ornate shisha pipe. We build a fire to heat up a few coals and smoke here rather than going to the Dunkirk cafés.

Shkar is late, and after some time we hear him slashing through the brush with a butcher’s knife, hurrying towards us. He emerges from the trees carrying a few kebabs from Karzan’s café. Panting and frantic, he explains that Rastgo, one of his friends, had made it across to the UK two days ago. Shkar had struck a deal for Rastgo with a smuggler whereby he crossed for £3500 instead of £4000. Shkar tells us that he had vouched for Rastgo, “His ‘OK’ is through me” meaning that he had promised the smugglers that Rastgo had sent his initial OK. Upon his arrival in the UK, however, the smugglers completed their half of the transfer – the second OK – but found that Rastgo’s money transfer from Slemani to the hawala office in Istanbul (this one is run by a man named Hama Barham) was never initiated. As soon as Rastgo reached the UK,

⁸³ During the fieldwork period, smugglers allocated space for up to a dozen or so people per dinghy. By the time of writing, however, more and more people are being placed on dinghies, and smugglers also buy larger dinghies. It is now typical for over 30 people to board one craft, which has sharply increased the risk of capsizing and deflation.

⁸⁴ As was first discussed in the Introduction, I travelled to Kurdistan for the purposes to seeing a friend who had self-deported using a state-assisted return programme. While there, I visited the families of several friends and research participants.

however, he stopped responding to Shkar's messages. If Rastgo does not complete the money transfer, Shkar must transfer £3500 of his own money to Hama Barham's hawala office.

Shkar and Bryar frantically search through Facebook, call smugglers, other kochberan, and family and friends in Kurdistan, looking for Hama Barham's phone number. All this time, Rastgo's smuggler continues to call Shkar and ask for updates. Shkar rubs his temples with the tips of his fingers in frustration, "I can't pay this money, what do I do?" They finally find the number and call. The man on the other end of the line speaks Turkish, leading Shkar to exclaim, "Kurdish, come on, speak Kurdish. Why the hell would I speak Turkish?" Finally, they settle on English and the man on the phone says, "I'll give you Hama's number. Wait." 15 minutes later, Shkar receives a call from a Turkish number. It is Hama Barham, who greets Shkar in Kurdish.

Shkar cries out, "Finally! Was an OK sent from Slemani under the name Kani Twri [Rastgo's hawala pseudonym]?"

"What is this for?" Hama Barham asks.

"Nefrek derchw [a person has crossed]."

"Aha..." Hama echoes Shkar's words to someone in the background, "Someone has crossed." After a few moments Hama says, "No, the transfer was never initiated."

Shkar hangs up and calls Rastgo again. The phone rings, and Rastgo has clearly been online in the past few minutes, but he still does not answer. Shkar leaves him a voice note: "I trusted you. I can't afford to pay this for you. This was the first and last time I'm ever doing something like this."

Shkar stands up quickly, anxiously. As he stands, car keys fall from his jeans' pocket. I see them and quickly look away, but Shkar sees that I have spotted them. He sits back down and picks up the keys.

“Well, you’ve seen it now, might as well tell you. The last three nights I’ve been out with the boats. Last night I went with thirty people, including eight kids. I drove the van, it’s a white Mercedes.”

“Beaqli [you’re stupid]” I shake my head. As soon as the words leave my lips, I recognise my comment was inappropriate. I try to make a joke out of it by continuing, “You’re stupid because white’s too obvious. A black van is better.” Yet I worry for him. Lately, those who get caught have been getting three years in prison, up from six months to a year only last year.

“Ha! Last night we got arrested before we could even get the boats on the beach. The paqla [derogatory term for police] actually took the Mercedes, but I have this second set of keys. They took one of my phones, too. Three nights ago, I slept one hour, two nights ago three hours, and last night just two. I’ve been getting back to Kampeka at around 8 each morning.”

“Are you going out again tonight?”

“No, I need to sleep [laughing]”

Later, Bryar tells me not to worry about Shkar: “You know I work too, right?”

“Yeah, you told me you open the doors [of the lorries in which kochberan hide].”

“I open doors, Shkar drives vans, someone else siphons petrol, another guy is a look-out. Everyone here works, in one way or another and at one time or another. The police know this, they’ve seen us, but they also know that we’re all just nefr [‘people,’ referring to kochberan who are not continuously engaged in smuggling and who are attempting to cross to the UK]. They see us during derchwn but they know we’re not high up so they let us go.”

Shkar had only begun working that week, after several months of attempting derchwn from Dankix. Due to previous traumatic experiences on dinghies, he

wants to cross by lorry. However, he cannot afford this and therefore must work until he is granted free passage. He does not know how long he must work.

One night three weeks later, I am eating dinner with Bryar and one of Wlat's cousins, who recently arrived in Dankix. We use baguette to scoop up pieces of lamb heart from the pan in which we cooked it over a fire, next to Bryar's tent at Kampeka. It is around 11 pm and rapidly becomes dark, so I stand up to walk to my car. I have to pass through Karzan's café to reach the road, so I lift a hood over my head and walk quickly alongside Bryar to avoid conversations with intoxicated men at the café. Just outside the café, however, Shkar sees us and lurches over, stumbling over a burnt-out shopping cart from Auchan. He is very drunk.

"Hey! What are you still doing here? Hey, do you have your car? Can you drive me somewhere?"

"Is it urgent? I want to go home."

"Yeah, it's important."

Bryar, who was walking me to my car, lowers his voice and says, "I'll come with you" indicating to me for the first time that he does not trust Shkar alone with me. I assume this is merely because Shkar has been drinking heavily, of which Bryar disapproves. We get to my car, and I drive out to the main road.

"Where are we going?" I ask.

"Centre [Dunkirk]. A hotel, by the train station."

After ten minutes, we arrive. I park my car outside of the train station and turn to say goodbye to Shkar. Before he leaves, however, he asks if I want to see something. I tell him that I do not, but he pulls out his wallet anyway. He empties his wallet of cards and several hundred euros in cash and fishes out a plastic bag from a hidden pocket. Inside the bag is a white rock.

“Want to know how much this costs? It’s a lot.”

“Are you using that?” I ask.

“No, it’s my friend’s. There’s a lot more of this. Anyway, I have to go. See you tomorrow.”

He opens the car door and steps outside. Just before closing the door, he remembers something: “Oh wait! I won’t see you tomorrow. I’m going to Italy with a new car – an Audi – to work for a few days. I’ll see you afterwards.”

Upon his return several days later, Shkar repeatedly makes similar, short trips throughout Europe.

Shkar’s story illustrates one of the ways in which kochberan become involved in smuggling. As Bryar states above, “Everyone here works, in one way or another and at one time or another.” Indeed, most of the research participants involved in this research purportedly ‘worked’ at some point during their time in Dankix in order to facilitate their own crossing to the UK, either through the accrual of funds or to build relationships with those ‘higher-up’ who could grant them free passage. In this way, the very categories of ‘kochber’ and ‘smuggler’ collapse when the complex realities of smuggling work and border crossing are analysed.

Yet, the construction of migrants and smugglers as ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ of exploitation, respectively, is common both in the media and by the state. For instance, on 24 November 2021, twenty-seven migrants drowned in the Channel when their dinghy deflated and filled with water, many of whom were kochberan who had been residing in Dankix. In response, the French Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin stated, “Those responsible for the tragedy which took place yesterday in the Channel are the smugglers, who for a few thousand euros promise El Dorado in England. The smugglers are criminals, this tragedy reminds us, painfully” (Patel-Carstairs, 2021). In response to the same event, the Guardian published an article entitled, “Channel tragedy: ‘Smugglers tell their clients it’s just a lake – but it’s not’” in which smugglers are blamed for misleading innocent migrants about the dangers of

the water crossing (Henley, 2021). The Home Office frequently makes use of this rhetoric, with Home Secretary Priti Patel stating in response to the death of a sixteen-year-old Sudanese migrant whose body was found on Sangatte beach on 19 August 2020, “This horrendous incident serves as a brutal reminder of the abhorrent criminal gangs and people smugglers who exploit vulnerable people” (Patel, P. 2020).

This narrative glosses over key nuances and, while it may serve the French and British states’ aims, does not reflect reality. Kochberan also benefit from this simplistic narrative unless they are arrested and incarcerated. To make use of an example commonly cited as tangible evidence of smuggler violence, the media repeatedly reports that smugglers force kochberan at knife- or gunpoint to either board or navigate dinghies and lorries (see, e.g., Johnson, 2020; Taylor, 2020a; Williamson, 2019). In the context of Dankix, however, these reports are often fabricated by kochberan who have a vested interest in minimising their agency to build a solid claim to asylum and avoid incarceration or deportation to a ‘safe third country.’⁸⁵ The relationship between *nefr* (people who ultimately aim to reach the UK) and smugglers (those whose main objective is not to reach the UK) is, in many ways, more so that of a customer and service provider. For example, we see in the vignette above that while Shkar’s smuggler attempts to convince him to leave for *derchwn* that night despite the high waves, Shkar and his friends are free to reject his offer and propose an alternative date according to what makes them feel safe. Smugglers do sometimes consolidate their power over kochberan through disinformation campaigns (e.g., to create a false sense of urgency) which reduces their capacity to make informed decisions regarding when and how to attempt a crossing. Yet, kochberan are free to accept or reject any offers to go on *derchwn* and are unlikely to be forcibly placed onto a dinghy or lorry as smugglers earn customers through reputation and referrals.⁸⁶ Claims that smugglers ‘sell’ the UK as ‘El Dorado’ or minimise the dangers by claiming the Channel is a lake are deeply misinformed.

⁸⁵ This is not to say that some kochberan are not forced or coerced by smugglers. Yet, overwhelmingly, kochberan who have not experienced force at the hands of their smugglers fuel this narrative to serve their aims. Further, French police are reported to have not found weapons when intercepting boats on beaches (Bolt, 2020).

⁸⁶ However, women and girls who are travelling unaccompanied by a man are at acute risk of sexual and gender-based violence throughout the *rega* (or the route to and through Europe), and this risk is compounded when dealing with smugglers because their interactions are very often coloured by a steep imbalance of power.

Smugglers do not have to 'sell' their services – the demand is too great, and those who are in Dankix have already decided to cross to the UK before meeting with smugglers.

As was discussed above, those who work at the lowest level (door-openers, look-outs, transporters) are most likely to be arrested and imprisoned, simply for the fact that they are exposing themselves to risk by accompanying *kochberan* on *derchwn*, rather than organising *derchwn* from a safe distance as those 'higher up' do. Bryar believes that this grants him and others like him, including Sangar and Shkar, some level of protection, as he argues that police surely understand that lower-level smugglers are just *nefr* who cannot afford *derchwn* and are trying to reach the UK themselves. Yet, time and time again in Dankix, this has proven untrue. For example, police and border agents sometimes wait in lorry parks and other smuggling territories and photograph low-level smugglers as they open lorry doors for use as evidence in court (Perrigueur, 2019). While this gives people like Bryar the impression that they are being let off the hook, many low-level smugglers are arrested weeks or months later, when enough evidence against them has been compiled. There are also instances in which police intercept *kochberan* on beaches and arrest those whom they perceive to be directing the group (Vautier, 2020). Lower-level smugglers therefore have the highest chance of an encounter with police, and consequently a greater chance of arrest and conviction.

Nahro's experience illustrates this well. When I met him in Dankix he was twenty-one years old and had left Kurdistan alone with only a few thousand pounds. By the time he reached France, he had nothing left, and no realistic prospects of reaching the UK. He therefore decided to open lorry doors without remuneration based on an implicit understanding that he would soon be granted free passage. One day, however, he disappeared. The rumour around Kampeka was that he was arrested and imprisoned. After three months, he returned and told me:

It was really bad in there, in prison... Anyway, what am I supposed to do? I'm poor, and I don't want to stay in France. I need to get to the UK. It's not like I want to open doors. I would prefer to be safe. The smugglers feel bad for me now, so they'll take me for free soon.

The following week, he made it to Dover for free. Nahro's experience is not unusual, and echoes Bryar's, Sangar's, and Shkar's reasons for becoming involved in smuggling. While lower-level smugglers (door openers, drivers, look-outs) are most likely to be incarcerated, smuggling provides them with a route to the UK when they could otherwise not afford the crossing. While Shkar began making money by selling Belgian tobacco (which is much cheaper than it is in France), he soon realised this would never provide him with enough income to save up for *derchwn*. Rastgo's betrayal also cost him a further £3500 because Rastgo refused to answer his calls, despite the normative moral obligations discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to money lending. Working for smugglers to pay off this debt and to secure his eventual free passage is his only viable option. Since the Home Office has chosen not to create alternative safe and legal routes to settlement in the UK, *derchwn* is only available via the (costly) smuggling route. Yet, the nature of Shkar's work puts him at acute risk of incarceration.

As we see in the vignette above, working in cafés or as a smuggler increases one's exposure to – and arguably likelihood of using – substances. Shkar, as we see above, is drawn to this work not only for its promise of free passage, but also for its glamour. He is quick to tell me he is driving a new Audi to Italy, to allow hundreds of euros to fall from his wallet, and to show me a bag of drugs while alluding to the fact that it is but one portion of a much larger quantity to which he has access. While he first became involved in smuggling out of necessity, he does not perceive himself to be a victim of exploitation. In fact, Shkar was among a group of lower-level smugglers who went on strike in the autumn of 2019. They refused to work until they were given a fair share of the earnings from each crossing. After two weeks of negotiations, their faction's boss conceded to their demands. The amount of precarity experienced by lower-level smugglers therefore depends upon for whom they work, and under what conditions (e.g., for a wage, a percentage of profit, or as debt-bondage). This leads to heterogenous perceptions among smugglers of their own agency and security. While some, including Shkar, understand themselves as choosing to work, others, such as Nahro, understand themselves as having no choice *but* to work.

Conclusion

The lack of safe and legal routes to the UK for those living in Dankix (the history and context of which are outlined in detail in the Introduction) means that the only way for *kochberan* to reach the UK is through irregular crossings facilitated by smuggling groups. In response to the ever-increasing securitisation of the France-UK border, smugglers charge a premium for their services due to overhead costs and the considerable risk to themselves for their involvement in this business. *Kochberan* pay their steep prices because smugglers have a monopoly on access to the UK. Yet, because *kochberan* are illegalised in Dankix and are excluded from the right to work, those who form part of the Kurdish working class – and do not have the funds available to pay for *derchwn* – must find alternative, usually illicit means of either making money or securing free passage from smugglers (as Shkar's decisions demonstrate). While these alternative means are sometimes key mechanisms for the reproduction of transnational relationships (such as through gifts of money), they also have the propensity to entrench *kochberan* in affectively 'heavy' cyclical debt and challenge, weaken, and sever familial ties (as we see occur with Zryan and Bryar). Furthermore, the reliance of *kochberan* on means of making money or securing free passage exposes them to exploitation (exemplified by Aso's case), interpersonal violence (such as Karzan's extreme abuse), and incarceration (as we see with Nahro). Illegalisation and other mechanisms and consequences of border control, therefore, are forms of structural violence that transform and limit the range of choices available to *kochberan*.

Finally, the systematic arrest and incarceration of lower-level smugglers – those who are most likely to be *nefr* (smuggled people, as distinguished from some types of smugglers by Bryar above) – targets migrants who cannot afford *derchwn* upfront. These arrests make little difference to smuggling operations, as factions constantly recruit new workers to fill the positions of those incarcerated. The result is a self-reinforcing, symbolically violent cycle in which undocumented migrants must participate in illicit activity as part of their survival strategies. The following chapter examines this further, demonstrating how the illegalisation of *kochberan* is both responded to and legitimated by cyclical evictions and repeated detention. It does so by analysing encounters between *kochberan* and another key social actor in Dankix: the police.

CHAPTER FOUR | Detention

I am from the East

I am an Easterner, I love the sun
but there was no new day in my life.
I believed in science, and said
*as long as it's dark and night in the East
this means the sun is shining in the West.*
I came here to America
to see the sun, speak to it,
beg it at dawn to come back with me
to end the darkness in my country.
Ah! woe to my poem
I did not see anything but pure darkness.
I was astonished.
Oh, my God,
how can this be?
Where is the sun?
Without its light,
how can we live?
how can we see?

- Yassin Aref⁸⁷ (2007)

It is a few days after a mass eviction. During the eviction, the police destroyed all living areas and materials. Residents who did not manage to slip away in the moments before the eviction were rounded up and sent on buses to deportation centres and accommodation centres across France. The police have set up a checkpoint to the Jangaleka main entrance and are looking through all

⁸⁷ Yassin Aref is a Kurdish Imam, author, and poet who fled to the United States, where he was granted refugee status. There, he was arrested by the FBI in a sting operation, convicted of supporting terrorism, and served fifteen years in prison (Aref, 2008). Upon his release he was deported to Kurdistan. Many believe him to be wrongly prosecuted and a victim of post 9/11 Islamophobia (Taib Menmy, 2021).

incoming vehicles and checking identity documents. On orders from the subprefect's office, they are not allowing vehicles with tents or sleeping bags to enter the nature reserve in order to deter distributions that would quickly lead to a new settlement. My car is full of people's personal belongings, which were given to me to keep safe until the police presence lessens, so I walk rather than drive into Jangaleka to avoid their confiscation.

Just before I reach the checkpoint, Rekar [who is introduced in Chapter Two] edges out from his hiding space in the bushes to my right and jogs towards me.

"Hey! Let's walk together, it's safer for me."

We wait until the officers are busy checking others' papers and quickly walk around the side of the checkpoint. Once we have made it through, we jump over a deep trench and into the dense thicket parallel to the path and continue towards Jangaleka through the forest to evade detection. As Rekar and I snap tree branches and cut our way through bushes, we see Shalaw [who is introduced in Chapter Three] and a few others running towards us. They run past, through the path Rekar and I have just made, turning only to say:

"A lot of paqla [derogatory word for police] have just arrived in Saheka [the car park in the middle of Jangaleka], it's not safe – don't go that way!"

Rekar stops and considers this. He is worried, as he was only released from one of the deportation centres half an hour ago. He was taken there yesterday after an identity check just outside Saheka. I offer to go ahead and check the car park out first, but he declines: "Nah, Shalaw's a wimp, let's just go."

We reach a trail in the forest and quickly walk along in single file. Others have caught up with us, some are running past us in the opposite direction. As we near the end of the path, the forest canopy opens up and sunlight hits our faces. The lake is glistening ahead of us, and plumes of smoke from cooking fires are dotted around its perimeter. We hear whooping and shouting as we approach the open grassy field in front of the lake, just behind Saheka.

As we emerge from the forest a dozen or so men are standing on the hill in the field, looking towards us. They holler and cheer:

“You’re here! Welcome back!”

“Hey, Victoria, tell your friend Donald Trump⁸⁸ to get these paqla to leave us alone!”

“Rekar, did you have a nice time in prison?”

Rekar laughs and warmly greets them with handshakes and hugs. As I walk up the hill, on the other side of which lies the Saheka car park, I hear the group cheer for some other men who have just emerged from the trail behind me. They whistle and shout, “Welcome back! The paqla can eat shit!”⁸⁹

I reach the crest of the hill and walk down into Saheka. The non-profit volunteers hanging around the car park do not have enough tents and sleeping bags to distribute to all those returning now from short-term holding facilities, deportation centres, or the accommodation centres into which they were placed. But for now, it is sunny and hot, and the 200 or so men who have already returned are laying in the grass in the nature reserve, smoking cigarettes, drinking tea from plastic cups, eating sunflower seeds, or fishing in the lake. Most of them are killing time until more material distributions arrive so that they can set up their living spaces. Many of the smugglers are also hanging around, speaking with newly arrived groups to ease their fears and reassure them that crossing attempts will be unaffected.

⁸⁸ This is a joke referencing first my American nationality, second, the long reach of American influence and power, and third, common perceptions among kochberan that I secretly worked with a US government agency such as the CIA. Trump was President of the United States at the time.

⁸⁹ The phrase ‘to eat shit’ is one of the few obscenities that I have literally translated from the Kurdish. In Kurdish, ‘eat shit’ is *gu bxo*, and is a common insult with very similar connotations as the same phrase in English.

Hama, whom I had recently met during a food distribution [and is introduced in Chapter Two], sees me in Saheka and shouts over the loud hum of a nearby generator, asking me to watch his phone. It is charging amongst the hundred or so other phones attached to extension cables running from the generator, itself brought by one of the non-profit organisations. He just needs to buy some food at Auchan and will be back in thirty minutes or so. He walks off towards the lake.



Figure 12 - Kochberan charge their phones in Dankix; research participant's image, used with permission.

After an hour, the organisation's volunteers signal to everyone that they need to pack up the generator. Everyone picks up their phone and stuffs their charging cables into their backpacks and pockets. I take Hama's phone, worried because he has not yet returned. I ask a few of his friends and one of them says he saw Hama getting thrown into a PAF [Police aux Frontières or Border Police] van just before Auchan. "Don't you know? Anyone that leaves Saheka gets arrested right away. Today they took thirty-five people so far."

The police have set up a perimeter around the nature reserve, but will most likely leave at nightfall, as they usually do.

Hours later, in the evening, a large group of forty or so men enter Saheka on foot, including Hama. They were all arrested at various times throughout the day, taken to the deportation centre in Coquelles (near Calais, forty kilometres away), and then released altogether at 5 pm. They return to the car park to cheering, applause, and laughter.



Figure 13 - Saheka, showing the lake in the background, and the forest through which Rekar and I walked to the right. Image used with permission from Mobile Refugee Support.

As Hama's and Rekar's experiences show, the practices of police and other bordering institutions are significant in shaping everyday life in Dankix. Police officers, vans, and checkpoints are ubiquitous, and policing is conducted for the purpose of checking identities and potentially detaining kochberan, rather than to ensure public order or to protect Dankix residents. In examining these policing practices below, I repeatedly use the term 'the state.' Anthropology and other social science disciplines have extensively analysed the phenomenon of the state, criticising in particular its representation as coherent, objective, or omnipotent (Sharma and Gupta, 2005). My aim is not to reify the French state as such, but rather to communicate the ways in which kochberan interpret the state as a cultural artefact bred from xenophobia and Orientalism, and police officers and border agents as enactors and enforcers of the state's will and interests.

Detention, both short- and long-term, is common for those living in Dankix. Police often park their vehicles at each entrance to the nature reserve, at various points within the forest, in Saheka before and during material distributions, and along the A16 motorway which looms above the car park and forested areas. Their vehicles slowly crawl through the paved paths that intersect Jangaleka, sometimes stopping to check the papers of those they encounter. These checkpoints are permeable (it is relatively easy to slip through unnoticed by walking around them and into the forest), temporal (as the police usually leave the area when the sun begins to set), and transitory (as police set them up here and there, on a whim). Such checkpoints can be contrasted to the rigid boundaries of institutional or formalised camp spaces, such as reception centres where residents must sign in and out and can often use only one entrance and exit, manned by staff.

Kochberan are usually arrested either due to an identity check in Dankix, or after being detected in lorries or cars at the ports of Calais and Loon-Plage. While they are also often intercepted by police on beaches along the coast as they prepare to board dinghies, they are usually returned several kilometres inland rather than detained. This is likely because kochberan found on beaches are in large groups of several dozen, and their arrest would consequently take up considerable time and resources. Upon their arrest, kochberan are taken to either French or British short-term holding facilities, usually referred to as *cejn* (prison) in Kurdish. The French

facilities in which most are detained are in Calais, Loon-Plage, and Lille and are administered and run by the PAF (*Police aux Frontières* or Border Police). There are four British facilities in France, each run by private contractors: two in Calais, one in Coquelles, and one in Loon-Plage (the locations of which are shown in the figure below), in which people are usually detained for between three and six hours before being transferred to the PAF. To better understand the juridical context of these facilities and the crucial role they play in enforcing the British border in France, I turn to an examination of the documents given to kochberan upon their release. These documents illuminate how kochberan are juridically categorised by the British state.

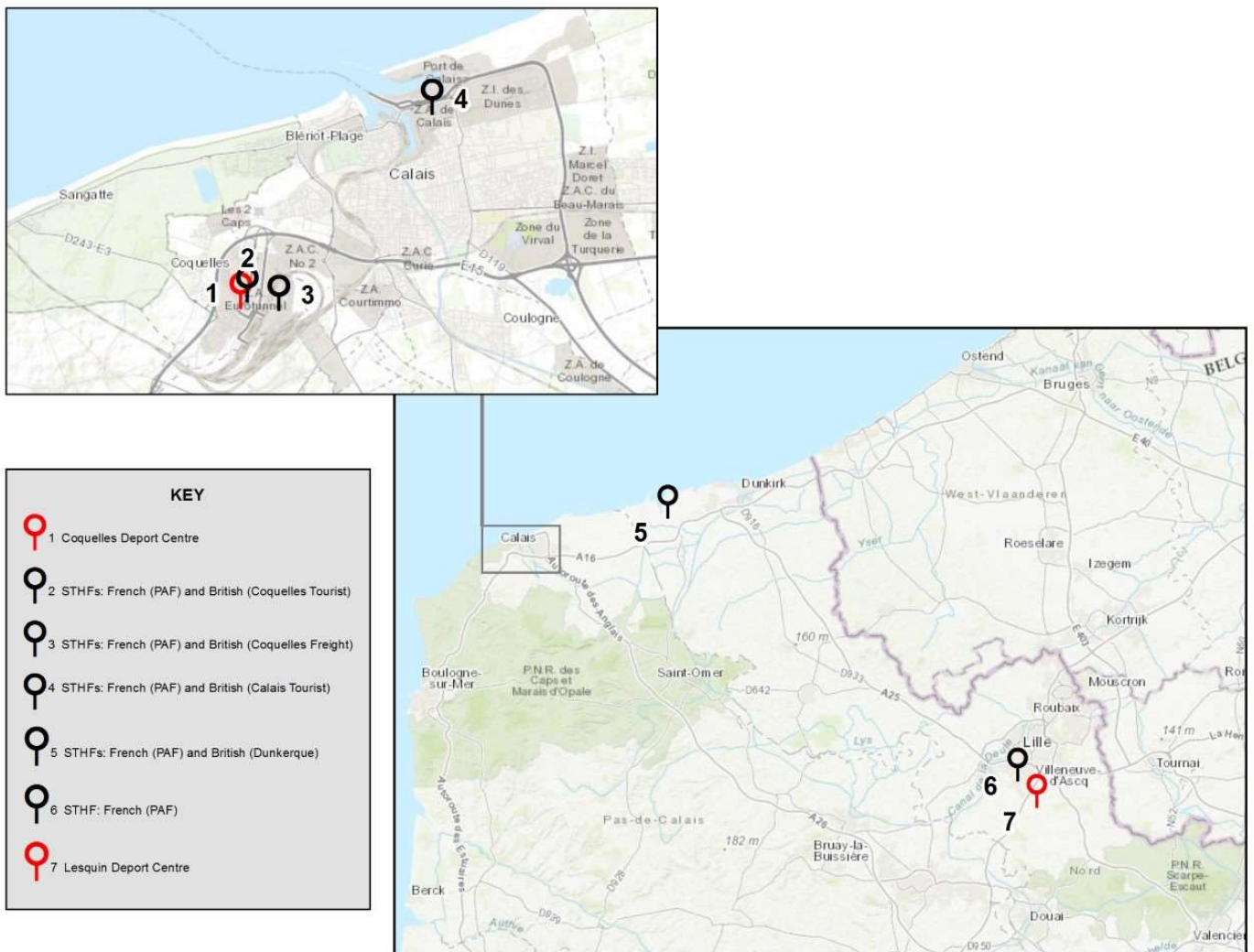


Figure 14 – Map of spaces of detention. Black markers are short-term holding facilities, and red are deportation centres. Image by Rheyra Sward, commissioned by author.

Upon release, kochberan are often given an English-language document on UK Border Force-headed paper outlining the reasons for detention (e.g., “[y]our removal from the United Kingdom is imminent”) and on what grounds (e.g., “[y]ou have not produced satisfactory evidence of your identity, nationality or lawful basis to be in the UK”). They are also usually released with a Home Office-headed “Notice of Removal Directions” (form IS 82), “Notification of Requirement to Provide Biometrics (Fingerprints and a facial image)” (form IS 86) warning that “reasonable force may be used if necessary,” and a “Notification to a Person who is Liable to be Detained” (form IS 96). If the detainee’s phone is taken as part of an investigation into smuggling networks (never to be returned) they are given a letter which states that “[y]ou were encountered in the UK control zone at Coquelles and deemed to have entered the United Kingdom illegally.”

These documents use language that makes it clear the detainee has been found on British soil. Within these facilities, the clocks are turned back one hour (to match the UK time zone), and all signs are written in English. Those working in the facilities are UK residents and come to France only when they are scheduled to do so, working for several days or weeks before returning to the UK. The facilities are, effectively, an extension of the UK itself.

Kochberan do not, however, have the right to claim asylum in these facilities (this was tested by a few bold men in Dankix). As was explained in the Introduction, due to certain legal stipulations, these facilities are considered British soil *only* for the purposes of border control under juxtaposed controls.⁹⁰ If would-be asylum seekers had the right to claim asylum within these facilities, the UK government would be responsible for their care and be forced to transfer them to the UK to process their claim. Kochberan, then, who are detained in these facilities are found to have “entered the United Kingdom” and are treated as if they were literally in the UK. Their right to claim asylum as if they were in the UK, however, is rescinded by the British government.

⁹⁰ See Article 9 of the Le Touquet Treaty (2003) and Article 4 of the Sangatte Additional Protocol (2000). It is not explicit in the Belgian agreement.

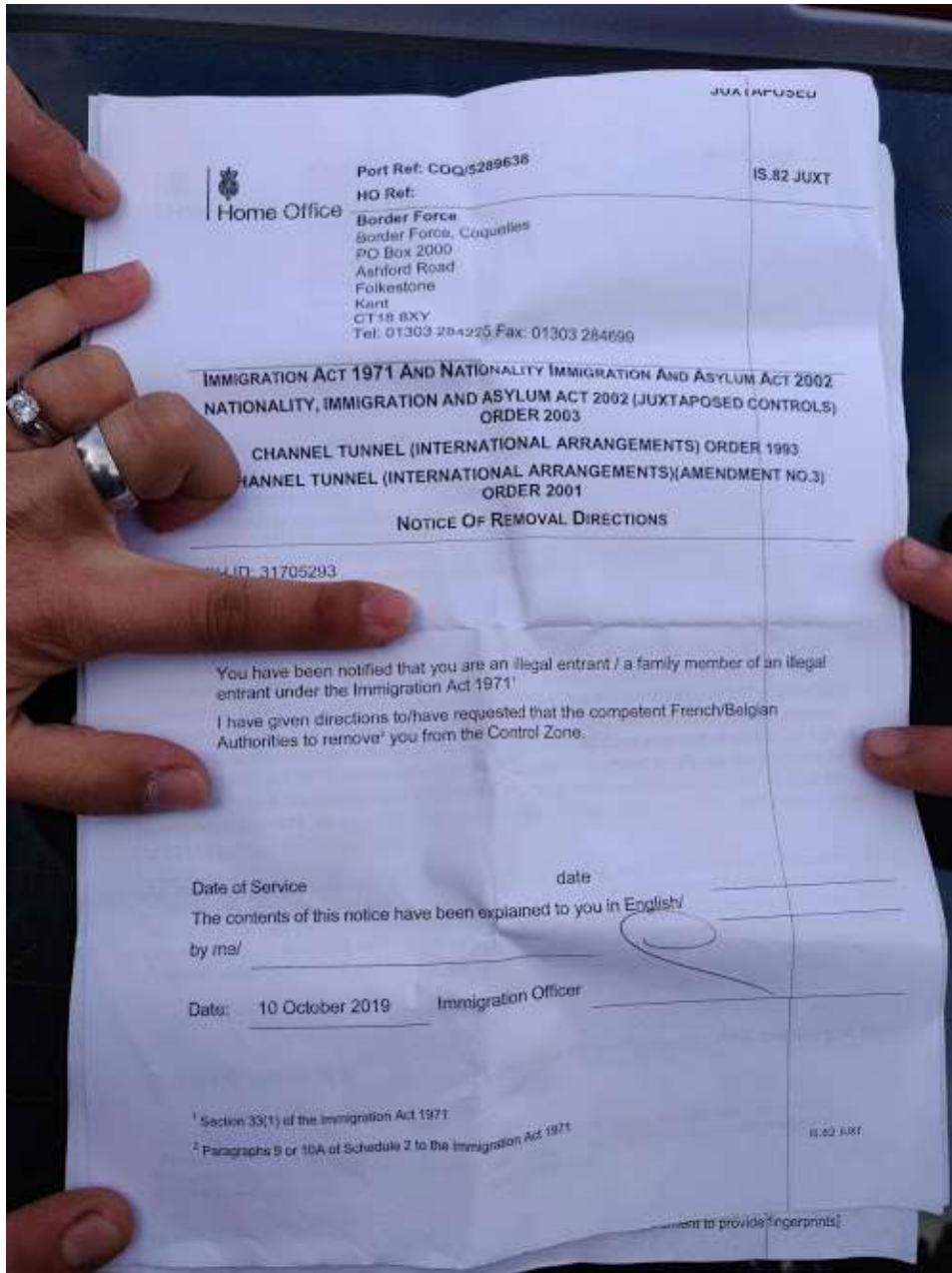


Figure 15 - IS 82 form given to a man in Dankix, not signed by an interpreter. My forefinger is covering identifying information. Image by author.

Once their biometrics are taken, detainees are transferred to the PAF in the nearby French short-term holding facility which officially marks their 'expulsion from the UK.' The PAF often release detainees at night when public transportation is no longer running. Some people sleep on the street and wait until the morning to return to Dankix while others walk the seven-hour journey back to their tent.

When subject to an identity check in Dankix, kochberan show the police documents given to them while they were last detained, as most have no identity

documents to hand. This document is either a *procès-verbal* (record of their arrest) or an OQTF (*Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français*, Obligation to Leave French Territory). OQTFs are usually given to kochberan who have entered irregularly and communicate no desire to claim asylum in France. They are sometimes taken to a *Centre de Rétention Administrative* (CRA, Administrative Retention Centre). These are referred to as *deport senter* in Kurdish and, for clarity, I hereby refer to them using an anglicised version of the Kurdish term: deport centre. From a deport centre, detainees will either be deported to their country of origin, to the country in which their fingerprints were first entered into Eurodac,⁹¹ or will be released after an undefined period of time with an OQTF administered by the prefecture.

The OQTF states that they must leave the French territory within either fifteen or thirty days (noted on the document as a *délai de départ volontaire*, voluntary departure period), or as soon as possible (*sans-délai*, without delay and without a designated departure period, usually considered as within forty-eight hours). After this departure period, the document is considered 'expired' by both kochberan and the police. If kochberan do not comply, the document states that they risk detention and deportation. Most people holding an OQTF destroy it after its 'expiry' and obtain a new document when they are next detained. Kochberan often do not destroy their OQTFs before the expiry date, because they can be unofficially used on trains throughout France in lieu of a ticket by showing them to the ticket inspector. Since the document says the bearer must leave the French territory, the inspector allows them to continue the journey without paying because it cannot be proven whether the document-bearer is attempting to leave France. Kochberan in Dankix use pseudonyms for encounters with the state and some refuse to be fingerprinted while detained, therefore rendering it impossible for the officers to know whether they have been previously arrested and administered with an OQTF. Others are compliant or forced to take their fingerprints, making any efforts at anonymisation useless.

Most people in Dankix are afraid of being entered into the Eurodac system, and I had multiple conversations daily with newly released men and women who had questions about the type of fingerprints that had been taken by the police. Through these many conversations and by discerning with what materials their fingerprints

⁹¹ Eurodac is the system explained in the Introduction that is used by EU countries to maintain and share a biometric database of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

were taken it became clear that it is uncommon for police officers in short-term holding facilities to enter detainees into the Eurodac system (whereby fingerprints are taken on a green-lit glass screen), and much more common for their fingerprints to be entered into the French criminal database (whereby fingerprints are taken with ink or on a red-lit glass screen). In either case, there is a relatively low chance that multiple arrests and the frequent administration of OQTFs will result in long-term detention or deportation. The amount of OQTFs administered weekly to kochberan in northern France far outnumbers deportations. In 2018, of the 333 Iraqi nationals placed in the Coquelles deport centre near the Eurotunnel port of entry, all were eventually released (La Cimade, et al., 2019). I know only of two deportations of Kurds to Iraq from Coquelles in 2019. I only became aware of these instances, however, because I happened to be visiting others in the Coquelles deport centre who shared this information with me.

Considering the above, I argue that the processes of detention and OQTF administration are performative mechanisms through which the state exercises its power along the border. Since detention occurs at immensely higher rates than deportation, it is clear that police officers do not detain people in Dankix with the aim of deportation. They are detained instead as an act of “coercive immobilization” through which migrant lives are interrupted and controlled (De Genova, 2016: 5). Nicolas De Genova calls this phenomenon ‘detainability.’ As De Genova argues, “detainability (or the susceptibility to being detained) – and also actual detentions that do not culminate in deportation – serves to *discipline* migrants’ lives through the unfathomable interruptions that exacerbate their precarity” (2016: 6, emphasis in original). In Dankix, deportation is largely unfeasible because the number of people without identity documents and those arrested during crossing attempts always outnumbers the state’s capacity for long-term detention and deportation procedures. Frequent detention without the ability to deport has the effect of ‘disciplining’ kochberan, as De Genova says, by incapacitating them in the ways in which they move through the world, as will be explored in detail below (see *also* Bosworth, 2013). Immigration detention, unlike other forms of incarceration, is not oriented towards rehabilitation or reintegration. It instead aims to isolate detainees by removing them both spatially and socially from networks of care, support, and solidarity (Turnbull, 2016). It is “fundamentally concerned with ‘holding’ individuals deemed unwanted and illegal” (*ibid.*: 64).

In the deport centre at Coquelles, for instance, the state detains far more people than they have the resources to manage. In Coquelles in 2018, over 200 detainees were released by the courts or the prefect's office solely because they could not provide escorts to court hearings. As most of the detainees in Coquelles are Albanian and are very likely to be deported to their country of origin (due to agreements between France and Albania) there are few places available to detain people of other nationalities in the deport centre. The centre is designed to hold seventy-nine people, and those who are detained with little prospect of deportation are likely to be released by the prefect's office relatively quickly. They are sometimes released in as little as twenty-four hours, after which point someone else takes their place. This was the case for 250 detainees in 2018 (La Cimade, et al., 2019). Iraqis (and especially Iranians) are considered difficult to deport due to differing agreements with those nations, and are therefore more likely to be released in 'favour' of those of other nationalities such as Albanians.

In light of this, detainability and persistent detention in Dankix create severe and often disturbing interruptions to an everyday life that is already marked by significant levels of uncertainty and precarity (as is discussed in Chapters Two and Three), and physical and mental illness and exhaustion (as is discussed in the following chapter, Five) among a group that is relatively undeportable, so to speak. De Genova's concept of detainability and the particular violences this entails are explored below.

The banality of frequent arrest and detention

Yesterday when I went to Auchan police grabbed me. They tied their hands behind my back and threw a black hood over my head before throwing me into a car. Is that humanity? Who are they arresting – Daesh, a rapist, a murderer? I haven't done anything. I'm not a criminal. I understand that I've crossed borders illegally, and that because I don't have papers the police and the state have the right to try to determine who I am. But throwing me into the back of a car with a hood over my head? I've never done anything to warrant that kind of treatment from them.

The car was like this one [pointing to a white unmarked hatchback driving through Jangaleka]. An undercover car.

I was in jail for a day and a half. A day and a half without food or water. The policeman guarding me knew that I smoke cigarettes. He stood there and blew smoke in my face with every pull of his cigarette. You know how it is when you can't smoke, even for a few hours. You go crazy, you can't think straight. He stood there and blew puffs of smoke into my face. When I asked for water, they took a paper cup, just like this [he picks up the paper cup from which I had been drinking tea]. The toilet was full of piss and shit. He took the cup and dragged it across the bowl of the toilet, filling it with the dirty water. He handed it to me and said, "Here, you can drink this."

[He looks towards the lake across the field as he lights a cigarette. He hands me one and lights it for me. We sit in silence for a few minutes before he continues.]

They took me because they thought that I was someone else. When I got to the police station, they showed me a photo of a man that looked like me, but with a beard. They accused me of being this man in the photo – of being a smuggler. They asked if I wanted a lawyer, so I said yes. She came and she said, "Look it's clearly not the same person. The eye colour is different." The man in the photo had black eyes, I have brown eyes. So, the judge had to concede that it wasn't me. But even then, the judge said that for five years they would follow me and watch me. That if I were to do anything wrong, they would immediately find me and catch me.

They forced me to take fingerprints. After the day and a half without food or water I was going insane. I couldn't think properly, my mind was racing and destroyed. Not working right. I was so far gone that I was even thinking of going back to Kurdistan, of deporting myself. So, when they told me to take fingerprints I did it. There was an interpreter there, he told

me not to take the fingerprints, that it would be better if I didn't. But I know that these interpreters work for the police – the police are the ones who pay their bills. I could tell the interpreter wasn't translating everything accurately.

The interpreter told me not to take fingerprints, but I know that I soon as I refuse, the police will immediately use that as proof that I'm this man in the photo, that I'm guilty. I just did the fingerprints. They took them on paper with black ink and on glass. The light in the glass turned green [indicating that the prints were entered into Eurodac]. I told them that I don't want to stay in France, but they still forced me to take the prints. Is that fair?

Before this morning, I had no fingerprints in Europe. I crossed into Italy by hiding in the wheel axle of a lorry for thirty-six hours. By the time I arrived in Italy a Bangladeshi man found me. He thought I was Bangladeshi with the amount of dirt and mud covering my body, making my body browner. But even when I got free, I didn't put down my fingerprints in Italy.

I made it this far without fingerprints, and this is how I end up with them? Is that fair? Is that right?

I haven't done anything. Again, I understand that they have the right to try to determine who it is in their country. I know that I crossed borders illegally. I know that every border in Europe I've crossed illegally. But the way they treated me – throwing a hood over my head, tying my hands behind my back, not giving me food, water – did you arrest Daesh? Did you arrest a murderer?

What am I going to do, file a complaint? Sue them? Who am I going to file a complaint with? The police?

- Excerpt from an interview with Aram

Aram's experience as told through his interview highlights the ways in which heavy police presence and frequent arrest in Jangaleka and its surrounding commercial areas permeate even the most trivial aspects of everyday life. Aram is a slim, short man in his mid-twenties from Kalar (a city in the region of Kurdistan occupied by Iraq). He was walking to Auchan along a path that leads directly from the nature reserve to the commercial centre. At the end of the path, just before Auchan, he was violently tied up and thrown into a police van. As was the case with Hama, even mundane activities such as going to the grocery store for food are risky and dangerous due to the possibility of arrest and ensuing carceral violence. In Aram's case, violence manifested in severe degradation and humiliation during detention. The repeated assertion throughout his interview that he deserves to be detained is evidence of how his dehumanisation at the hands of police works in tandem – through symbolic violence – with his internalisation of a criminal subjectivity.

Karwan, the geologist introduced in Chapter Two, further discusses the ubiquity of police violence and the possibility of arrest and detention:

In the morning, anyone who is alone over there [pointing to the entrance of Kampeka] they take to the deport centre if their paper is expired. I'm not a smuggler. I don't sell hashish. Why are they arresting me? 100 people smoke hashish, there are guns. By evening, 100 police come to Kampeka and pat everyone down to see how many guns there are in the camp...

The Italian police punched me in the face and my face hit the wall. That's what gave me that bruise [which he shows me in a photograph from that time]. The French police hit me in the legs in the toilet. We were in prison, and I told him please I need to use the toilet. He said go. I went to the toilet. I had constipation, he told me to hurry up and I said please wait. When I opened the door to the stall, he kicked me in the leg with steel-toed boots. I still have the scar. A friend of mine, when he was caught at the [border] control in Calais, was put in a prison cell one metre by one metre until he said who his smuggler was.

These experiences of direct police violence are not unique to Karwan and Aram and are well-documented in northern France and in similar contexts across Europe (see,

e.g., Danish Refugee Council, 2020; HRO, 2020; Lighthouse Reports, 2021). Nearly every man⁹² with whom I spoke about police violence over the course of my fieldwork relayed similar experiences to me, often pulling up photographs from their phone of bruises and marks caused by police officers and border agents in France or other EU countries. Many meticulously document the violence they experience along the *rega*, or the journey to and through Europe. Some do this because they later report this violence to local non-profit organisations and the police, and others in order to build their case for asylum in the UK, as the Home Office may attempt to render their case inadmissible if there is evidence that they travelled through a 'safe' third country before arriving in the UK. They gather evidence in the hope that it proves they are unsafe in other European countries.

While Aram and Hama were arrested and detained as they tried to buy food from the grocery store, Karwan was arrested in Italy while he attempted to cross the border into France. Others are arrested while they walk out of the Kampeka entrance, perhaps to use the showers or toilets sometimes installed across the street. Karwan's friend, whose experience he discusses in the above interview excerpt, was arrested at the port of Calais while trying to cross to the UK in a lorry. For those who are actively on *derchwn*, or the practicalities involved with reaching the UK, it is very likely that they will be arrested and detained each time they attempt to cross the border. Some people try to cross five times per week, meaning they are detained nearly as many times. Others try only once or twice weekly and are therefore detained significantly less. In either case, and combined with the incessant cycle of police evictions, detention occurs multiple times monthly, and sometimes multiple times weekly.

Detainability, and consequently the fear of detention, is unevenly distributed amongst kochberan in Dankix based on nationality, gender, kinship, and age. Iranian nationals do not fear deportation because it is well-known that they will not be deported to Iran, as will be discussed in further detail below. They are, however, just as detainable as Iraqi nationals. Iraqi nationals, on the other hand, are both

⁹² This occurred much less frequently when I discussed direct police violence with women, who are less likely to experience this particular type of police violence, but are much more likely to experience rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of police officers and border agents (UNHCR, 1995). Throughout my time in the field, however, I was not made aware of such an instance. This is not to say it does not occur, but rather that it either occurs less frequently or that women did not feel comfortable disclosing this information to me.

detainable and deportable, although deportations to Iraq are rare. Women with or without children and men travelling with their children fear detention much less, as they are usually only liable to be detained while attempting to cross the border. They are also much less likely to be sent to deport centres for long-term detention, although this does occasionally happen. Boys and men who have convincingly young-looking faces are immediately released from deport centres (as it is unlawful to detain a minor in these facilities) and they are much less likely to be detained while going about their lives in Dankix. That being said, minors are often detained if the arresting officers are not convinced that they are underage. Of all of these groups, single men are the most detainable and experience detention at the highest rates.

The frequency of detention in living spaces and while going about the chores and tasks of everyday life increases during prolonged periods of heightened police activity. This occurs especially after large-scale evictions at which time the subprefect orders police officers to disperse returnees and deter the formation of new tent settlements (as we see in the vignette that opens this chapter). The subprefect's office arguably realises this is ineffective, as new settlements have consistently been evicted and re-established in the area since 2006. Instead, this is likely a means to justify evictions by arguing that a new settlement has yet to be formed. This became clear after the 17 September 2019 eviction of Kampeka, which was followed by a six-week police operation in Jangaleka during which time between fifteen and fifty arrests were made daily in and around Jangaleka, Kampy Swtayeka, and Auchan. The subprefect released a statement to the press on 3 October 2019 claiming that “[n]obody sleeps in the woods anymore” and that “[t]here are no more makeshift shelters” (Constant, 2019). At this point, however, there were around 300 people sleeping in Jangaleka and Kampy Swtayeka, most without any form of tent or tarp shelter due to repeated confiscation by the police. Since evictions can only be legally justified if they effectively put people in shelter (called a *mise à l’abri* operation, or sheltering operation), the subprefecture’s ability to continue cyclical evictions depends on its capacity to demonstrate that evictions result in fewer people sleeping outside – an aim which they attempt to achieve via unrelenting police operations.

During this six-week police operation, for instance, Aryos (whom we meet in Chapter Two) was arrested three times in three days. He was arrested on two

occasions while walking in the forested area of Jangaleka, and again while leaving Auchan. I had not seen Aryos for a few days in Jangaleka, so upon his return asked him where he had been:

Aryos: “Oh my god my sister I need to tell you something. It’s so funny [he bursts into laughter]. You know where I was? I was on holiday all over France! Three days ago, *paqla* [derogatory term for police] arrested me and took me to Calais prison [a short-term holding facility]. The next morning, I was released and I came back here, then they arrested me again and took me to No-Flash [referring to Loon-Plage, the site of another short-term holding facility at the port of Dunkirk].

I showed them my papers they gave me in Calais, I said [in English and French] ‘Bonjour monsieur, no prison, no police, me paper’ and showed them my paper. I said, ‘please monsieur no prison, me paper’ [his speech is punctuated by laughter]. But he said, ‘Yes prison you refugee, come come’ so I went to prison again.

It was so nice, it was warm! It was raining outside and inside it was nice and warm. I swear, it was like a great hotel. The only problem is I was starving, I was so hungry. They didn’t give me food, so in the morning I decided to leave, come back here, eat some food, and go back to the police hotel! Let me tell you how that happened.

So ... [he is laughing so hard he can barely continue] I get back here [gasping for breath] and I go to Auchan to get food. I leave Auchan and I’ll tell you what happened. Ask me what happened.”

Victoria: “What happened?”

Aryos: “They get me again! Oh, my god they get me again, I swear on the Koran they’re in love with me! So, I said, ‘[in English:] Please no marry, no boyfriend, I go to UK I no stay here.’ [Switches back to Kurdish:] Those *paqla* didn’t like that. So, they took me to Lille, to prison in Lille [another

short-term holding facility]. I was in prison in Lille, waiting in my cell. Then, you will never know who I saw, ask me who.”

Victoria: “Who?”

Aryos: “Hakim! I saw Hakim! [laughing again] I was in my cell, and I saw them bring in Hakim and put him in the cell next to me. Oh, dear sweet god they put him there and I said, ‘Hakim [dragging out the vowels] did you miss me so much you came to join me?’ Hakim was so mad, he said, ‘Shhh! My name here is Sardar!⁹³ Don’t call me Hakim.’ So, I kept calling out to him, ‘Haaakiiiiim, my brother, my little lamb!’ [Aryos wipes tears of laughter from his eyes, at this point we’re both doubled over with laughter as he continues, gasping for breath between words].

Then they released us both and we went to the train station to try to get back to Dankix. We had our new police papers, so we tried to get on the train, but it was full of police. We waited on the platform for hours and hours, finally at maybe 9 pm they left, and we got on a train. We rode black [without buying tickets] all the way here. Anyway, now I’m back! Let’s go smoke shisha. Come on, it’ll rain soon so we have to find some tarp quickly.”

As with the direct violence experienced by Aram and Karwan during detention, Aryos’ experience of frequent arrest is common. Arrest and detention are, to him, banal facts of everyday life. Their mundanity exemplifies what Nancy Scheper-Hughes has termed ‘everyday violence,’ or forms of violence that become so endemic they are normalised by those involved, including the objects and subjects of acts of violence (1993). The detainability of Kochberan is excused and even encouraged as it results from – and is a key part of – the process of their illegalisation. Their frequent detention is a result of their criminalisation, while, simultaneously, also seemingly evidencing that Kochberan *deserve* to be incarcerated, beaten, and punished. While even an individual experience of arrest

⁹³ Hakim told the police that his name was Sardar in order to conceal his identity.

and detention might be perceived as a 'jolt' (Strathern, 2018) or a spectacular event, in Dankix it occurs so often that it is in fact one of the most taken-for-granted and accepted forms of violence to which kochberan are subject – alongside evictions, which are themselves mass detention events.

Aryos humorously recounts this experience even as he acknowledges his lack of control and power over his movements while incarcerated, echoing De Genova's "coercive immobilization" (2016: 5). On the other hand, another of Aryos' encounters with police sheds light on how the everyday violence of detainability creates an economy of fear used by the police to leverage power over those in Dankix. The following section examines this economy of fear as generated by the cruelty with which some police officers treat kochberan in their interactions.

The cruelty of frequent arrest and detention

Both Aram and Karwan communicate frustration and resentment towards the frequent arrest and detention of kochberan. Aram and Aryos both view it as an unavoidable consequence of their condition of 'illegality' produced by the state, exemplifying how symbolic violence – by which kochberan internalise their 'illegality' and adopt a criminal subjectivity – is a crucial mechanism of the illegalisation process. Aryos, however, is also angry at the heartlessness with which police conduct identity checks and arrests. As was first discussed in the Introduction, one of Aryos' close friends, Hemn, died in mid-October 2019. He drowned while attempting to reach the UK in a dinghy. Aryos and I had an appointment at the morgue in Lille to identify the recovered body at 10 am. I told Aryos that I would pick up him at 7:30 am via a lesser-known back route into the forest to avoid the police on their morning shift. When I arrived, there were two police vans stationed at the main entrance to Jangaleka and two others at the dirt road running between Auchan and the nature reserve. By the time I arrived at the back route, however, two other police vans were stationed in the car park near Aryos' tent. I circled around, drove back, and parked near Auchan. After calling Aryos and explaining the problem, he told me to wait there. Already shaken by Hemn's death and anxious about seeing his body in the morgue, he was frustrated by the possibility of arrest and said on the phone: "This is more important than refugees and police [referring to the 'game' of his frequent

detention], why can't they just leave me alone today?" He decided to try to sneak through the forest instead of walking along trails and paths, as it was not yet fully light out and he believed he would not be seen.

Thirty minutes later, Aryos leapt out from behind a building and ran to my car. He opened the door, jumped in, and we quickly drove away. He did not relax until we reached the motorway; he ducked down into the seat each time we passed a police vehicle. I asked if he was okay.

No, my sister. Today of all days. Why can't they leave me alone? We're busy, this is important. And they're just here to play games with us. They caught me on my way to you, but I faked a toothache. I grabbed the side of my face and made noises and they let me go.

The lengths to which Aryos needs to go to ensure he is not arrested on the morning of such a crucial event cause him frustration and anxiety. He knows that even if he explained to the arresting police officer the circumstances in which he found himself that morning, and the fact that he had an appointment with the medical examiner at the morgue, it would make no difference and he would still be detained. Faking illness or other medical issues usually leads to being released on the spot because there are no medical staff in short-term holding facilities. If a detainee requires any form of medical care the officers on duty must call the emergency services. This rule is common knowledge in Dankix and most kochberan strategically use it to their advantage by, for instance, itching themselves incessantly upon arrest, or groaning loudly and rocking back and forth.

While Aryos does not particularly mind *being* arrested, and views this as par for the course of living 'illegally' in France with no intention of claiming asylum, it is the lack of empathy or humanity in the police's tactics that angers him. Others, such as his friend Hakim, greatly fear arrest and detention, and remain in safer areas such as their tents or Saheka. Hakim never ventures as far as Auchan, and therefore relies on non-profit distributions for all his food and material items. His friends often sneak up quietly behind him and shout, in English, "Police! Paper!" causing Hakim to whip his body around or jump in fear. Others are similarly afraid: in Kampeka, one man's girlfriend was detained in a deport centre three hours south of Dankix for two months. He was terrified of the possibility of his own detention, and subsequent

inability to see and care for his girlfriend upon her release. He did not leave Kampeka, even to go to Auchan or to the local town centre, until she was released. The acute awareness of one's detainability can be productive of devastating levels of fear and anxiety.

For Aryos, it is the police officers' and the state's perceptions of him that make him angry: "The *paqla* and the government don't see me as human. They see me as a dog. Worse than a dog. They hunt me, they hunt us like it's a game," recalling Sangar's assertion in Chapter Three that, in Europe, undocumented men are treated worse than dogs. The perceived heartlessness of the police in Dankix stems from myriad encounters between *kochberan* and police and border agents. A young man from Slemani named Balen had a similar experience a few days prior. He was very close with another man, Rebin, who drowned alongside Hemn.

Balen and I sit on the ground in Saheka waiting for news from the maritime search and rescue agency. Seven others had returned from the beach, and only Rebin and Hemn were missing. I receive a call from the police at Le Touquet, a tourist town south of Boulogne-Sur-Mer. They had found two bodies on the beach. When I tell Balen the news he enters a state of shock, unable to speak or acknowledge me in front of him. After a quarter of an hour passes, he abruptly stands up and begins walking towards one of the roads leading out of Jangaleka, where two police vans and three smaller vehicles are stationed.

When he passes the checkpoint, not acknowledging the shouts of the police officers around him, they grab his arms, twist them behind his back, and ask for his papers. Balen is completely unresponsive, tears silently run down his cheeks, and he stares blankly at the ground ahead of his feet. This further agitates the police officers, who begin to walk him to a van, preparing to arrest him. I run to meet them, also agitated, shouting to them that he is a minor who has just found out his friend has died. As I approach, an officer he cuts me off and tells me that he would not care even if his mother has just died, that Balen will be arrested regardless. Balen eventually looks up, seeming to suddenly acknowledge those around him, pulls out a faded document attesting to his age in a plastic A4 sleeve, and shows it to the officers. They quickly look it over and

release him. Balen looks exhausted, and slowly walks to a nearby patch of dirt, on which he sits in silence.



Figure 16 – CRS (riot police) checkpoint at Jangaleka main entrance; image by author.

Migrant detention is considered an administrative procedure. Those executing arrests and detentions are the CRS (*Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*, or riot police), PAF (*Police aux Frontières*, or border police), and other National Police agents in Dankix and at ports. Most officers do so as a response to orders from their superiors and are themselves exempt from decision-making. Their position as ‘cogs in the machine,’ so to speak, is evidenced when they conduct arrests regardless of circumstance. If someone is in severe and obvious psychological distress for something unrelated to the immediate situation of arrest – if they are weeping, or screaming for a loved one – they will still be arrested. Johan Galtung’s (1969: 179-180) comments about the relationship of bureaucrats to street-level actors are relevant here:

In other words, they may mobilize the police, the army, the thugs, the general social underbrush against the sources of the disturbance, and

remain themselves in more discrete, remote seclusion from the turmoil of personal violence. And they can do this as an extrapolation of the structural violence: the violence committed by the police is personal by our definition, yet they are called into action by expectations deeply rooted in the structure – there is no need to assume an intervening variable of intention. They simply do their job.

For Aryos, this is what angers him more than detention itself: that the officers – who to him engender the main point of encounter between those in Dankix and the structural violence of the state – absolve themselves of guilt or responsibility by mechanically following orders. He believes this is only possible if the officers do not see him as human, or if they themselves are not human.⁹⁴ As was discussed in the context of racialisation in Chapter Two, to be human is to be recognised as such by others (Fanon, 1986 [1952]; Khosravi, 2010). Aryos interprets the indignity with which he is treated by police officers and border agents as evidence of his dehumanisation not only by the individuals with which he interacts, but by the state of which he considers them representative.

Similarly to Aryos, what Aram finds issue with is the cruelty exhibited to him by the arresting police officers, as well as those supervising his detention. Throughout his interview above, he repeatedly asserts that he is not dangerous: he says that he is not a rapist, nor a murderer, nor affiliated with Daesh. He acknowledges that he has crossed into France without documentation and does not plan to claim asylum there. He says that it is therefore necessary for the state to conduct identity checks and occasionally detain those without papers. He does not contest the fact of his detention or detainability, but rather the humiliating treatment through which the officers involved elucidate relations of power. Karwan, too, exhibits frustration with frequent detention, asserting that he does not smoke hashish nor is he a smuggler, and is angry at the direct violence he experiences during detention. While some kochberan, such as Aryos and Aram, may be subject to

⁹⁴ This is not to say that officers who enact violence or arrest and detain despite clear signs of distress in kochberan are incapable of moral evaluation (*continue* Galtung, 1969 *and see, e.g.*, Feldman, 2019 and Jauregui, 2013) but rather to demonstrate the ways in which those who experience arrest, detention, and violence interpret the morality and complicity of the perpetrators.

symbolic violence and have, as a result, internalised their illegalisation and justified their detainability, they remain adamant that they do not deserve to be dehumanised.

Those who are arrested while going about their everyday lives (as opposed to attempting to cross the border) are detained “on the basis of little more than their sheer existential predicament as ‘undesirable’ non-citizens” and their illegalised status (De Genova, 2016: 4). De Genova’s argument is relevant when kochberan are arrested while walking to the grocery store, looking for a secluded spot near the lake to bathe, or heading to Saheka to queue for dinner. When arrested in these instances, kochberan are targeted for who they are and what they represent to the French state and its sovereignty. On the other hand, they are also arrested frequently at the border during attempted crossings. While this type of arrest and short-term detention is not necessarily the result of the *embodiment* of illegality but of illegalisation more generally, its frequent and sometimes nightly occurrence greatly contributes to exhaustion and disruption.

In further examining the role of this exhaustion and disruption, I turn to Sara Ahmed, who argues that “emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities...Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways...” (2004: 119, emphasis in original). She proposes that by engaging with the circulation of emotions and their uneven distribution throughout social groups as constructed through what she calls ‘affective economies,’ we can better understand what emotions do and how they mediate relations between individuals and the collective. As Kathleen Stewart argues, the significance of affects “lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible” (2007: 3). Affective economies, then, can be deliberately created to achieve certain aims. In Dankix, an affective economy of fear is created through incessant and violent arrest and detention. It circulates with every arrest, every eviction, and as the police slowly patrol the paths of Jangaleka in their vans, staring at passers-by. This economy of fear is weaponised by police as a tactic of control, normalising the detainability and criminalisation of kochberan in living spaces and everyday life. It doubly invisibilises kochberan by first removing them from public spaces, and then by causing them to hide themselves away for fear of future arrest.

In addition to this, there is an affective economy of indignation and anger that circulates among kochberan. As is evidenced by the vignettes and interviews

included here, nearly all those who participated in this research feel they are treated 'like dogs' (as Aryos puts it) who are hunted down and then humiliated. Affects "pick up density and texture" as they transmit from person to person (Stewart, 2007: 3). They duplicate and grow as they flow through places like a holding cell or the inside of a police van, and through objects such as a paper cup full of water mixed with human excrement. Some, such as Aram, are angry at being treated like violent criminals and find fault with the way in which the categories of migrant, terrorist, and criminal are collapsed in their dealings with the state. Police officers, they argue, treat them like 'Daesh' or 'a murderer,' but, he says, are justified in their arrests of kochberan. Furthermore, throughout the statements from participants included above, police officers and border agents are often spoken of in tandem with 'the government.' Experiences with individual officers are, in this way, mapped onto the way in which kochberan perceive themselves in relation to the French state. As Aryos says, "[t]he *paqla* [derogatory term for police] and the government don't see me as human." Interactions with individual officers or border agents, then, are taken as representative of their interactions with the state apparatus as a whole. In addition, some encounter the 'state' not only through their frequent arrest and short-term detention, but also through long-term detention and threats of deportation, as we see below.

Long-term detention and deportation

There is a real problem with Iranians in that you can't return them to Iran...

- Tim Loughton, Conservative British MP (Home Affairs Committee, 2019)

Some kochberan are transferred from short-term holding facilities to long-term detention facilities (deport centres). These are spaces from which detainees are deportable to countries of origin or to the first country in which they have Eurodac fingerprints. Deport centres in France are administered by the PAF, and people are often taken to these centres if arrested by the PAF in Dunkirk or after detention in a short-term holding facility (in Loon-Plage, Lille, or Coquelles). The main deport centres used to detain kochberan are in Coquelles, which is located adjacent to the

Eurotunnel border control zone and Coquelles short-term holding facility, and in Lesquin, which is a small town outside of Lille housing an international airport.

The maximum number of days for which someone can be detained in a deport centre was increased in 2018 from forty-five days to ninety (Article L.552-7 CESEDA). The arresting officers' decision to transfer someone from a short-term holding facility to a deport centre is largely arbitrary and is not necessarily related to whether one has Eurodac fingerprints. This is evidenced by the overwhelming number of people with fingerprints who are released daily from both deport centres and short-term holding facilities. Deport centres are often used by the state in the wake of large-scale evictions where the prefecture and subprefecture have evicted more kochberan than available spaces in accommodation centres throughout northern France. Kochberan are sometimes held there so that the prefect's office can argue that the eviction resulted in their sheltering (referring, again, to *mise à l'abri*). For instance, after an eviction of more than 1800 people from Jangaleka on 23 October 2018, a number of kochberan were placed in Lesquin deport centre rather than an accommodation centre. Even after the judge presiding over their cases deemed it impossible to deport them to Iraq and Iran (their countries of origin) they remained in detention for over forty days (La Cimade, et al., 2019).

During another eviction several weeks later, a great number of kochberan were arrested by police and border agents and detained in not only Coquelles and Lesquin deport centres, but also in Rouen-Oissel and Mesnil-Amelot, further south. Prior to their detention, the officers involved placed numbered bracelets on each detainee's wrist and continuously referred to them by their number, rather than name. After forty-five days and following a visit from the Iraqi consulate who interviewed the detainees, all were released.

In some cases, and despite their purportedly 'non-penal' nature, deport centres are used informally and unofficially as holding facilities for repeating criminal offenders in between prison sentences. This is exemplified here by Farhad's experience (who is introduced in Chapter Two):

Farhad first arrived in Dankix in 2002 when he was seventeen years old, and soon after was convicted for smuggling and incarcerated for eight years. Since that time, he has been in and out of prison on smuggling chargers.

About one month after our first meeting in Jangaleka, Farhad calls me from the deport centre in Lesquin. He needs some money to buy cigarettes, so I agree to pick up cash from his friend in Jangaleka and bring it to him the following day. As I drive down the long road leading to the deport centre the building emerges to my left, obvious due to its tall, concrete walls topped with barbed wire. I turn into the front entrance and explain to the guards via an intercom that I am here for a visit. As I wait to be buzzed in, I look at the building in front of me. It is grey, concrete, and has very few windows. There is an outdoor area around the back, with what looks like synthetic grass. This area is enclosed by even taller chain-link fences, also topped with barbed wire curling upwards into the sky. A buzzing sound indicates the gate has been opened for me, and I walk into the courtyard and through the entrance.

A bored-looking PAF officer takes my ID and escorts me through a tiny, low-ceilinged room where he barely checks my pockets before I walk through a metal-detector. He lets me keep my phone on me and silently waves me away when I ask if I am allowed to give Farhad cash. There are three visitation rooms, and I can faintly hear conversation going on through the walls. The officer leads me to a room at the end where I sit and wait in one of two chairs and place my arms on a wooden table in the middle of the room. Through another door, Farhad emerges with a big smile.

[In a mixture of Kurdish and French] “You came.”

“Yeah, how are you?”

“I’m fine, do you have the money?”

I pass the cash over to him. “Why are you here?”

“It’s all part of their plan. Didn’t I tell you? They’re all after me. The prefect [of the Nord region] has nightmares about me, I keep him up at night. This is all part of their plan, their cinema. It’s a film. They’re going to keep me here and

then I will get out again and then they'll put me back and it will go around and around like this until I die."

"But what will happen? You're Iranian, they can't deport you."

"I have a trial tomorrow at 1:30 pm. It's in Lille, I want you to come. It's at the administrative tribunal –"

He is interrupted by the sounds of a woman moaning in the visitation room next to us, followed by repeated knocking sounds. My eyes dart to the ground; I am embarrassed. I assume the bored officer would stop them, but he never does. Farhad does not react, indicating that this is not unusual, and continues:

"So, I want you to come tomorrow because if I'm freed then you can drive me to Jangaleka."

The following day I attend his hearing. The courtroom is large, brightly lit, and far too warm. It is also empty aside from a few men walking around shuffling papers. After thirty minutes of waiting, a PAF officer approaches me and tells me that Farhad wants to speak with me. He escorts me into the hallway where Farhad and three other detainees are waiting, watched over by uniformed PAF officers and one man in jeans and a denim jacket who seems to be in charge. Farhad is frantic and jittery. As soon as he sees me, he jumps out of his chair and speaks to me quickly in Kurdish.

"My tasbeh,⁹⁵ the one I wrap around my wrist, it's my father's. It broke today, it broke on the way here. I got it sixteen years ago. I don't want to participate in this shit, this is cinema, this is a joke."

He switches to French and bellows:

⁹⁵ Referring to prayer beads which are formally used to recite tasbeh, a form of dhikr. Tasbeh are cherished among Kurds in Dankix as one of the few items they bring along the entirety of the *rega*, the journey to and through Europe.

“I want to return to my country, give me an OQTF!⁹⁶ I want to go back to Iran!”

His voice echoes through the empty courthouse. The PAF officers roll their eyes and sigh, seemingly annoyed. One of them asks me if he has always been like this. Farhad continues to shout for an OQTF. Two officers wrench his arms behind his back and handcuff him.

Unsurprisingly, this does not calm him down, so some of the officers drag him outside to their vehicle. Inside, the hearing begins and Farhad’s case is judged in absentee. His solicitor argues that there are clear, documented systems in place in Iran to detain and torture Iranian citizens who leave the country irregularly. Returning him to Iran would therefore be a breach of human rights conventions. The judge agrees with this, as is always the case for Iranian nationals, and decides that Farhad cannot be freed but cannot be deported to his country of origin.

The judge moves on to the next case, in which an Albanian man’s OQTF did not have an interpreter’s signature, indicating that upon his initial arrest the document was never verbally translated. His solicitor argues that the defendant did not follow the instructions of the OQTF because he did not understand the French-language document. Two other cases are up, but I wander outside for a cigarette. From here I can hear Farhad, still shouting from inside the PAF van in the car park.

⁹⁶ As was discussed in a previous section of this chapter, an OQTF is a document instructing the bearer to leave the French territory.

Farhad's is a unique case. Most kochberan involved in smuggling – and, as is discussed in Chapter Three, usually those newly involved in smuggling at the lowest levels – are arrested and incarcerated fairly quickly and are not bounced from deport centre to prison over a number of years for various charges. What Farhad's case exemplifies, however, is the way in which deport centres function as penal institutions for undeportable and 'undesirable' non-citizens who have yet to be charged with a punishable crime, despite seemingly relaxed police practices such as allowing intimate relations in visitation rooms and not recording transfers of cash. As Juliet P. Stumpf puts it, "[immigration] detention shares the most significant features of pre-trial detention and incarceration: complete control over the physical liberty of the detainee and exclusion from society" (2014: 242). Furthermore, embedded within deport centres are mechanisms of discipline that are weaponised against those who do not comply with the conditions imposed upon them. This was the case for Farhad, who was sent to solitary confinement as a punishment for his actions during the hearing. As is discussed in Chapter Two, waiting is a subordinating exercise of power (Khosravi, 2014). It is a "domesticating process," as Boochani notes, whereby the behaviour of those waiting is shaped by systems of punishment (2018b: 190). The structures through which waiting time is organised (here being the relations of power entrenched in deport centres as well as their spatiality and materiality) prevent detainees from effectively negotiating with those imposing the wait (Auyero, 2011; Turnbull, 2016). Farhad resists this through his actions at the hearing but is rendered compliant by being forced into a "social death" through solitary confinement (Guenther, 2013).

As was implied by the vignette above, Iranian citizens without Eurodac fingerprints cannot be deported to Iran nor to another EU country. Iranian citizens against whom charges have not been levelled therefore seem to be detained as punishment for who they are, and their lives are put on hold during detention with little recourse to due process. As Tim Loughton MP's words at the beginning of this section reveal, and as have been echoed countless times in informal conversations I have had with PAF officers while visiting people in detention, this is understood by PAF officers and state officials as a 'problem' intrinsic to Iranians themselves.

While Farhad does not, in fact, wish to return to Iran, he uses his nationality to his advantage in his dealings with the state, knowing that while he is detainable, he is not deportable. He endures years of on-and-off detention knowing that at least he

has control over in which country he is detained. And yet this continuous pattern of detention and imprisonment seems unbreakable. It is the case for a considerable number of people involved in smuggling in some capacity in northern France, and recalls Ghassan Hage's concept of 'stuckedness,' as was introduced in Chapter Two (2009: 97). Stuckedness refers to a form of existential immobility wherein someone is faced not only with the absence of choice, but also with the inability to generate the conditions that would enable new choices to present themselves. Many former smugglers first came to France as teenagers and adolescents. They grow up in French prisons, and upon release return to the only profitable work that they perceive as accessible to them. Not only are they undocumented, but after serving their sentence they will likely never be granted asylum or humanitarian protection. If they are Iranian, they cannot be deported to Iran. Some, like Farhad, remain in France for decades, forever moving between Dankix, prison, and deport centres.

Farhad's situation exemplifies both the pattern of incarceration that pervades many smugglers' lives in Dankix and the particularities of the detention of Iranian citizens. I now turn to the experiences of three Kurdish men of Iraqi nationality, Shkar (who was introduced in Chapter Three), Baran, and Hawkar, to highlight what I argue to be key mechanisms by which the state uses detainability in deport centres to exert control over kochberan: arbitrariness and uncertainty.

"Do you want me to bring you some cake or sunflower seeds?" I ask Shkar over the phone. The guards give him his phone for one hour at different times each day, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening. This makes it difficult for him to keep in touch with friends and family, but we manage to speak the night before I am going to visit him at the Coquelles deport centre. Although Shkar is allegedly a smuggler, the arresting officers are unaware of this. He was stopped and arrested while walking through Jangaleka and is detained for being undocumented.

"No my sister, it's Ramadan. I'm fasting and they don't let us save food in here."

"If you can't save food, what are you eating?"

"I'm not! Just bring me some weed."

“I’m not doing that. See you tomorrow.”

It’s now the following day, and I’m waiting in pelting rain at the entrance gate for the PAF officers to escort me to the deport centre building. The Coquelles deport centre is in a compound alongside large PAF and National Police offices. Beyond the compound the Eurotunnel security checkpoint is visible, as are the cars and lorries lining up for their passports and contents to be checked before they board the train for the UK. After forty-five minutes of waiting, an officer comes and takes my ID. He escorts me across the compound and lets me into the deport centre foyer. I take my belongings out of my pockets and place them in a locker. A female officer then arrives and thoroughly pats me down. She does not find the phone charging cables I have hidden in my socks. Some officers do not mind if I bring tobacco or charging cables, and they are technically allowed, but others confiscate anything I bring regardless, so I hide them to keep them safe.

When the officer is satisfied with her pat-down she escorts me downstairs to the visitation room. I wait inside the room, brick-walled except for one glass wall facing an interior courtyard. In the middle of the courtyard grows an enormous banana tree. A friend once told me during his detention that he thinks this is to remind them that they’re nothing more than monkeys. A door opens on the opposite side of the courtyard and Shkar is escorted through, his upper arm held by a PAF officer. The officer opens the door in the glass wall and Shkar enters and sits at the table across from me, a huge grin on his face.

“Victoria, I missed you! How are you? How is Jangaleka? What’s the news about derchwn [passage to the UK]?”

I pull my chair around the table, so that our backs are against the CCTV camera pointed at us from one of the corners of the room. As we speak, I slowly move the cables from my socks into my hands. He reaches across the table, and we briefly hold hands as I pass the cables to him. He laughs:

“So, you wouldn’t bring me weed but you brought me contraband anyway. Next time bring me weed, that’s better than a phone cable! Anyway, I don’t want it for myself, you know I don’t smoke. I want it for Hawkar. You know he’s been in here for forty-five days now?”

“That’s so long...how long have you been in here now?”

“It’s been a week, I think. Baran is here too, remember him? He arrived on my third day, so he’s newer than I am. Hawkar is doing poorly though. He doesn’t speak anymore, and he’s angry all the time. I tell him to relax because it’s fucking annoying but what can I do. Anyway, I’m so hungry. It’s Ramadan and I’m fasting, but they don’t let us save our food here. Some of the paqla [derogatory term for police] give us dinner and water after bangy maghrib⁹⁷ but not all. We’re all Muslim in here, so we’re trying to convince them to do it every night...”

Shkar and I continue chatting for around thirty minutes. I visit him again five days later. This time, when he walks into the visitation room, he looks exhausted. His skin is alarmingly pale, and he has deep bags under his eyes. He does not smile for the entirety of our visit. He enters the room with two small paper cups and places them on the table between us.

“What’s this?”

“Hot chocolate. Here, I got one for you too.”

“You’re not fasting?”

“No, I stopped a few days ago. I can’t do this anymore.”

“Ramadan?”

⁹⁷ *Bangy maghrib* is the call to prayer signalling sun set and the time to break fast during Ramadan.

“No, this [he motions towards the courtyard and banana tree]. All of this. I’m going crazy, I swear to god. My mind feels like it’s been reformatted. I’m so bored. I have a hearing tomorrow, it’s the third one. I know the first two [hearings] aren’t real, you know? They’re just a joke. But I heard that with the third one you can actually be freed.”

“Do you want me to come?”

“Yes please, that would be nice. Can you bring me a lighter, too?”

“Sure. Where’s the hearing?”

“I don’t know, hold on let’s ask someone.”

He presses the button on the wall which signals to the guards that the visit is finished. Shkar and I continue talking for a while. Eventually, Shkar becomes frustrated with waiting and stands up and pushes his chair onto the floor. The sound of it crashing onto the tiles reverberates through the enclosed room.

“Where are these idiot, lazy paqla? We’ve been waiting for so long.”

He jams the button with his finger and then pounds his fist on the glass wall until he has caught a guard’s attention. The guard opens the glass door and I ask him where Shkar’s hearing will be tomorrow. He does not know and leaves to find someone who does. As we wait, Shkar does not speak. He looks towards the floor, at his shoes, his mouth in a hard line.

“Are you okay?”

“No, I swear to god I’m dying in here. Kat ba lash aroat [time goes by for free].⁹⁸ So much time is going for free, and it’s not clear when I’ll be released. Hawkar

⁹⁸ See Chapter Two for a discussion of this phrase.

has been in here for so long now. I don't want to be like him. I don't want that future; I can't do this anymore."

At this point a woman dressed in jeans and a t-shirt knocks on the glass door. She enters the room and sits down with us. We introduce ourselves in French, and she tells me that she works for a non-profit housed within the deport centre which aims to ensure detainees' rights to legal counsel, medical care, and translation are respected. The hearing will be in Douai's courthouse the following afternoon at 2 pm. I ask her whether she believes that Shkar will be freed. She sighs:

"I really don't think so. People never get released at hearings. They get released when the prefecture feels like releasing them. It's completely random. There's no pattern to it. Tell your friend the best thing he can do right now is to not look for a pattern, he'll make himself crazy. He'll be released when he'll be released."

She leaves through the glass door, and I translate what she said to Shkar. He does not believe her and argues that since she works with the police she is probably lying.

The following day I arrive at Douai's courthouse and wait for Shkar. The PAF vehicles arrive an hour late, annoying the solicitors, interpreters, and judge. When they do arrive, the officers allow me to sit with Shkar in an annex outside of the courtroom. Baran is there as well, along with three other men whose hearings are scheduled that day, and we smoke cigarettes and chat while we wait for the proceedings to begin.

Shkar feels better today. While he still looks pale, and has lost a noticeable amount of weight, he is laughing and joking with Baran and me and tells me that he is feeling lucky. The Kurdish translator approaches them and mediates a conversation between Shkar, Baran, and their solicitor, whom they have just met. The solicitor explains that she will argue that deporting them to their Eurodac countries (as both of them have fingerprints) is inadvisable because

from there they will likely be sent to Iraq and that returning to Iraq is dangerous. Shkar and Baran try to explain to her, via the translator, some particularities of their cases that may support her argument, but by the time the translator has turned to the solicitor to relay their messages, she has already left and is talking and laughing with some of the other solicitors present. The translator shrugs and walks away to have a cigarette. Shkar is bewildered:

“How can she know what to say if she didn’t ask me anything about my case?”

We are then instructed to sit quietly in the annex outside of the courtroom. Shkar, Baran, and I look at Kurdish meme accounts on my phone’s Instagram and stifle our laughter as we scroll through with one another. Shkar bursts into laughter at one humorous video of a Kurdish man who is filming himself while walking on a frozen pond in Sweden and falls in when the ice breaks beneath his feet. A PAF officer reprimands him so we quiet down, smiling and making faces at each other like schoolchildren.

Baran is called into the courtroom. Barely any time passes before he returns, and Shkar is called in. Several minutes later he also returns, and the court adjourns for deliberation. Shkar and Baran become anxious and worried, bouncing their legs and fidgeting in their seats. We smoke cigarettes in silence, and I manage to slip Shkar a lighter when the guards are not looking. The judge returns to the courtroom, and we are invited inside. Of the five men present, only one is released. Baran and Shkar both purse their lips. As we walk outside towards the white PAF vans waiting in the car park, Shkar says:

“I just have no luck. I can’t feel myself anymore. I can’t feel my body and I can’t feel my thoughts. I feel like I’m a ghost. Sometimes I forget if this is Britain or France.”

Some days later I am waiting outside of the Coquelles deport centre entrance gate. A PAF officer emerges from the deport centre and walks towards me. There is a man walking with him in jeans and a t-shirt, carrying a black puffy

coat. As they get closer, I recognise him as Baran. He is beaming, and shouts to me from the other side of the gate:

“Look, they’ve just freed me! Ha! I’m released! What are you doing here by the way? Hey, can you drive me back to Jangaleka?”

The officer opens the gate entrance and Baran joins me in the car park outside the compound, excitedly relaying to me the story of being called up via loudspeaker a few moments before and being escorted outside without explanation. He had been detained for seventeen days. Baran waits in the car park as I go inside to visit Shkar.

My visit with Shkar is brief. He is completely dejected and hopeless. Speaking is difficult for both of us, and we spend most of the visit looking at the floor in silence. He said when they called Baran’s name over the loudspeaker he misheard and thought they had called him, as their pseudonyms are similar when spoken with a French accent. He is happy for Baran, but crushed as well. Three days later, Shkar calls me from an unknown French number. He has been released and asks me to pick him up from outside the deport centre. He had been detained for twenty-three days. Later Hawkar is also released, after sixty-eight days.

Weeks after his detention, Baran told me that it was one of the most difficult times in his life, mostly due to the agony of attending hearing after hearing and never being released. For the following two months that he was in Dankix, before he finally reached the United Kingdom, he was terrified of the possibility of arrest and acutely aware of his detainability. This terror did not stem from the threat of deportation – he knew if he were deported to his Eurodac country he would return relatively quickly to France – but rather from the trauma and uncertainty produced by detention itself. As for Shkar, he never wanted to speak of his experiences in the deport centre again.

A central component of Behrouz Boochani's Manus Prison Theory,⁹⁹ regulations and procedures within the deport centre as well as the length of detention are governed by arbitrariness (2018b). They are decided behind closed doors and are often nonsensical and cruel, such as the case in Lesquin in which a group of Iranian and Iraqi nationals remained in detention for over forty days after the judge's decision not to deport. Due to the lack of clarity and communication to detainees about the system of detention, they perceive their release as dependent on the whims of the guards working that day. While hearings constantly take place, nothing significant ever comes from them. They create a semblance of due process without truly striving for any meaningful change in circumstance. "[T]hey give the illusion that rights are engaged" and actually serve to justify the actions and existence of dehumanising systems of domination (Stanley, 2018).

Baran's and Shkar's encounter with the solicitor assigned to their cases at the hearing in Douai reflects this. During their hearing, the solicitor did not expect them to describe the particularities of their cases, nor did she stop to consider them when they attempted to communicate with her. The 'illusion' of due process for detained kochberan does not necessarily stem from negligence on behalf of the solicitors, but rather from the hearings themselves. They are structured in such a way as to ensure judges rarely accept detainees' applications for release, and therefore to ensure that release is dependent on the orders of the prefecture, themselves aleatory in nature. Solicitors are usually given only a few hours' notice before they are called in to represent detainees at these hearings. They are in the same room as their clients for only a few minutes before the hearing begins. The detainees themselves are given different solicitors for each hearing they attend (usually three or four over the course of several weeks) and therefore do not have time to strategically and succinctly inform solicitors of the particularities of their cases. Detainees are also usually not adequately informed of the reasons for and aims of the hearing (even though they are often appeals or requests for release), and therefore do not know what information could be relevant to their case.

It usually goes unquestioned whether the detainee has entered the country irregularly, and solicitors therefore argue not against detention itself but rather

⁹⁹ Boochani's Manus Prison Theory is discussed in Chapter Two in relation to queueing as a domesticating process.

against deportation. Since the only relevant information they have about their clients is their country of origin, their arguments are repetitive – usually a version of: “if my client were to be deported to a third country, that country would deport them to their country of origin, which is politically unstable, dangerous, and therefore against human rights conventions.” Each day, hearings take place for four or five men in the Douai, Lille, or Boulogne-Sur-Mer courts. If some of the men in that day’s hearing are from the same country of origin, the judge hears the same argument multiple times that day.

These arguments are repeated for days, weeks, and months, and judges continue to rule that kochberan must remain in detention, where they stay until the prefecture orders their release. The nature of these hearings deliberately steers the conversation towards whether detainees should be deported, and away from whether they should be detained in this manner in the first place. Consequently, detention is perceived as justifiable as long as the detainee is deportable. As soon as a judge deems them undeportable, they should therefore be released immediately, and yet this is often not the case. The conditions in which hearings occur provide very little room for adequate and significant legal challenges on behalf of detainees. Their design reproduces the detention regime, while adding a considerable amount of uncertainty, suffering, and trauma for the detainees involved.

Long-term detention in deport centres is formally an administrative process, as is the case in most countries (Bosworth and Turnbull, 2014). Deport centres in France are officially called Administrative Retention Centres, and hearings usually take place in administrative courts. However, in line with Mary Bosworth’s (2014) findings in her research in Immigration Removal Centres in the UK, as well as with Boochani’s (2018b) experiences as a detainee on Manus Island, in practice these facilities function as prisons. While not formally designed to rehabilitate or punish detainees, they do so by ‘holding’ people regardless of whether they can or will be deported. The psychologically harrowing experience of being detained without clear purpose and for an undefined amount of time is visible in Shkar’s deterioration over the course of his detention and is echoed in ethnographies conducted in similar detention and deportation centres (Griffiths, 2013; Hall, 2012; Whyte, 2011). A few months prior, Shkar had been detained in a deport centre in the UK for several weeks before he was deported to Italy, where he has Eurodac fingerprints. He then returned to Dankix to attempt to cross to the UK a second time. If he is successful,

he claims he will 'live black,' a phrase that means to live undocumented without claiming asylum, to avoid another deportation. He states after his hearing in Douai that he sometimes cannot recall whether he is in the UK or in France, indicating the deep entanglement of these two traumatic periods. The hearings add a further layer of cruelty, which, as Baran explains, play with detainees' hopes and anxieties and can leave people feeling numb, empty, and 'like a ghost' as Skhar says.

Conclusion

Policing and police practice implicitly necessitate a subject-object relationship in which kochberan are the objects of policing (Martin, 2018). This can be understood as a component of governmentality, or the mechanisms, actions, and institutions through which particular groups are rendered governable (Foucault, 2007). The act of policing – through intensely heavy presence, identity checks, and incessant detention – itself reifies kochberan as criminalised and policeable objects, justifying the need to police in the first place by characterising the sovereign moral agency of police officers and border agents as superior to that of their illegalised targets (Feldman, 2019). Police and border agents dehumanise kochberan through practices such as numbering their hands, refusing to call them by name, and continuing with an arrest regardless of extraordinary circumstances, such as when Balen is informed of his friend's death. Life in Dankix is marked by relentless police harassment, arrest, and detention. Detention itself, especially in deport centres, is productive of trauma and terror that lasts long after release (see, e.g., Robjant, Hassan, and Katona, 2009; Steel, et al., 2011). Detainability and policeability create an economy of fear by forcefully demonstrating to kochberan the state's ability to manage undesirable and unwanted migrants (Ahmed, 2004). Indeed, the role of the police is largely to *display* power, often as a means through which real decision-makers remain unaccountable (Martin, 2018). Simultaneously, kochberan internalise their illegalisation through processes of symbolic violence, and excuse and justify their repeated detention.

Both detainability and the experience of detention contribute to this economy of fear, as we have seen exemplified by the accounts of various people throughout this chapter. The feeling of being 'hunted' by the police intrudes into even the most

intimate of moments, such as preparing to identify a friend's body in the morgue or grieving the loss of a loved one. Unyielding police harassment, particularly during times of extraordinary stress, is often exhausting and disturbing. The processes of detention are furthermore ruled by arbitrariness and uncertainty, the severe psychological repercussions of which have been well-documented throughout the literature (Bosworth, 2014; Bosworth, Fili, and Pickering, 2014; Cohen, 2008; Hall, 2012; Griffiths, 2013; Terrio, 2015; Whyte, 2011).

The decisions of the judge and prefecture concerning release from deport centres are made behind closed doors and are not communicated or explained to detainees, which mystifies the process of being freed and leads detainees to the agonising belief that freedom is based on the whims of the guards working that day. Bosworth argues, in the British context, that decision-makers are kept off-site as a dehumanisation measure ensuring distance between detainees and the caseworkers charged with their futures (2014). In French deport centres the decision-maker is the prefecture or judge, rather than a caseworker, who make decisions largely based upon the detainee's country of origin or the state's current resource capacity. While their reasons for being off-site are different to those of their British counterparts, the effect on detainees is similar in that the mystification of the release process is a source of considerable anxiety and anguish.

Furthermore, hearings are biased against detainees and serve as an illusion of due process. They are designed to deliberately reduce any propensity for legal challenge to long-term detention itself and steer juridical discourse away from the question of detainability and towards that of deportability. And yet, even when the judge decides that a detainee cannot be deported, he is often not immediately freed but remains in detention for days or weeks. Deport centres therefore function as prisons for those who have not yet been charged with a punishable crime, as is the case with Farhad before his incarceration in prison, and for those who have been deemed undeportable by a judge and yet are still detained until the prefecture orders their release. Considering that most Iranian and Iraqi nationals are not deportable and are not deported, long-term detention aims to hold and isolate illegalised kochberan, rendering them juridical non-subjects (De Genova, 2016; Turnbull, 2016). It fundamentally operates on the idea that kochberan who are travelling to another country to claim asylum should be punished and penalised in ways comparable to incarceration (Bosworth and Turnbull, 2014).

Detention contributes to an emerging hierarchy of deservingness whereby legalised people are deserving of protection, and illegalised people are not. Symbolic violence normalises this hierarchy, itself borne of multiple and intersecting forms of structural violence as outlined in this chapter. The assumption is naturalised that illegalised people somehow deserve to be detained, or to be subject to direct police violence and other forms of interpersonal violence in Dankix (Bourdieu, 2000). Despite the entitlement of kochberan to basic human rights protections against assault and other forms of interpersonal violence, these rights are often not respected. Police officers and border agents take advantage of the inaccessibility of the rights to which kochberan are entitled and perpetrate acts of direct violence and dehumanisation without recrimination. These practices highlight “the role police have in maintaining structural violence to portray their discretionary powers as a mode of sovereign exception” (Martin, 2018: 140).

Police officers and border agents are the main points of contact between kochberan and the state. While the state as a unified and centralised actor is an illusory concept, those living in Dankix often interpret it as a kind of ventriloquist or puppeteer using police officers to do its bidding. Throughout this chapter, while discussing experiences of detention, kochberan collapse the concepts of state, government, police officers, and border agents. Policing and police practice, including arrest and detention, are therefore largely “how the state is made coherent and tangible” for those living in Dankix (Griffiths, 2013: 265). Interactions between them are subsequently perceived by kochberan as microcosms of the relationship between the state and the undocumented people who move through and within it. The material included here shows how detention is a key practice by which kochberan are illegalised by state actors. It functions as an expression of state violence through enforced waiting and confinement (Bosworth and Turnbull, 2014).

Yet, detainees are social actors, and “are constituted as such in and through their relation to a social space” – that of the deport centre or short-term holding facility (Bourdieu, 1996: 11). While the spaces in which kochberan are detained aim to isolate them through their containment, detainees do much more than passively wait (Khosravi, 2014; Kreichauf, 2021). Kochberan use the documents given to them upon release (OQTFs) to secure free train travel and avoid detention in future. Aram and Karwan express anger at the way they are treated, even while remaining empathetic to their arresting officers. Aryos interprets his frequent detention as a

humorous game played between him and the police. He, Hakim, and others find ways to reduce their detainability by faking illness and pain. Young-looking men and boys strategically take advantage of differing laws for minors. Farhad uses his Iranian nationality to leverage power over those detaining him. Shkar, Baran, and I laugh and joke together as we await their hearing, and their fellow detainees advocate for detention officers to change their mealtimes to enable them to fast during Ramadan. Embedded within (and intrinsic to) the descriptions of abuse and indignity included here are the many ways in which kochberan live through, are shaped by, and undermine their detainability. Just as kochberan cut Ls in both lorries and the queue, as we see in Chapter Two, these practices form part of the myriad ways kochberan both navigate and complicate the violence to which they are subject. I have shown how their detainability is evidence of the ways in which 'illegality' comes to be embodied as intrinsic to undocumented people themselves. In the following chapter, I examine how violence, in its plurality of form and scale, also comes to be located in and on the body.

CHAPTER FIVE | Embodying Violence

Kurds migrating in a caravan,
Come through the cities.

By day, laden with burdens and hunger,
By night, under the rain.

I love my homeland such that I measure it with my feet,
Do not call it wandering.

- Excerpt from the song کۆچی کوردان (Kochi Kurdan, or *Kurdish Migration*) by Adnan Karim¹⁰⁰ (1993), translation¹⁰¹ by author

Why am I not clean? Why am I dirty? I smell. That's why. Why do I smell? There's no shower, no toilet, no running water. There's nowhere to sleep. Now at night it's very cold, by day it's very hot. Can you sleep in a tent in these conditions? In Kampeka there are no bins. 500 people are in the camp. How many toilets? Outside there are ten, inside there are two. They clean the toilets in the morning, by noon they are full of filth [...] Because there are no showers or toilets everyone is ill; there are coughs, fevers. People get diarrhoea [...] everyone is coughing, everyone is ill.

– Excerpt of an interview with Karwan

Here you come to the real secret of class distinctions in the West...It is summed up in four frightful words which people nowadays are chary of

¹⁰⁰ Adnan Karim (عەبدنان كەرىم) is a Kurdish singer-songwriter and painter. Born in Kirkuk, he and his family fled to Sweden in 1992 in response to the Gulf War and increasing persecution under Saddam Hussein. 'Kurdish Migration' was written during his first year in Sweden and was released on an album entitled *I miss you [plural]* (بیرتان دەکم). 'Kurdish Migration' is well-known among Sorani-speaking Kurds and is often played to express the longevity of Kurdish emigration and to express and contemplate the hardships of the *rega*, the route to and through Europe from Kurdistan.

¹⁰¹ The final lines are literally translated as: "I measure my homeland, do not say he is a wanderer." The meaning is lost when translated in this way, and the above translation conveys the original meaning as much as possible.

uttering, but which were bandied about quite freely in my childhood. The words were: The lower classes smell. That was what we were taught – the lower classes smell. And here, obviously, you are at an impassable barrier. For no feeling of like or dislike is quite so fundamental as a physical feeling. Race-hatred, religious hatred, differences of education, or temperament, of intellect, even differences of moral code, can be got over; but physical repulsion cannot...Very early in life you acquired the idea that there was something subtly repulsive about a working-class body...

- George Orwell (2001[1937]: 119-120, emphasis in original).

With the body we move through, experience, and attribute meaning to the world (Csordas, 1994). We look at other bodies to discern the character of those around us, which we see as reflected or manifested in the body, and in turn adorn and modify our own bodies as a symbol of our social selves (Turner, 1980). Bodies are porous and permeable. Affect, as a “process of life and vitality” moves through our bodies, passing through and clinging on to objects and places as it circulates (Blackman, 2012: 4; Navaro-Yashin, 2009). Simply put, rather than a closed, self-containing object, the body can be considered a subject of culture or “the existential ground of culture” (Csordas, 1990: 5). Embodiment, in turn, refers to the bodily elements of this subjectivity (Desjarlais and Throop, 2011).

The excerpts above illuminate two key aspects of embodiment. Karwan points to the first: that violence is sensorially and pathologically inscribed onto the body. The second is highlighted by Orwell, who discusses how bodies are perceived as evidence that hierarchy is natural and can therefore be used to identify those who do not belong. While dirt is a symptom of the inability to clean oneself, perceived dirtiness becomes ‘misrecognised,’¹⁰² to borrow Bourdieu’s term, as the natural state of the Other, whether that be the working class, the migrant, and/or the racialised

¹⁰² As was examined in relation to racialisation in Chapter Two, misrecognition refers to a process of symbolic violence, or the normalisation and widespread acceptance of violence through particular discourse and practices (Bourdieu, 2001). Misrecognition is a process through which power relations are perceived in a way that makes them legible and legitimate to the person who confronts them (Bourdieu, 2000).

(Bourdieu, 2000). A dirty body, then, is an Othered body. A dirty body – a migrant body – is a body out of place (Douglas, 1984 [1966]; Malkki, 1992).

In this way, the body is a site for the production and maintenance of power. “[F]rom the poor who have to exhibit the stigmas of indigence to benefit from public welfare or private charity, [to] foreigners who have to report their illness or suffering to obtain a residence permit” the body is taken as irrefutable evidence and is used as such in negotiations of power (Fassin and d’Halluin, 2005). The bodies of kochberan are used as evidence of where they have been (through fingerprinting, for example) and of what they have endured (for instance, torture) to determine whether they have the right to cross borders. The migrant body is, in this way, considered the ultimate testament to truth. An examination of the biometric border, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis and a wealth of interdisciplinary work on this topic has already been generated that demonstrates the ways it shapes migration-related decisions and experiences of border-crossing (see, e.g., Ajana, 2013; Amooore, 2006; Grünenberg, et al., 2020; Kloppenburg and van der Ploeg, 2020; and Sanyal, 2017). Instead, I focus on the sensorial and affective dimensions of illegalisation through embodiment, which locates the consequences of structural violence in and on the body.

In returning to Karwan, he identifies the source of his odour and illness as a product of social inequality. He states that he feels unclean, and is perceived by French locals as such, because he has nowhere to shower, he sleeps in a tent in the summer heat, and cannot wash his clothing. That he perceives himself as embodying social inequality is consistent with the testimonies of research participants of scholars of violence in other contexts. For instance, Linda Green was told by her research participants – Mayan widows in 1970s Guatemala – that “their experiences of bodily illness constituted more than individual, psychological, and sensory responses to distress. Their illnesses embodied the violence of their social reality” (1998: 5). To briefly exemplify this, I return to the concept of illegalisation.

As has been demonstrated throughout previous chapters, kochberan are illegalised through state policy and practice in order to delegitimize and criminalise their presence in France. That Karwan is street homeless and has no access to sanitation facilities is an intentional result of French immigration policy and the decisions of the prefecture of the Nord and subprefecture of Dunkirk. Issues of access to clean water exemplify this well: before large-scale evictions, sanitation

facilities (such as a tap with clean drinking water) are uninstalled on orders of the prefecture, only to be reinstalled months later after great effort on the part of non-profit organisations who mount legal challenges against the subsequent lack of water. The prefectural government and these organisations are engaged in a years-long cyclical battle over water.¹⁰³ And yet Éric Étienne (who was subprefect of Dunkirk at the time of fieldwork), continuously uninstalled the water taps for several years, arguing that they “have created a fixation point for those who wish to benefit from these facilities” (Pélissier, 2019, translation mine). In other words, the denial of access to running water and sanitation facilities is a deterrence mechanism that attempts to dissuade kochberan from settling in Dankix.

The battle over water is but one facet of a larger system that ensures kochberan embody the violence to which they are subject in Dankix. Their denial of access to clean water is a tool with which the prefecture makes kochberan *feel*, deeply and sensorially, their illegalisation, as Karwan attests to above. The illegalisation of kochberan generates dirty bodies, diseased bodies, and bodies in pain while denying them the ability to heal. This chapter examines the affective and sensorial experience of living in Dankix to demonstrate both how violence is embodied by kochberan and how the migrant body in need of care is politicised as a site for the (re)production of state power and legitimacy. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, dirt, disease, and pain do not engulf the body. They are interpreted and communicated in sometimes surprising ways, problematising the notion of the “suffering subject” (Robbins, 2013: 447). In some of the vignettes below, accounts of pain are punctuated with humour and laughter; they demonstrate that pain does not necessarily preclude joy.

Equally as significant are the ways in which access to adequate healthcare is restricted. Lack of medical care reproduces the health inequalities that are produced by street homelessness, which in Dankix results primarily from illegalisation (as was explained in the Introduction and illustrated throughout the previous chapters). As is demonstrated below, medical encounters illuminate how discourse surrounding access to care is predicated upon assumptions about the nation-state itself: that it exists to define who is a member and who is not, and to redistribute resources

¹⁰³ For a timeline of these court decisions and the discourse in which they are contextualised see Boittiaux, et al., 2020.

exclusively to those members, who are, in turn, expected to contribute. Further, for those who can access medical care, the healthcare system generates health inequalities through selective acceptance of patients and differences in quality of care (see *also* Fassin, 2004). Finally, medical care in Dankix exists only to alleviate the symptoms of structural violence that exist outside of it, which are products of political choices expressed in policy. The restriction – and sometimes denial – of access to medical care, as one facet of illegalisation, therefore both generates illness and constrains the ability to heal. Encounters with healthcare practitioners included in this chapter reveal how these assumptions about belonging, deservingness, and care are embedded and play out in everyday practice in Dankix (see *also* Quesada, 2012). The following sections interrogate certain aspects of the medical encounter to reveal it as a site of contestation between kochberan’s attempts to heal and the legitimisation and normalisation of the state’s power to exclude. In service of this argument, I first historically contextualise the healthcare system available to kochberan (called la PASS) and the role of national strikes that were ongoing during my fieldwork. The second half of this chapter makes use of two additional vignettes to illustrate two key aspects of the affective dimensions of the embodiment of violence: sensoriality and an affective economy of death.

Contextualising the medical encounter

The level of access to medical care for illegalised migrants is comparable to that of other groups living street homeless. Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg, for instance, describe the emergency services in California as an institutionalised and “deliberately hostile bureaucratic triage system” whereby hospital services are “rationed” for those who cannot pay for healthcare and do not have insurance (2009: 97). Their street homeless research participants therefore delayed visits to the emergency room “until they were quite literally dying” so that they were sure they would be seen by a doctor (*ibid.*: 97). Similarly, a study conducted among homeless participants in the UK found that there are both perceived and actual obstacles to accessing adequate medical care, including the difficulties of registering with a general practitioner, travelling to services, and attitudes of healthcare workers towards people who are homeless (Rae and Rees, 2015). In the UK, the public

healthcare system is purported to be universally available and free to use, but in practice is subject to immigration status and results in perceived and real healthcare disparities for women, racialised people, and the working class (see, e.g., Raleigh and Holmes, 2021).

Similarly as in the UK, in France healthcare is contingent upon citizenship status. Most migrants require proof of private health insurance as part of their initial visa application to enter the country. Since 2001, undocumented migrants who do not have a visa are eligible for *Aide médicale d'état* (AME, State Medical Aid) (Larchanché, 2012). To access AME, however, migrants must prove that they have had fixed residence in France for at least three months (excluding unaccompanied minors and those detained in deport centres; André and Azzedine, 2016). Kochberan are therefore ineligible for AME and must make use of a separate system called la PASS (*Les permanences d'accès aux soins de santé*, Healthcare access points). While la PASS is intended for anyone without health coverage (including citizens and foreign nationals), in practice in Dunkirk Hospital it is used almost exclusively by Kochberan because other services are available to those who can prove long-term fixed residence. La PASS in Dunkirk has responded to this by hiring a psychologist and Sorani Kurdish translators (many of whom previously resided in Dankix themselves and are therefore empathetic to the obstacles many Kochberan face during convalescence).

La PASS was created in 1998 to facilitate access to the healthcare system for people in precarious situations, as part of a programme aimed at improving access to care (Pfister, et al., 2014). The programme's costs are covered by the state's "missions of general interest and contracting assistance" (MIGAC) funding programme, which supports services deemed essential to public health that would otherwise operate at a loss (Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé, 2021, translation mine). Significantly, the legislation that created la PASS refers explicitly to the right to health protection as is outlined in the French constitution and is therefore considered an obligation by the state, rather than a form of humanitarianism. As is defined in the public health code, the programme supports people in precarious situations "in the steps necessary to implement their rights" without mention of legalised or long-term residence in France (République Française, 2021, translation mine). The right to healthcare access is therefore understood as inalienable, and la PASS is a programme that recognises that right and facilitates its implementation. It

is not considered as part of immigration policy but is instead seen as an ‘apolitical’ exception grounded in compassion (Ticktin, 2011).

During the time of my fieldwork, the healthcare system in France was undergoing significant funding cuts under austerity measures. In 2018 and 2019 alone, under Emmanuel Macron’s administration, the state cut over 2.6 billion EUR (£2.1 billion) from public hospital funding, exacerbating the already-significant loss of 70,000 beds over the past fifteen years (Diallo, 2021). Hospital staff across the country (including those at Dunkirk Hospital) went on strike in 2019 to protest these funding cuts and the ensuing precarity experienced by healthcare workers. At times, over a third of the nation’s emergency services were striking simultaneously (Bock, 2019). A 2019 petition created by the Inter-Urgences collective, the group who organised the strikes, cites the “slow destruction of our public health service” and the “dysfunctions of the system, for example in the provision of healthcare related to social policies [which] amplify these difficulties” for the “gradual reduction of downstream beds,” referring to the capacity for hospitals to relieve congestion in emergency rooms (Inter-Urgences, 2019, translation mine). The strikers’ demands included thousands of additional staff, an end to hospital bed cuts, and a universal pay rise.

Before continuing to the vignettes below, which describe examples of encounters between hospital staff and kochberan in need of care, it is important to note that no medical staff accepted my request to be involved in this research. Based upon previous interactions with many of the staff at Dunkirk Hospital, I believe this is due to a lack of time and resources on their part, and in some cases because I was perceived to facilitate what was described to me by one nurse as “migrants’ self-destructive behaviour.” Often, the illnesses and wounds suffered by kochberan are misrecognised (to, again, make use of Bourdieu’s term) as self-inflicted, either directly or indirectly (2000). Consequently, kochberan are sometimes perceived as undeserving of quality care, as is shown below. By outlining the legal justification for la PASS and contextualising the below vignettes within the history of austerity and the national strikes outlined above, I aim to provide clarity on the behaviour of hospital staff where they were unable to do so themselves through interviews.

Bodies in need of care

La PASS provides a key function for some kochberan, especially those in need of emergency care. It is also a gateway to other services through which patients can be referred to any other department, such as maternity or neurology. Yet, those who need continuous medical attention (including pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses such as blood cancer and heart disease) often do not receive adequate care because they are endlessly evicted from their living spaces, and subsequently cannot make their appointments at Dunkirk Hospital. Often, kochberan are blamed by nurses and administrative staff for missing their appointments, and rescheduling can be incredibly difficult. The vignette below exemplifies this:

Rozhin is eight-months' pregnant. A medical non-profit organisation operating in Dankix called GSF (Gynécologie Sans Frontières or Gynaecology Without Borders) had scheduled an appointment at Dunkirk Hospital for an ultrasound on 10 September. On 6 September, however, the police evicted Jangaleka and forced her, her husband, and her daughter onto a bus destined for a temporary accommodation centre along the border with Belgium in Aulnoyes-Aymeries. This centre (usually used to house migrants awaiting a state-assisted return to their country of origin) was being temporarily used as a CAES (Centre d'accueil et d'examen des situations or Migrant Reception Centre). CAES are normally emergency migrant shelters, established as a 'first step' to asylum.¹⁰⁴ They are also sometimes used to house undocumented migrants after evictions to reframe and legally justify the eviction as an operation aiming to shelter the homeless.¹⁰⁵

Rozhin and her husband are only allowed to stay in the CAES for one week, after which they can either claim asylum or be forced onto the street, told unofficially to "go back to Dankix." This CAES is over two hours away from

¹⁰⁴ See Boitiaux, 2018 for more information about CAES shelters.

¹⁰⁵ This is referred to in French as a *mise à l'abri* ('sheltering') operation. As was discussed in Chapter Four, there are often not enough spaces in accommodation centres to house the entire Dankix population, and after evictions dozens or hundreds of kochberan are either left in Dankix or driven around for hours in buses before returning to Dankix and dropping them off in the forest without shelters or sleeping bags.

Dunkirk by car, and many more hours by train. It is impossible for Rozhin to travel to Dunkirk Hospital and back to the CAES in one day without having to sleep overnight on the street or in a train station. If she does not return to the CAES, the staff will not allow her re-entry and she will be unable to recover her belongings. Since she is pregnant, she wants to take advantage of the warmth of the CAES and prefers to stay in Aulnoye-Aymeries until the staff kick her out.

I visit her at the CAES four days after her arrival to bring nappies and baby formula for her two-year-old daughter. A staff member working at the CAES shouts at me in French when he sees me arrive. I try to explain that I am just dropping off nappies and do not intend to investigate living conditions (which is, I assume, why he is angry) but he does not believe me. So Rozhin and I, along with a dozen other women who were evicted from Dankix, sit on the pavement outside the centre, watching as cars pass us on the road and slow down, honk, and shout obscenities at us. Rozhin looks at them blankly. "Scum," she says of them. She then explains some of the trouble she has been having since coming to the CAES:

"I keep calling GSF, but they say they can't come all the way down here to bring me to my ultrasound. I understand it, that's ten hours of driving for them. It's just a routine check, fortunately, but it's still important. Since they moved us here, I've been to the local hospital a few times. I went on foot because the staff can't drive me. But the first time they said there were no translators, so I went back again with a translator on the phone. But then they said they didn't speak English. So finally, I went back with a translator who spoke French, and then they said because I don't have health insurance and I can't pay that they can't help me. They said that if it's an emergency they would see me, but since I need long-term help, they can't take me as a patient.

A couple of others have tried to go back to Dankix, but each time they tried to take the train they were refused entry at the station. One person even bought a ticket, but was still not allowed in. The staff there keep saying [in English] 'Jangal finish, no Jangal.'"

Another woman adds: “They don’t have the things we need here, not even toothbrushes or nappies [they are given a voucher each day for the local supermarket, but the amount is not enough for both hygiene items and food]. The social worker is useless and won’t help us, especially to get to the hospital or see a doctor. There’s no legal help – none. And there’s no smugglers so we can’t try for derchwn [passage to the UK]. All we do is sleep and eat and sleep and eat. It’s a waste of time being here.”

I try calling Dunkirk Hospital to reschedule Rozhin’s appointment. The woman on the phone scoffs at me – “She’s a migrant right? She can’t pay, but then when we do make her an appointment she doesn’t bother to show up. No, I will not reschedule her appointment. It’s her responsibility to come on time.”

A week later, everyone in the CAES is told to leave. They all return to Dankix and, along with 600 others who had been evicted the week prior but since returned, rebuild Jangaleka in a matter of hours. The next eviction occurs only days later, wherein all 1000 tent shelters are destroyed, but the subprefecture finds space for only half of them in accommodation centres.

The administrative staff member’s reaction to my request to reschedule Rozhin’s appointment is typical. While it does vary between departments (emergency, neurology, maternity, etc) and between hospitals, most administrative and nursing staff with whom I dealt attributed the inability or failure of kochberan to make their appointments to the individuals themselves, rather than as a consequence of their precarious living conditions. The illegalisation of kochberan leads to carceral mobility, rather than the immobility typically discussed in the media and scholarly literature on forced migration.¹⁰⁶ Dankix facilitates many forms of geographic mobility: for instance, kochberan cross to the UK at a steady rate, newcomers continuously arrive, and failed attempts at crossing lead them to other regions of France and neighbouring countries when their lorry goes in an unexpected direction. Carceral mobility, on the other hand, here refers to the punitive forms of mobility employed by the prefect’s office and border agents through evictions and detention.

¹⁰⁶ For literature on migration and carceral mobilities, see Moran, et al., 2016.

Evictions forcibly redistribute the population throughout accommodation centres across the country, and (as was discussed in Chapter Four) kochberan are repeatedly arrested in their living spaces and transferred to deport centres outside of Dunkirk. Mobilities are, in this way, “systematically used by [the state] to deliver punishments” (Gill, 2016: 21).

One of the consequences of carceral mobility is that kochberan are unable to plan for or imagine their future with confidence. While Bourgois and Schonberg found that their research participants avoided the hospital until they were dying to ensure that they would be seen, the carceral mobility affecting kochberan means that they, too, avoid accessing medical care because of their likely inability to make their appointments, and the ensuing ire of the nurses and administrative staff decreasing their chances at rescheduling (2009). Furthermore, as is demonstrated in the vignette with Rozhin above, some medical staff’s perceptions of the failure of kochberan to make their appointments are linked explicitly to their inability to pay for medical care.

Rozhin’s words clearly communicate her frustration and anger with the seeming impossibility of her situation. Not only is she forcibly (re)displaced to an area where she is isolated from support networks, but also walks for several kilometres to the hospital while heavily pregnant. She perceives the CAES staff as “useless,” as her friend says. Indeed, while the hospital administrator with whom I speak on the phone communicates a negative perception of undocumented migrants, the responsibility for Rozhin’s care does not rest solely with her. La PASS, including that in Dunkirk, employs social workers who are responsible for integrating patients into networks of care and social support. While the actions and focus of this role transform considerably when working with kochberan due to their transitory presence in France (rather than, for instance, a non-migrant or a longer-term resident) it is ostensibly the social worker’s role to help to resolve the issues faced by Rozhin. Yet, the social worker at la PASS in Dunkirk was apparently not contacted by GSF (the non-profit organisation who scheduled Rozhin’s initial hospital appointment, that she subsequently missed). If they had been in contact, the GSF workers did not communicate this to Rozhin, who felt that nothing was being done.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of the social worker in the CAES (accommodation centre) to contact either the social worker at la PASS in Dunkirk or the local la PASS service. Rozhin would then have been referred to the maternity

department at the local hospital, and the CAES would have provided both transportation and a translator. As the social worker did not do this, Rozhin is unaware that she must first go through la PASS before accessing medical services. Information about this system is never made available to her, nor communicated to her. When she walks to the hospital, she says “[the medical staff] said that if it’s an emergency, they would see me, but since I need long-term help, they can’t take me as a patient.” The staff likely mean that they can take her as a patient if she is referred to them by la PASS, but otherwise cannot help her unless she is suffering from an acute injury or illness. Perhaps as a result of mistranslation, or the staff’s lack of time and exhaustion, this message is not effectively communicated to Rozhin. She leaves the hospital with the perception that her denial of access to care is absolute, rather than conditional upon her compliance with bureaucratic systems of operation.

The state’s system of care attempts to engage with people like Rozhin “through conceptual acts of translation,” as Cristiana Giordano puts it in her work on migrant integration in Italy (2014: 10). Just as foreign others are translated and filtered into categories that are recognisable to the state apparatus – the ‘economic migrant,’ the ‘refugee,’ the ‘foreign national offender’ – so are they in interactions with institutions of care. In the French medical system, this translation is made by filtering undocumented migrants through la PASS. They then belong to a category of people for which there are appropriate forms and protocols. And indeed, the bureaucratic system of la PASS was created to uphold and protect the right to access medical care. Yet, since Rozhin cannot access la PASS, she is untranslatable, unrecognisable, and invisible.

In contrast to Rozhin’s experiences, I include the following meeting with Rekar as an example of a medical encounter wherein staff are largely friendly and communicative. And yet, as is shown below, both Rekar and the medical staff involved politicise his presence while under their care, and their interactions are entangled with assumptions about deservingness and belonging.

Rekar has tuberculosis. He had been in Jangaleka only for a few weeks before he became alarmed enough by his symptoms to admit himself into the hospital. He had chills, a fever, and a cough that felt as if it was tearing his lungs apart. When he began to cough up blood, he took the bus to Dunkirk Hospital, but

because he arrived late at night the nurse turned him away, asking him to return the next morning when la PASS was open. He had been unable to explain his symptoms to her, and she did not know that he was coughing up blood. Still fearful, he travelled to the polyclinic in Grande-Synthe, just a fifteen-minute walk from his living space. The polyclinic staff usually turn kochberan away and direct them to la PASS in Dunkirk, but he decided to try his luck anyway.

When he arrived, he met an Arabic-speaking French woman in the waiting room who agreed to translate for him. After explaining his symptoms to the nurse on duty, she admitted him immediately, writing “Camp du Puythouck” [the French name for Jangaleka] where he was supposed to write his address for billing purposes. He was tested for tuberculosis, and after diagnosis was hospitalised for treatment.

I had not met Rekar until I saw him in the polyclinic.¹⁰⁷ His father in Kurdistan had somehow managed to get my phone number and called me to request that I bring Rekar a phone and SIM card so that they could communicate.

He promised that he would transfer money for the phone through Western Union later that day. I agreed, and after picking up a few things from Auchan, headed to the polyclinic.

Some of the staff at the polyclinic know me. Like Rekar, I often try my luck with them outside the working hours of la PASS, much to the annoyance of the emergency room nurse. This time, however, she sees me through the CCTV camera at the door and comes out of her office to greet me as I enter.

“You’re here for the migrant? Rekar?”

“Yes, what floor is he on?”

¹⁰⁷ After this interaction, he agreed to participate in my research and, together, we reconstructed this conversation from memory and my field notes.

“Fifth. Just take the lift as there’s some construction on the stairwell.”

I thank her and head upstairs, surprised at the dramatic shift in her behaviour. In all our previous encounters she was reserved and curt, likely because I continue to help Kochberan travel to the polyclinic despite her insistence that they can only use la PASS.

As I arrive on the fifth floor and push through the double doors leading to the hospital beds, another nurse sees me. I explain that I am here for Rekar and she smiles: “That one? He’s so sweet. This way.”

Outside his room is a trolley of personal protective equipment (PPE). She instructs me to don the PPE before entering. I put on a disposable apron, surgical mask, and gloves, and knock before walking inside.

His room is brightly lit from large windows, which are opened slightly. Being on the fifth floor you can see all the way to Auchan and the Jangaleka forest from here. A man who I presume to be Rekar occupies the only bed in the room. He is very thin, with thick curly hair. He had been watching television.

“Hi, are you Rekar?”

“Yes, hello, how are you?”

“I’m well, my name is Victoria. Your father sent me. I have a phone and SIM card for you. I’ve already activated it. It’ll work for a month before you need to top up.”

Rekar thanks me in a quiet voice. We talk for several minutes before I ask him how the staff have been.

“They’re so kind, believe me they’re really good with me. I was so surprised when I came. I’m very lucky because they need the bed, and I’m a foreigner. They could’ve given it to a French person, but they gave it to me.”

“Well, you’re sick, aren’t you?”

“I am. But I’m not stupid. They need to take care of their own in this country before they can take care of panaberan [refugees] who don’t even want to stay here. [Laughing] we just go from country to country and take things and make a mess and don’t give anything back before we get to the UK.”

“I’m glad they’ve been nice here.”

“Yes, they’ve been very good. I don’t know what will happen when I leave, though. Jangaleka made me ill. I’m ill because my body has been cold, hot, cold. I can’t shower so I get itchy all the time. I have red spots everywhere. The doctor told me I should get my own tent to myself because sharing the air with a lot of people makes you ill as well. I can’t get my own tent so quickly [laughing]; you know how it is. But he was just being nice.”

“By the way,” I tell him, “I’m sorry that I’m covered in this mask. They told me I have to wear it in here.”

“That’s okay, I understand. I felt horrible on the bus getting here, I was trying not to cough so that the French people wouldn’t be afraid of me. I’m ill and itchy and smelly, they were all looking at me like this [he widens his eyes and moves away from me, before laughing again].”

Later, just before I leave, I return to the nurse in the emergency room and ask if there is any outstanding information she needs, as I am available to translate. She shushes me and tells me not to worry about it, “I’ve taken care of it.” I pause, hesitant to seem combative, and ask, “Why was Rekar allowed in, even though there’s no la PASS here?”

She looks puzzled by my question, “Well, his symptoms were significant, there was blood in his cough.”

“I see.”

“These were serious symptoms. He is ill. When you come in with people who are in pain, that’s not as serious. That can wait until la PASS is open over in Dunkirk.”¹⁰⁸

Rekar says above that Jangaleka made him ill. Just as Karwan, at the beginning of this chapter, attributes the proliferation of disease and his dirtiness to his illegalisation, Rekar, too, perceives himself as embodying the conditions to which he is subject as a street homeless, undocumented migrant. Not only does he feel itchy and is anxious about his odour, but he understands himself as a danger to those around him. He does not want the locals to be afraid of him, and “felt horrible,” as he says, for subjecting them to his unwashed and ill body. As the excerpt from Orwell at the beginning of this chapter argues, classed or racialised odours are often considered to be intrinsic to the group in question (Classen, et al., 1994). Rather than due to differing hygiene practices or living conditions, these odours are often merely “[feelings] of dislike transposed into the olfactory domain” (*ibid.*: 169). In other cases, a real scent does exist due to the inability to regularly wash oneself, but in Dankix this is uncommon and when it does exist is often masked with deodorant and cologne.

While bodies in Dankix do not usually smell, spaces do. Some areas in Jangaleka and Kampeka always exude bad odours, such as where there are rubbish skips or porta-loos, which are sometimes installed by the prefecture. Yet, Karwan and Rekar believe that *they* smell. Significantly, they are both conscious of their scent while on the bus. The bus is one of the only spaces in which they are in close contact with locals. Their perception that they embody social inequality through their aroma is revealing of the ways in which scent is a symbolic means of generating and maintaining class and racial boundaries, whereby odour and morality are closely associated (Bourdieu, 2001; Classen, et al., 1994).

¹⁰⁸ La PASS is open in Dunkirk Hospital in the mornings and afternoons, Monday to Friday.

In returning to Rekar, when he arrives at the polyclinic he is surprised and pleased by the friendliness of the medical staff, and the swiftness with which he is admitted as a patient. The staff's behaviour contrasts markedly with the way in which the staff member speaks with me over the phone in Rozhin's vignette. Rekar is recognised as in need of and deserving of care, while Rozhin is perceived as ungrateful for the appointment they had scheduled for her, and therefore undeserving of a second chance.

To be deserving of the kind of care reserved for the legalised, the body must be "morally legitimate" (Ticktin, 2011: 4). A morally legitimate body is a sick body, a sexually violated body, or a dying body - but it is not necessarily a body in pain. The "pain" to which the nurse refers at the end of the above vignette is often a result of injuries sustained during crossing attempts, either from falling from a lorry, being hit by a car, or being beaten by police. I have accompanied kochberan who have been turned away from the polyclinic on the night of their injury, only to find out the following day at la PASS that their spine has been fractured, or that they have had a concussion. Only once did the emergency room staff at Dunkirk Hospital allow us to see a doctor outside of la PASS hours. In this case, it was because a man had fallen from the top of a lorry and injured his arm, which he could not lift above his head. In the middle of our consultation, another member of staff rushed in and whispered in the doctor's ear. The doctor then looked at us and apologised, explaining that he could not examine him further, as the patient was uninsured and presumably unable to pay. We were instructed to return on Monday when la PASS was open.

Pain, therefore, does not override immigration status and is not perceived as an emergency. Coughing up blood, on the other hand, renders Rekar's body morally legitimate and therefore deserving of urgent care. In this way, "the moral imperative to act is accompanied, explicitly or implicitly, by practices of violence and containment" (Ticktin, 2011: 5). The nurse's differentiation between illness and pain – and their attached merit for care – provides a glimpse into the complex matrix of deservingness and urgency that form part of decision-making practices medical staff perform as they "ration" healthcare (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009: 97). The outcomes of these decision-making practices are strikingly similar to those made about other street homeless or migrant groups, who are often blamed for the conditions causing them pain (see, e.g., Holmes, 2013; Huffman, et al., 2012; Larchanché, 2012). Illness, such as Rekar's tuberculosis, is framed as an apolitical,

unfortunate event in a way that obscures the circumstances producing his illness in the first place. The doctor, while most likely knowing the impossibility of his request that Rekar acquire a one-man tent upon release from the hospital, still prescribes him a change in living conditions that is prevented by Rekar's illegalisation. On the other hand, pain caused by an injury sustained falling from a lorry, or Rozhin's need for pre-natal care, is misrecognised as due to the choices of Kochberan themselves (Bourdieu, 2001). This misrecognition is a key mechanism of symbolic violence, by which the proliferation of injury and disease, and the inability to address them as we see with Rozhin, are attributed as failings of the individuals themselves. Through misrecognition, these assumptions are regarded as "common sense" and normalise the notion that some people deserve care and others do not, and that these groups are identifiable through a process of affective and moral reasoning (Willen and Cook, 2016: 96).

As was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, when Kochberan gain access to the healthcare system it helps to alleviate some of the embodied manifestations of structural violence that they experience in Dankix. The following two vignettes illustrate two key aspects of the affective dimensions of the embodiment of violence: sensoriality and an affective economy of death. In the first, Aryos (who is introduced in Chapter Two) fills my shoes with water to help me to better understand how it feels to be perpetually wet and cold, and the consequent difficulty of preventing disease. The second vignette, featuring Shahin and Jamshid, explores the relationship between addiction and the affective economy generated by a death in the community.

Diseased bodies

Dishad was arrested on derchwn [the practicalities of attempting to cross the border to the UK] last night. He has just returned to Jangaleka from the police station in Lille and has barely slept at all. It is raining and hailing, so he is sleeping in the back seat of my car in Saheka [the large car park in the middle of the forest] for a few hours while Aryos and I hang around the medical non-profits.

Aryos and I stand in the pelting rain, which has soaked through our clothes. I cannot stop shivering and have a persistent cough that leaves my throat feeling raw. Every freezing gust of wind blows the remaining heat from my body with it and leaves tears in my eyes.

Aryos tells me, "My new shoes I got from the Brits two days ago are soaking wet now. My feet feel like fish, listen." He stomps his feet, which produce loud squelching sounds with each step. He laughs, "My sister, you've got boots on your feet and you're nice and dry but listen to my fish feet!" He is cracking himself up at this point, laughing and stomping around the car park. Aryos had trench foot several months ago and is laughing at the irony that he will likely develop it again after spending so much time in convalescence. Trench foot is caused when feet are wet for a long period, and leads to loss of nerve function, gangrene, and potential amputation. The various medical non-profits' doctors told him to wrap his feet in plastic bags to keep himself dry, but his shoes are too small for him, and the plastic bags do not fit.

Ali [who is introduced in Chapter Two] approaches us, sees Aryos, and rolls his eyes. He invites me back to his and Aryos' tent later to smoke shisha and wait for Dlashad to wake up. I have some translations to do for the medical non-profits, so I tell him I will be ready later.

Forty minutes pass and Aryos returns, carrying a bottle of water and a bag of sunflower seeds. We walk around the lake while it continues to rain but he seems unsure of where we are going. "I swear, I forgot where we put the tent!"

After a few minutes of looking through bushes and thickets we find the right tent, and see Ali using a piece of cardboard to fan a fire he had started using a t-shirt as kindling. I crouch down by the fire and blow onto the flames until it is strong enough to heat the coals for our shisha.



Figure 18 - Fanning a fire to cook with in Jangaleka; image by author.

“It’s not bad here, huh? The wind doesn’t hit us as hard as it does by the lake. Come on, get in the tent, your clothes are soaked. I’ll set up the shisha.”

I take off my boots and place them under a tarp before crawling into the small tent. While we chat, Aryos apologises for not attending my English lessons in Jangaleka anymore [for a methodological discussion of these lessons, see the Introduction]. He says that his mind is too busy to learn English now that Kampeka has been evicted and there are no longer safe places to sleep [as is explained in Chapter Four]. He is worried about police and staying dry, but he is mostly concerned with derchwn [passage to the UK].

“I dream about when I’m in a lorry and have my phone out, staring at the screen, and I get to where the clock changes [indicating that one has crossed into British territory]. As soon as that clock changes, I can breathe.”

We sit cross-legged in the tent, eat sunflower seeds, and smoke our mint-flavoured shisha while the rain steadily drums the tent fabric. The heat from the coals and our bodies fills the tent, and my feet and hands – which were numb from the cold – slowly regain their feeling. The conversation eventually turns towards language. Ali is from a village outside of Ranya and has a thick accent, often using words unique to his town, which sometimes leads to confusion and misunderstanding. Ali asks Aryos what word he uses when he wants to say he will hit someone.

Aryos: “I say ‘let dadem’ [I’ll hit you]. Why, what do you say?”

Ali responds, “Pet dakeshm.”

“What? Are you serious? That’s crazy,” Aryos falls over laughing, “Oh my god! Victoria, do you know what that means? It means like when a car crashes into another car. Ha! Ali, are you a car?”

“It’s normal where I come from, we don’t say let dadem we say pet dakeshm.”

“This is the best thing I’ve heard all week. I can’t believe you just told me this. From now on whenever I see you, I’m going to say pet dakeshm. I’m sorry, but I can’t help it, this is great.”

We now spend a considerable amount of time messaging and calling various people to tell them we are going to pet dakeshm. The shisha flavour and coals eventually burn out. I get up to leave and look for my shoes under the tarp outside the tent, where it is still pelting down rain.

“My shoes are gone.”

Aryos falls backwards with laughter again, “I put them in the rain so you could be wet too! Ha!”

“Aw, come on!” My boots are filled with water, which I dump out. As I pull them on, I inhale sharply and become slightly dizzy; the water saps the heat from my body and my feet feel like blocks of ice again. I am entirely preoccupied with the pain of the cold and can think only of getting back to my car. As I leave the tent, every step I take makes a squelching sound. This makes Aryos laugh even harder; he is almost crying.

“You’ve got fish on your feet now too!”

“I swear to god, pet dakeshm.” I can barely make out the last word without laughing, even as my toes begin to freeze once more. This makes Aryos laugh so much he nearly falls onto the remnants of the coals.

“Woah! Ha! Come on I’ll walk with you to Saheka and see if Dlashad is awake,” he continues as we walk, “Now you know what it feels like to live with wet feet [trench foot]. Well, no you don’t, it’s so painful. I can’t believe I healed my feet and now it’s raining so much again. I might as well just chop my feet off, they’re so useless.”

He continues, “I made your shoes wet but you’re not angry, we’re laughing together. Thank you for that. When you live in shit, when you don’t have a house and the police are hunting you like rats – when actual rats are snuggling up next to you in your tent [laughing] – if you don’t laugh you will die. What else can I do? Nobody gets angry at me; it makes them happy. I prefer to be happy.”

As the vignette above illustrates, living conditions in Dankix are sensorially and pathologically experienced. Yet, despite anthropologists’ attempts, ethnography is limited in its ability to convey the way that pain feels. Pain “occurs on that fundamental level of bodily experience which language encounters, attempts to express, and then fails to encompass...[it] includes much more than raw physical

sensations: pain creates problems of control and meaning-making” (Kleinman, 1992: 7-8). Pain is, in this way, unshareable (Scarry, 1985). In the vignette above I have described some of the ways that being outdoors in unsuitable clothing in freezing temperatures and wet weather is painful. I do so through my own experiences because research participants rarely discussed how cold they felt, and I found it inappropriate to ask during fieldwork or to include here. Even in including my own experiences of the cold, however, my sensations of pain as described above are reduced to metaphor.

In an acknowledgment of the unshareability of pain, Aryos relays to me his experience of trench foot through playfulness and humour. When we first see each other on Saheka, he immediately contrasts my dry feet with his own, which are cold and wet. By splashing around in the rain, he acknowledges the absurdity of his situation: although he has just recently healed from trench foot, he is likely to develop it once more because he has no control over whether his feet are dry. The medical advice he receives is, unfortunately, useless for him because his shoes are too small, and he does not have the funds to buy larger, well-fitting shoes. Small shoes further restrict his circulation, increasing his chances of hypothermia. His shoes’ affordances – what they offer to the wearer – are inverted: what was designed to protect him from the environment is transformed into the very environment that harms him (Gibson, 1979). When filled with water and too small for his feet, his shoes become the rain, the mud, and the cold. They carry water, and therefore carry trench foot. Yet, stomping his feet and soaking his trainers is fun for him because he knows they will get wet regardless of any precautions he could take. He laughs in order to care for himself – he “[prefers] to be happy” – because his shoes have betrayed him by becoming carriers of the very disease against which he protects himself by wearing them.

Finally, he intentionally leaves my boots out in the rain so that we might share the experience of wet feet. He does not do this maliciously – he knows that I have multiple pairs of dry shoes waiting for me at home – but merely to help me to understand “what it feels like to live with wet feet” all while acknowledging that I could never truly know until I do not have access to dry shoes and develop trench foot myself. Through their inverted affordances, Aryos’ shoes develop affective attachments that he articulates through the language of sensoriality: cold, wet, pain. In defining affect, Gilles Deleuze argues that it encompasses more than dispositions

and includes “sensual intensities that may move through human bodies, but do not necessarily emerge from them” (Deleuze, 1995; Navaro-Yashin, 2009: 12). Taken this way, we can argue that the affective attachments associated with trench foot were transmitted to Aryos through his shoes. In turn, he attempts to transmit these affects to me through my shoes. The pre-linguistic, automated nature of affect reduces our ability to articulate its effects in terms that transcend emotion and feeling (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 [1980]). Aryos instead uses objects – my shoes – to bind the two of us together and facilitate the flow of affect between us.

As Aryos’ jokes above exemplify, humour is a common lens through which disease and pain are communicated among my research participants (as is also evident in Chapter Four in relation to frequent detention). While illness is undoubtedly experienced in various ways, including through anger and frustration, Aryos uses laughter, lightness, and joy to reflect upon the way that his illegalisation becomes inscribed upon his body through his susceptibility to and experience of trench foot.

In addition to trench foot, the most common noncommunicable conditions in Dankix are hypertension (commonly caused by stress, an unhealthy diet, and excessive alcohol consumption) and hypothermia (which occurs especially during crossing attempts in both lorries and boats, but also overnight while sleeping in tents). Kochberan sometimes suffer open wounds and sores, which they cannot dress because there is no soap or clean water with which to sanitise their hands (a problem Bourgois and Schonberg also observed among their research participants, 2009: 100). Additionally, invasive procedures that require calm, sanitary environments in which to heal, such as abortions, are complicated significantly by living conditions in Dankix.

The most common communicable diseases among people living street homeless are HIV, Hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis, scabies, and lice infestations (Badiaga, et al., 2008). HIV and Hepatitis B and C are blood-borne, sexually transmitted diseases, and are therefore most prevalent among intravenous drug users and those engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Kochberan are generally more susceptible to tuberculosis (which is airborne) and scabies and lice (due to a lack of sanitation facilities), all three of which are extremely transmissible in overcrowded conditions. There are also frequent impetigo outbreaks, which, while unthreatening, are also highly transmissible and physically ‘mark’ carriers, leading to further

ostracization from the local population and exacerbating what Karwan discusses at the beginning of this chapter.



Figure 19 - Huddling under a bridge near Jangaleka to avoid the rain; image by author.

Furthermore, there is the issue of cumulative stress. Seth Holmes refers to this as “allostatic load” in discussing similarly adverse health outcomes for undocumented Oaxacan migrants in Washington State. He states that it is “understood biomedically as the accumulation of health risk associated with chronic stress” (2013: 101). Allostatic load increases dramatically with traumatic events such as border crossings, living without shelter, being targeted and physically assaulted

by police, uncertainty about the future, repeated periods of detention, deportation and deportability, and other events that previous chapters have shown are common for those living in Dankix. In order to cope with these stressful challenges, the body goes through a process called allostasis in which it activates certain neural mechanisms to adapt to and overcome life-threatening situations (McEwen, 2006). If allostasis is overstimulated over long periods it leads to increased allostatic load, which in turn can result in disease of the cardiovascular, immune, and central nervous systems, as well as abnormal brain function, manifesting in memory impairment and cognitive decline (*ibid.*; George, et al., 2012). The relationship between illegalisation, increased allostatic load, and consequent adverse health outcomes is well-documented in the literature on the North American context (McGuire and Georges, 2003; Valentín-Cortés, et al., 2020). It has been demonstrated that restrictive and xenophobic immigration policies directly lead to disproportionately poor health outcomes for migrants (Malmusi, 2015; Martinez, et al., 2015; Torres, et al., 2018; Vargas, et al., 2017).

Addiction is also an allostatic mechanism whereby stress has an impact on all stages of the addiction cycle (intoxication, withdrawal, and anticipation) and induces allostatic load, further increasing the chances for substance use to transition into pathological addiction (George, et al., 2012; Koob and Schulkin, 2019). Those who are more prone to increased allostatic load are therefore more likely to experience addiction. Substance use is prevalent in Dankix, as has been alluded to at various points throughout this thesis (including in the case of Aso, who we see in Chapter Three is paid in alcohol and drugs for his work in Karzan's café). While it is beyond the scope of my research to determine whether kochberan develop addiction disproportionately, it plays a significant role in the lives of some research participants. For instance, the vignette below featuring Shahin and Jamshid shows how the disease of addiction is worsened by living conditions in Dankix. It explores the relationship between addiction and the affective economy produced by the deaths of Rebin and Hemn.¹⁰⁹

“Victoria, we need to go, Jamshid just fell off a lorry and was taken by ambulance. I don't know where he is, we need to find him.”

¹⁰⁹ Rebin's and Hemn's deaths are first discussed in the Introduction.

I had been standing on Saheka, watching dozens of kochberan climb the hill from Jangaleka onto the A16 motorway. Traffic that began thirty kilometres down the road in Calais had caused the motorway to back up, and cars and lorries alike were moving only at a crawl. Whenever this happens, kochberan take advantage of the vehicles' slow speed and jump onto lorries from the side of the road. I had been making bets with a few men about how many minutes it would take for the police to arrive and disperse everyone with teargas when Jamshid's friend, Shahin, ran up to me and told me that Jamshid had fallen. Shahin's words fill me with dread. Only a few days before, Rebin's and Hemn's bodies had been found on a beach in Le Touquet. I hide my fear from Shahin and call Dunkirk Hospital.

The emergency room staff tell me that nobody matching Jamshid's description – a twenty-nine-year-old Kurdish male – had been admitted. I wonder if perhaps he was taken to the polyclinic in Grande-Synthe instead.

Shahin is shaking, and tears begin to stream down his face, "Please, let's just go. We can't wait for them on the phone."

We get into my car and drive to the polyclinic, which is only five minutes away, but the administrative staff say that no migrant had been brought in by ambulance. "I really am sorry," one of the staff members says, "Maybe try Dunkirk again?"

We drive to Dunkirk Hospital. As we arrive, an ambulance passes us with their lights on.

"That's the one!" Shahin exclaims, pointing, "When they took him it had all those markings on the back." The back of the ambulance is adorned with white paint. The most prominent drawing is a target, and the words "EN GRÈVE" [on strike]. The local emergency medical services had joined the national strike.

I pull into the visitors' parking bay at the emergency room, and Shahin jumps out of the car, running towards the ambulance that had passed us on the road. When the paramedics open the ambulance doors, he pushes past them and climbs inside, ignoring the paramedics' shouts to stay away. He sees Jamshid – who is unconscious – and begins crying as he holds him and kisses his face. The paramedics convince him to let go and give him Jamshid's belongings: a coat, a mobile phone, and some money. They rush Jamshid into the emergency room on a stretcher, where he disappears behind double doors upon which is written "réservé au S.M.U.R." [reserved for the mobile emergency and resuscitation service].

We sit outside the double doors and wait. Most of the others in the waiting room ignore us, but some glance at us repeatedly and hold scarves or coats over their noses and mouths. A couple stares at us disapprovingly.

After an hour, a nurse approaches us, "You came with the migrant?"

"Yes."

"We need some more information, what happened? How old is he? Where is he from?"

[Shahin speaks to her through me, as I translate from Kurdish to French] "He's from Iran, he has no family here, he's twenty-nine—"

"What happened?" she interjects.

"He fell off the top of a lorry. It was moving fast. After he hit the ground, he was run over by a car."

The nurse gasps quietly. "Okay," she responds, "He has a leg fracture, but –"

"He's alive?" I interrupt.

“Yes. But stay here; if we need translation we’ll call you in.”

Shahin and I smoke cigarettes in the parking bay outside. “I regret coming here [to Europe],” he says, “In Rojhelat [Eastern Kurdistan, or the part of Kurdistan controlled by Iran] we had a good life. Money’s not everything, you know. There’s no life here. What kind of life is this?”

We hear a loud noise, similar to that of a street-cleaning truck. But rather than pass it only increases in volume over the course of several minutes. The wind picks up violently around us, and soon the cigarettes and ash from the ashtray are whipped up into the air. A white helicopter slowly passes over us. It must have just taken off from the roof. I worry that Jamshid is being transferred to Lille. Before Wlat¹¹⁰ was induced into a coma he was transferred by helicopter to Lille because it has a larger intensive care unit. I do not share this fear with Shahin.

Another hour passes before the nurse approaches us once more.

“He’s fine. We’ll discharge him in two weeks, and you can come see him tomorrow.” She pauses before continuing, “He was drunk.”

The following day we visit him in his hospital bed. His nose is broken, his shin is split open, and he has an operation scheduled for his leg later this evening. Shahin and the rest of his friends berate him: “It was your own fault; you shouldn’t have been drinking so much.”

Jamshid retorts, “We were all drinking!”

“Well, not as much as you always do,” Shahin responds.

¹¹⁰ For the context and circumstances surrounding Wlat’s death, see the Introduction.

“Whatever man, did you see the news? Almost fifty people suffocated in a lorry today.¹¹¹ The driver found their bodies when they got to the UK. I drink or I don’t drink, I’ll die either way.”

Shahin later told me that Jamshid had been drinking since the time he woke up at midday through the afternoon. When they saw the motorway was backed up with traffic, they climbed up the grassy hill and began hopping lorries. Shahin watched him fall from the lorry and believes that were he sober he would have been able to catch himself. When he fell, he seemed to fall backwards very slowly and stiffly “like a doll,” Shahin later told me. Yet, Jamshid argues that the border itself is deadly, rather than his behaviour.

At certain times in Dankix, death feels closer. That particular week it felt inescapable. Rebin and Hemn had drowned mere days earlier, and consequently many in Dankix were coping with exceptionally traumatic grief. As a member of the community, I was also deeply affected by their death. During this time, my grief coloured my perception of risk. While omitted from the above vignette, as Shahin and I searched for Jamshid, images of Rebin’s and Hemn’s bodies – photos of which were shown to me by police only two days before – flooded my mind and almost blinded me. The smell of Wlat’s body on his deathbed filled my nostrils. I vomited several times in the restroom in the hospital waiting room, but the smell and images lingered and only increased in intensity as we waited for news of whether Jamshid was alive. The day after Jamshid fell, thirty-nine migrants were found dead in a lorry. Before it was announced that the victims were Vietnamese, Frishta, who is introduced in Chapter Two, showed me the news that morning and said:

What if they’re Kurdish? What if these are people that live here with us? I can’t handle that many of us dying. I can’t handle Rebin and Hemn, and they’re only two people. I can’t handle more death.

Frishta’s words, alongside those of Jamshid above and the sensorial flashbacks I experienced in the hospital, are indicative of an affective economy that is catalysed

¹¹¹ Jamshid is referring to the Essex lorry deaths that had occurred earlier that day, on 23 October 2019. Thirty-nine migrants suffocated in a lorry as they crossed the border into the UK.

by death in the community. As is outlined in the Introduction and developed in Chapter Four, examining affect as an economy enables us to see the way that it circulates and is exchanged within communities to better understand what affect does (Ahmed, 2004). More specifically, it helps us to understand the role of emotions and pre-conscious reactions in aligning subjects to other people and places. The affective economy of death in Dankix is distinct because the risky behaviour that resulted in the deaths of Wlat, Rebin, Hemn, and the thirty-nine Essex lorry migrants is practiced by all kochberan on a regular basis. Since Wlat died when he fell from a lorry, my body reacted to Jamshid's accident as if he, too, had died. I include my own experience of that feeling here because Shahin does not explicitly reveal in the vignette above whether he feels the same way. Only days later did he admit to me that he, too, was comparing Jamshid's fall to that of Wlat while we were in Dunkirk Hospital. Fear drove his thoughts and behaviour, as it did my own, until we were both certain Jamshid had lived.

The affective economy that is generated in the wake of death in the community is marked by fear, trauma, and acute feelings of insecurity. Significantly, the force of these sensations is not contained within ourselves. These affects are transmitted between those in Dankix, sticking to Frishta, Jamshid, Shahin, and me and binding us together to varying extents and with differing degrees of consequence (Ahmed, 2004; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010). In the wake of death, we begin to respond to the present reality through our perception of an impending future. In his discussion of affect and threat, Brian Massumi puts it this way:

Imagine a waker hearing a sudden and loud alarm and therewith falling forward back into a world where the present is a foreshadow cast retrospectively by the future, where the present's becoming is the backcast dream of a future's will have been (2010: 65).

In the affective economy of death, time changes shape and form. The future and present and past become affectively entangled with one another, boundless. Ultimately, this affective economy brings death closer. Death no longer feels a possibility, but an inevitability.

Jamshid explains that when death feels so close – when it becomes tangible and seemingly unavoidable – drinking makes no difference to him as he will “die

either way.” Jamshid’s fatalism is common among my research participants. Some use substances only while on *derchwn* (or the practicalities involved in crossing to the UK) to numb feelings of fear and anxiety, as well as to alleviate the cold and the boredom of waiting in a lorry for days on end. Others, however, binge repeatedly in their tents or at the smugglers’ cafés. The affective economy of death, which itself both evidences and produces allostatic load, exacerbates addiction among kochberan who use substances to cope with the fear of death during *derchwn*. While the risks involved in crossing are often experienced as latent, they occasionally crystallise and become acute when there is death in the community, as was the case that week in October. For Jamshid, the perception that death is an inevitable part of his journey to the UK because the border is intrinsically deadly leads to his perception that his actions have little consequence. In a comparison of risk, feeling as if one is always one misstep from death makes heavy drinking seem trivial. Alongside trench foot, tuberculosis, and other common diseases caused or exacerbated by living conditions in Dankix, addiction can therefore be understood as another pathological embodiment of violence.

Conclusion

The vignettes above show us several ways in which violence is embodied by those living in Dankix. Kochberan feel “ill, itchy, and smelly” as Rekar puts it, and identify their illegalisation as the cause of these sensations. As Shahin and I wait in Dunkirk Hospital, others communicate their disgust by covering their noses, grimacing, and moving away from where we are sitting. This recalls Karwan’s assertions: that he is identifiable by an odour that marks him as a street homeless, undocumented, illegalised migrant. Due to neglect on behalf of some of those charged with the care of kochberan – such as the social worker in the accommodation centre – Rozhin walks for several kilometres, alone, while eight months’ pregnant, causing her a considerable amount of pain and distress. Frequent substance use and addiction are common means by which to navigate the affective economy of death. Living conditions cause painful diseases such as trench foot, and then constrain the ability to heal.

Encounters with medical staff indicate that some locate the reason for pain and the need for care as ensuing from the decisions of kochberan themselves. As was outlined above, kochberan are legally entitled to healthcare, and la PASS is framed not as a humanitarian effort, but as a programme facilitating the recognition of an inalienable right. Healthcare is often discussed in such terms, in both scholarship and public discourse (Marshall, 2020; Sargent, 2012). And yet, there are “situationally specific, vernacular *moral* arguments about deservingness” that medical staff employ when making decisions about which kochberan they admit as patients, and which they turn away (Willen, 2012: 812, emphasis in original). While all are ‘entitled’ to healthcare, not all ‘deserve’ it.

On several occasions throughout this chapter, the issue of payment and lack of health insurance has been raised. For instance, the member of staff with whom I attempt to reschedule Rozhin’s appointment makes it clear that because Rozhin relies on state-funded healthcare but makes no effort to legalise her presence in France, she does not deserve the same quality of care as others. It goes without saying that this is not a universal assumption among medical staff, to which Rekar’s experience attests. Indeed, Rozhin’s situation demonstrates the ways in which responsibility for providing access to care is distributed and does not rely solely on administrative and clinical staff. La PASS, as a gateway to medico-social care for all regardless of circumstance or ability to pay, helps kochberan to alleviate some of the physical manifestations of their embodiment of structural violence. And yet, many still perceive themselves as being denied access to healthcare. This perception stems from navigating the bureaucracy of the healthcare system, as we see with Rozhin above. Practically, Rozhin *is* denied medical care, as she is not provided with the information that she needs to gain access to the system designed for her, and the actors involved in her provision of care are not in communication with one another and cannot, therefore, find a resolution.

My aim is not to argue that the actors involved in the medical encounter – including healthcare professionals, administrative staff, non-profit workers, and accommodation centre social workers – deny kochberan medical care because they are illegalised. Instead, I argue that moral arguments about deservingness and belonging – who should be in France and who should not – are *expressed* during the medical encounter, illuminating structures of violence and bureaucracy that restrict access to medical care. The vignettes included above take place at a time of severe

austerity and increased precarity among medical staff, which is generative of a discourse that revolves around funding and scarcity. As was mentioned above, even the 2019 petition circulated by Inter-Urgences states that “the provision of healthcare related to social policies amplifies these difficulties” (Inter-Urgences, 2019, translation mine). Rekar makes a similar argument, constructing kochberan as scroungers who “go from country to country and take things and make a mess and don’t give anything back.” This discursive economy, itself an extension of the symbolic violence and internalisation identified in Chapter Four, indicates that the healthcare system is understood as a symbol of the nation itself (Marshall, 2020). Illegalised bodies in need of care are perceived as taking up the beds of the morally deserving bodies who contribute to and reap the benefits of the state through their citizenship. The migrant body in need of care is politicised by Rekar here, and by others involved in the medical encounter, as a site for the production and maintenance of the state’s power to exclude. Medical encounters mobilise discourses of deservingness, belonging, and care that ultimately reinforce boundaries and normalise the illegalisation of kochberan.

This illegalisation is, as we have seen expressed throughout this chapter, consequently embodied both sensorially and affectively. The principle of allostatic load provides an explanatory framework that helps us to comprehend the far-reaching physical manifestations of violence as located in and on the body. While this chapter has dealt with disease, dirt, pain, and has introduced one of the affective dimensions of a death in the community, the following chapter examines death directly. It builds upon the issues outlined above to identify border deaths as a fundamental mechanism of migration management and border control. Death lies at the far end of the same continuum along which exists the embodiment of illegalisation (this chapter), detention and detainability (Chapter Four), denial of resources (Chapter Three), and conditional models of resource management (Chapter Two).

CHAPTER SIX | After Death

My heart is heavy because I am crying and listening to a Mour sung for my best friend, sung in a prison on the remotest island in the world. I never thought I would hear Mour sung for the bravest of Kurdish sons out on a remote island, out in the middle of a massive, silent ocean. I always think about the Mour my mother will chant for me when I die. I thought that song would be sung for me in beautiful Kurdistan. I am sure Reza and Fazel¹¹² had this thought just like me, but their lives were taken in a remote place, not in Kurdistan. They lost their lives because of injustice. They lost their lives in a foreign land. Who was there when their lives were taken? My mother, Reza's mother, and Fazel's mother, all together, all mourning, all chanting, the deepest Mour.

- Excerpt from *Our Mothers, a poem for Reza*, Behrouz Boochani (2018a)

Undocumented migration is widely understood to be a social process whereby people who cross borders do so by drawing upon a well of human and social capital. Members of communities with cultures of migration – as is the case in Kurdistan - are “[socialised] into the rules of undocumented border crossing” before even beginning their journeys (Singer and Massey, 1998: 562). Jason De León argues that at the end of this social process is necroviolence, or violence enacted upon corpses through certain ways of treating them (2015). De León develops the notion of necroviolence in the context of the United States-Mexico border, wherein migrants' dead bodies are left to decompose or be destroyed by vultures in the desert. Human remains left in the desert are “a logical extension of a political process” and represent the final stage of US deterrence policy (*ibid.*: 84).

This final stage of deterrence policy is founded upon necropolitics, or a strategy of governance through exposure to death (Mbembe, 2019). Drawing from

¹¹² Fazel Chegeni was found dead after escaping a detention centre on Christmas Island, and Reza Barati was murdered by two Manusian guards and two Australian officers working in Manus Prison, where Reza was detained at the time.

and developing Foucauldian notions of biopower and Giorgio Agamben's state of exception, Achille Mbembe argues that "[t]he ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (2003: 11; see Agamben, 1998). The ability to make or let die is not only exemplified by cases of direct execution, such as, for instance, with Reza Barati, a kochber detained in Manus Prison who died after being assaulted by Australian and Manusian guards; Anastasio Hernández Rojas, a Mexican migrant who was poisoned and beaten to death by US border agents; or Mawda, a two-year old Kurdish girl in Dankix who was shot and killed by a Belgian police officer (ACLU, 2016; Boochani, 2018b; Justice Pour Mawda, 2021). Making and letting die is also exercised indirectly through 'deterrents,' such as suspending or withdrawing all legal migration routes and increasing securitisation and infrastructure that creates bottlenecks at the border (Andersson, 2014). Sometimes referred to as the 'funnel effect,' this strategy of deterrence forces migrants into the open ocean (in Australia), the desert (in the US), and the Channel (in northern France) (Chambers, et al., 2021). By placing migrants – through deterrence policy – in these unforgiving and dangerous environments, the state exposes them to death while displacing responsibility for ensuing loss of life onto smugglers or those migrating themselves. Border deaths are, in turn, easily misrecognised (in the Bourdieusian sense of the term)¹¹³ as an inevitable risk taken when attempting to irregularly cross a border (Bourdieu, 2000). As De León puts it, "[n]ature 'civilizes' the way the government deals with migrants; it does the dirty work" (2015: 68).

During the time of my fieldwork, fifty-one people are reported to have died¹¹⁴ as they attempted to irregularly cross the border into the United Kingdom (Calais Migrant Solidarity, 2022). This chapter examines the aftermath of death in Dankix, focusing in particular on how death is operationalised as a means by which certain narratives are legitimised and others are undermined. Death, in this way, reveals social processes and relationships that are otherwise invisibilised, obscured from view. Immediately after death, smugglers and state actors scramble to manufacture and disseminate a narrative about that death that protects them and serves their

¹¹³ Refer to the Introduction and Chapters Two and Five for detailed outlines of Bourdieu's concept of misrecognition.

¹¹⁴ This figure excludes those deaths unnoticed and unrecorded by grassroots non-profit organisations, state officials, and the European media.

aims. Friends of the dead must do the work of family: identify bodies, organise memorials, and complete paperwork. Families of the dead mourn for months on end, a process made more painful and acute by the absence of the body. At times, when repatriation is stalled by bureaucratic identification measures, bodies decompose until they are unrecognisable upon their return. Before examining death from these various points of view, I open with a vignette that introduces the competing narratives that emerge from disappearance and death. I juxtapose short snapshots from a period in which a woman named Nima disappeared after falling from a dinghy in the Channel to emphasise both how these narratives circulate and their impact in Dankix. The sources of the news reports included here have been omitted and their wording changed, while maintaining their original content and connotations, in order to protect Nima's anonymity.

Competing narratives

UK digital news report:

The search has been called off for a migrant who is understood to have fallen from a dinghy twenty-one miles from the Kent coast. Three people wearing life vests were reported missing, and two were later found.

Lifeboats from Ramsgate and Dover and Coastguard helicopters were used in the search. It was called off at 11 am on Thursday – just over twenty-four hours after authorities were first alerted. A spokesman for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) said: “The search for a missing person in the Channel has ended as we await further information. A systematic search by air and sea was completed, involving coastguards on the British, French, and Belgian sides, but nothing was found.”

Freight and passenger ships in the Channel have been asked to remain alert. The search mission was continued at dawn, before it ended again after several hours.

During the incident, it is understood that seventeen people from Iraq and Iran, including six children, were rescued. They were brought to the Dover Marina by Border Force and Kent Police.

Home Office spokesperson:

Our thoughts are with the loved ones of this woman at this tragic and horrible time. We will continue to work with other organisations as we continue to investigate this incident.

Crossing the Channel in an overcrowded boat is an enormous risk. We want to crack down on the ruthless criminal gangs who perpetuate this. They are callous and do not care about loss of life.

We thank all the agencies and organisations, including the Coastguard and RNLI, who coordinated the rescue attempt.

Excerpt from a conversation with Shkar and Bryar:

Bryar: "Nima couldn't have died on that boat. Those two men who claim to have seen her are lying [referencing the two men on the dinghy who alerted the British authorities to Nima's fall]. They said there were three of them on that dinghy [according to rumours in Dankix] but that's not how it works. It needs to be at least ten people to maintain the right weight, otherwise it capsizes. Since last week nobody has tried crossing by dinghy."

Victoria: "What if they bought their own boat and tried?"

Shkar: "The smugglers would know. They didn't buy their own boat."

Victoria: "But look at this photo [I show them a photograph from an online news article about Nima's disappearance showing the dinghy from which she fell]."

Shkar: “That’s obviously not their dinghy. It has two Jerry cans, and that type of motor only needs one. The journalist is lying.”

Bryar: “I agree.”

Shkar: “The two men probably crossed, and that woman is somewhere in France. Or they did something to her, they raped her or killed her, and they’re using this story to cover it up.”

Victoria: “But this article says that the men were arrested in the water on the British side, and the police went on a huge search mission for over twenty-four hours—”

Bryar: “So? The men could be lying, the journalist could be lying.”

Shkar: “Look, go to Karzan’s café¹¹⁵ tomorrow. Ask everyone there what happened. Everyone will say the same thing. Nima did not die. And if she did, it’s because those men who claim to have been on the dinghy with her killed her and left her body in France.”

Field notes:

One of the security guards at Kampeka¹¹⁶ calls me over, “[In French] Hey! I haven’t seen you in a while. How are you?” We make small talk, and just before I need to leave, he tells me, “By the way, just so you know, Nima is dead. Start spreading the word amongst the guys.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Karzan’s café, featured in Chapter Three, is a makeshift structure built by alleged smugglers in the middle of the tent settlement. Karzan sells food, tea and shisha, and is also said to conduct smuggling business from his café.

¹¹⁶ The security guards working at Kampeka are employed by a company contracted by city hall. The company usually provides security for public events in Grande-Synthe, such as outdoor concerts or festivals.

¹¹⁷ I was often approached to spread information because I speak Kurdish. Most security guards at the time spoke French and Arabic.

“How do you know?”

“I can’t tell you that. But she’s definitely dead.”

Field notes:

One of Nima’s friends, Abed, approaches me outside of Kampeka. He has a huge smile on his face.

“I wanted to give you an update,” he says, “A few friends of mine in the UK said that Nima’s alive! She’s in the hospital and has been there for a few days.”

“Really? How do they know?”

“I don’t know. I don’t have any more information than that.”

Kurdish diaspora Facebook page:

It can now be revealed that Nima, the Rojhelati [Kurd from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iran] woman missing from Dankix, was pushed into the water by another person on the boat. There is not much more information than this, so we will keep you updated as we uncover any new revelations.

Her family in Sine [a Kurdish city] are looking for her, may God look after her and save them from this terrible pain.

Field notes:

Most people quietly believe that Nima fell overboard and drowned. Yet, they do not openly discuss their beliefs. When we do discuss what happened, we do so in the privacy of my car or in hushed tones in a tent. Everyone is careful in considering with whom they speak about her.

Several people have told me to avoid the topic. Everybody knows with which smugglers she tried to cross, but they want to keep their knowledge secret.

Smugglers continue to deny that she boarded the dinghy in the first place. The security guards at the camp continue to spread rumours that she has died. Nima's friends are convinced that she is alive and recovering in a British hospital.

Excerpt of an interview with Banaz:

It's not just one woman [Nima] that's died here. When I told my family that I was coming here [to Dankix] they told me what it's like for women here. One thousand women have died here, not one. They say she fell from the dinghy, they say she was murdered in France, they say she's alive in the UK, they say this and that but does it matter? I don't trust any of them. The smugglers lie, and the security guards lie, and the government lies. What are we supposed to believe? Women have died in all of the ways that they are saying she might have died.

UK digital news report:

A body was recovered from Belgian waters, police said, that is presumed to be that of the missing migrant who fell from a boat while crossing the Channel. The woman is known to have fallen from a boat while attempting to cross the Channel a fortnight ago. Seventeen others onboard, who were from Iran and Iraq, were intercepted and rescued by immigration officers, the Home Office said at the time.

Previously listed as missing, Kent Police now believe the body found in Belgian waters is that of the missing woman.

It is unusual that British journalists were interested in Nima's disappearance and death. Border deaths are seldom reported in the media, but she was the first person

known to the British and French authorities ever to have died during a Channel boat crossing attempt. Her death occurred nearly a year after smugglers professionalised the water route, and at this point boat crossings were cheaper and more successful than lorry crossings. That month, nearly all kochberan who made it to the UK had done so via the Channel. Her disappearance worried smugglers – perhaps kochberan would lose faith in their services and choose lorry crossings, which had been made exceptionally difficult due to increased securitisation funded by a recent influx of British cash.¹¹⁸ Kochberan already know the risks involved in boat crossings. Most who cross by boat do so because the risk of drowning is minimal compared to the dangers of staying in Dankix for months, making dozens of unsuccessful attempts by lorry. Nima's death, however, made the risk of a boat crossing more tangible. Were kochberan to reassess the dangers of Channel crossings and choose to cross only by lorry, smugglers would be unable to guarantee swift passage and their business would suffer.

To mitigate this, Bryar and Shkar, along with most other alleged smugglers in Dankix at the time, argued that Nima had never boarded the dinghy in the first place. By the time of my conversation with them, very little information about the events surrounding her disappearance had circulated among Kurdish news outlets and social media networks. The narrative they construct, as is outlined above, reflects this. Smugglers postulated that the two men who had alerted British authorities to her disappearance had actually murdered Nima and left her body in France because it was impossible for a dinghy to cross the Channel with only three people aboard (though there was no explanation for how those two men had reached the UK). They used their professional knowledge and social capital to refute the story as a lie created through the collaboration of journalists and the state. This perception was reinforced by the Home Office's reaction: that her death was caused by the dangerous waters and the smugglers involved. Considering that journalists in the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq are often supported by the ruling political party (the Kurdistan Democratic Party), and many journalists who do not support the state are reportedly assassinated or are imprisoned, it is logical for kochberan to believe that British journalists publish narratives that support the British state's aims (see,

¹¹⁸ This recent commitment of British funds was agreed upon in the Sandhurst Treaty between Ireland, the UK, and France (2018).

e.g., Amnesty International, 2021a; CPT, 2021; Reporters Without Borders, 2019). Furthermore, when I counter that the group could have bought their own boat and attempted the crossing without smugglers, Bryar and Shkar construct smugglers as omniscient: “The smugglers would know.”¹¹⁹ Through this narrative, smugglers displace responsibility for Nima’s death from themselves, the state, or the water itself to the two men who alerted the British authorities of her disappearance.

As the days pass and more information is shared, however, the smugglers’ story becomes unbelievable to many of those living in Dankix. Information about the circumstances surrounding her disappearance filtered through English-language news sites, Kurdish diaspora pages on social media, and through word of mouth convinces most kochberan that Nima did indeed fall during a crossing attempt. Yet, each of these outlets disseminates different and often contradictory information, including the number of passengers on the dinghy, where they were found, and their nationalities and other demographic details. Further, the security guards and some of Abed’s acquaintances in the UK stake conflicting claims to knowledge that are incongruent with the already circulating stories espoused by smugglers and the Home Office.

As the excerpt from Banaz’s interview demonstrates, these competing and confusing narratives mean that many kochberan do not know what to believe. They sow fear, uncertainty, and mistrust within the community that leads to many, including Banaz, feeling as if they cannot trust those around them, that they are acutely insecure, and that they have little agency. As Banaz, who is a young, unmarried woman travelling alone, states, “Women have died in all of the ways that they are saying [Nima] might have died.” The different stories espoused by various actors are not implausible; they are powerful precisely because they have all happened to women in Dankix in the past. Banaz is overwhelmed by the reshaping and retelling of Nima’s story. As a result, she is afraid both of those around her, and of herself disappearing as did Nima. Fear and mistrust circulate through the community and create fissures within it. After several days, when more information about Nima’s death becomes common knowledge, most people come to believe that Nima had fallen overboard and drowned. As I attempt to discuss her disappearance

¹¹⁹ The perceived omniscience of smugglers – that smuggling groups have ‘eyes and ears everywhere,’ so to speak – is a common mechanism by which smugglers protect their identities.

with Kochberan, I am warned to stay away from the topic by some while others refuse to speak until we are safely out of earshot from passers-by in Jangaleka and Kampeka. Fear spreads among those living in Dankix – about what fate had befallen Nima, certainly, but also about presenting themselves as *not* knowing which smugglers organised her crossing. To present oneself as knowledgeable is to make oneself a target for that particular smuggling group, who are invested in withholding their identities from the police and border agents.

As has been demonstrated throughout previous chapters, the structural violence that shapes everyday life in Dankix is a logic performed and reinforced by the seemingly small, soft, and symbolic but obscure unequal relations of power. In the context of the competing narratives described above, this can lead to what Michael Taussig refers to as “epistemic murk and the fiction of the real” (1987: xiii). Epistemic murk is produced by fictitious realities or magical realisms made powerful “in the coils of rumour, gossip, story, and chit-chat” and sustain “cultures of terror” which enable violence against a culturally constructed Other (Taussig, 1984: 464). These fictitious realities, or what I refer to as competing narratives, undermine the reality inhabited by the Other. To cite a well-known example, during Argentina’s Dirty War the military dictatorship disappeared (murdered) an estimated 30,000 people while publicly declaring that they were struggling against subversion. The state’s official narrative was that many of those disappeared had in fact died in combat due to their involvement in guerrilla warfare (Burchianti, 2004). Through an examination of military documents and reports, in addition to interviews with key actors of the time, Antonius Robben shows that those involved in the dictatorship discursively reproduced the perception that those targeted for disappearance and assassination had irreconcilably different values and morality systems to those of wider Argentine society (2014). This narrative exemplifies Taussig’s notion of a ‘fictitious reality’ that operates within and produces ‘spaces of death’ (1984). Stories of subversion created a culture of terror that compelled members of the military to ‘extirpate all evil,’ in the words of one General (*ibid.*: 149). This culture of terror, operating within a space of death or killing field, spread throughout Argentina, whereby “[n]obody was beyond suspicion, and life could not be taken for granted because the boundaries with death were permeable political constructions” (*ibid.*: 148).

In Dankix, upon Nima’s disappearance, stories that guess her fate circulate in hushed tones, in rumours of unknown origin, and by those with varying degrees of

power. To those in Dankix, Nima is not alive but not yet dead. Instead, she occupies a space of non-life until she reappears in the form of human remains. As Robben puts it, the permeability of the boundary between life and death is thrown into sharp relief by her disappearance, and terror arises from the perception of one's own closeness to death (2014). Banaz, as she alludes to above, is afraid both of those around her, and of becoming Nima – her anxiety stems from the threat of her own disappearance.

Disappearance, operationalized as a 'threat' to those close to the disappeared, can be conceptualized as an *extended* disappearance (Perl and Huttunen, forthcoming). Nima's disappearance generates yet another affective economy, and her disappearance expands temporally and materially. As her story is repeated and rewritten through various narratives, she disappears again and again. Sometimes, she disappears after falling from a dinghy. At other times, she disappears when she is taken by two men. Others imagine what it would be like to themselves disappear in these same ways. Many do not have to stretch their imagination, because disappearance in Dankix is not an infrequent occurrence. In other contexts, many of those caught in extended disappearances are in danger of themselves being disappeared due to their close association and ties to the original disappeared person, particularly in situations where the state is the enforcer of the disappearance (Slyomovics, 2005; Robben, 2014). In Dankix, disappearance is somewhat slippery. Whoever is responsible for Nima vanishing is identified through these narratives as a multitude of actors, including the Channel, the state, smugglers and the blurry and frightening spectre of unknown men. Responsibility for her disappearance is passed between these groups with each new narrative that emerges, from which is produced an epistemic murk that renders unknowable what happened to Nima. The result is a terror that paralyses the entire community, because everyone living in Dankix has been rendered 'disappearable' by the necropolitical logic of border control, and anyone, therefore, can disappear or die (Laakkonen, forthcoming).

As is shown above through the series of short vignettes about Nima's disappearance, kochberan are faced with the decision to risk abrupt death through crossing attempts, or to remain in Dankix and continue to face the slow violence of street homelessness, detention, and exploitation that has been illustrated by previous chapters. Both Dankix and the Channel can therefore be conceptualised as

spaces of death, rendered so through the fictitious realities that characterise crossing attempts as pure choices, free from the coercive power and ramifications of policy. In order to demonstrate what happens when kochberan challenge these fictitious realities, I turn to an instance in which Home Office officials travelled to Dankix and attempted to present them directly to kochberan. The conversations that occurred between members of these two groups illuminate the fictitious nature of the ‘reality’ constructed by state officials in the wake of a border death, and further reinforces the assertion that Dankix constitutes a space of death.

Spaces of death

Amidst the competing narratives disseminated by smugglers, security guards, and Nima’s friends, one of these such fictions persists before and after her disappearance. It is summarised by the Home Office spokesperson quoted above: “Crossing the Channel in an overcrowded boat is an enormous risk. We want to crack down on the ruthless criminal gangs who perpetuate this.” This statement, a common response of the Home Office in the wake of a border death, reinforces a narrative that blames the dead for their seemingly risky practices, and constructs smugglers as their heartless ferrymen. It leaves no room to question why the dead chose to make such a ‘huge risk’ in the first place, and indeed why the only way to seek asylum in the UK is by putting one’s life in the hands of ‘criminal gangs.’ As De León points out, the state is using nature – the Channel’s rough waters – to do the dirty work of necropolitics.

This fictitious reality is peddled by Home Office officials during press conferences, statements to the House of Commons, and public speeches. The wording and message rarely vary, with most characterising Channel crossings as “dangerous” (Johnson, 2020) and a “huge risk” (UK Home Office, 2019). Deaths are blamed on “ruthless criminals” (UK Home Office, Patel, and Philp, 2020) who “make money from exploiting migrants who are desperate to come” (Philp, 2020) to the UK. After Nima’s death, Home Office agents travelled to Dankix and attempted to dissuade kochberan from crossing by boat. The following vignette outlines what occurred during this visit.

The tent area behind Kampeka is packed with people. Four PAF (Police aux Frontières or French border police) officers stand along the pavement, facing the gymnasium and the crowd. Everyone in the crowd is facing one direction, looking at something or someone, and people are stacked so far back it is reminiscent of a crowd at a concert. I assume it is a fight, or that the PAF have arrived to arrest a smuggler.

After shouldering my way through the crowd, it becomes clear that there are a dozen uniformed Home Office agents dispersed throughout the tent area. It is jarring to see their uniform here, in Dankix. In France, uniformed Home Office agents are only ever seen in their small cubicles at border points, checking the passports and visas of travellers to the UK.

Groups of fifteen or twenty men surround each official. The first group I approach is speaking with the official through a Home Office translator, however it seems that there are not enough translators present, as most other groups are translating via kochberan who speak some English.

I join the circle surrounding one of the officials. She says that she is here to answer kochberan's questions, and that the Home Office's aim is to ensure that kochberan are not wasting their money and risking their lives to get to the UK because they will likely be sent back. She says attempting to cross the Channel by boat is "suicide." A man responds, angrily, "No, it is murder."

I move on, inwards towards the basketball court behind the gymnasium, and join another conversation. A man who had, last year, reached the UK with his wife and child but was recently deported to Italy approaches me and asks me to translate for him. I explain his situation to a Home Office official, a middle-aged bald man with a cheery disposition. The official says that he and his family were sent back because they had Eurodac fingerprints in Italy, and because they had travelled 'illegally' to the UK by boat.

After hearing my translation, several men groan in exasperation and shout "So the lorry is legal, and the boat is illegal?"

“No,” his voice falters and he hesitates, “Both are illegal, and the only legal route is family reunification¹²⁰ because everyone is supposed to claim asylum in the first country of entry. And clearly, the UK is not the first country you’ve been to in Europe.”

The man who had recently been deported to Italy rolls his eyes: “Oh, great, they’ve come to lie to us.” He walks away.

Another man approaches us and speaks, through my translation: “I arrived in the UK three months ago by boat and was immediately detained and sent to Brook House.¹²¹ I was kept there for two months, and then was deported to France. I don’t have any fingerprints in any European country. Why was I deported?”

“You crossed to the UK illegally. Boat crossings are ill-e-gal.” He emphasises the word by drawing out each syllable, “Anyone who crosses illegally will be sent back. If you have fingerprints, you will also be sent back. If you don’t have fingerprints and we know you came from France, you will be sent back to France.”

“So, you’re saying everyone should just come by lorry then.”

“No,” this time he seems more confident in his response, “You should claim asylum in the first country of entry and the only people who should be coming to the UK are those doing so via family reunification procedures.”

Another man counters: “But those procedures are too restrictive. Unless you’re under eighteen, they only allow you to join your spouse or child. I have over a dozen cousins in the UK. And even more aunts and uncles.”

¹²⁰ The family reunification route has since been closed by the Home Office. There are now no ‘legal’ routes to asylum except for limited resettlement directly from certain countries of origin.

¹²¹ Brook House is an Immigration Removal Centre (detention and deportation centre) near Gatwick Airport outside of London.

The official shrugged: “This is why we’re here. MPs [Members of Parliament] sent us here to get more information on what’s not working.”

A man, with his infant son in his arms, says, “I’ve been through Romania, Serbia, France...none of these are safe countries. I’ve been beaten by police, and the people I’m running from in Kurdistan have followed me to camps here, in Greece and in Italy. I need to get to the UK because it’s not in the Schengen zone so it’s harder for them to follow me. Besides, here for asylum seekers there’s no support. In France people are often not given housing for months, or their weekly allowance. People who claim asylum here are forced to keep living in Jangaleka. What’s ‘safe’ about that?”

“Look, the Common European Asylum System considers all European countries to be safe [as is explained in the Introduction]. This is why you need to claim in the first country of entry. We could talk about Brexit but I’m not going to,” he chuckles. “For now, we’re still in Europe and are still abiding by the Dublin Regulation.”¹²²

The men in the circle then give several examples of people in Dankix who have claimed asylum in France but have been given nothing thus far. Some have not been allocated housing, others have no financial or social support.

“Well, OFII [the French Government’s department that deals with asylum] was supposed to be here but they’re not. I don’t know how to respond; I only know the British system.”

“You can’t tell us to claim asylum here if you don’t know what it means to actually do that.”

The official shrugs again.

¹²² Now that the UK is no longer a member of the European Union and no longer abides by the Dublin III Regulation, the Home Office continues to assert that asylum seekers should claim asylum on mainland Europe.

One of the men asks, “I have two refusals on my asylum application in France. Where should I go? What should I do?”

“OFII should be helping you.”

“I went to see them. They said they can’t help.”

“Well, this is, again, why we’re here. MPs sent us to understand what’s not working and to figure out why people aren’t claiming asylum in France.”

Another man, who had been standing in the background, steps forward, “You should be grateful that we even want to go to your country. The UK destroyed Iraq, from Sykes-Picot¹²³ onwards. The UK has a responsibility to help people coming now.”

The official nods, “This, again, is why we’re here. To understand.” But he does not write anything down.

A woman with bleached-blond hair who is not in uniform approaches us and says to the official that they need to leave. She speaks as if she is in charge. I later learn that gunshots were fired in Jangaleka during a fight and assume this is the reason for their sudden exit.

By the time of writing, over two years have passed since the Home Office’s visit to Dankix. Since then, deaths in the Channel have been used as a catalyst for the introduction of deeply restrictive asylum policies. In presenting to the House of Commons the post-Brexit New Plan for Immigration, Home Secretary Priti Patel characterised the UK’s current asylum system as “broken” and:

¹²³ The Sykes-Picot Agreement is a 1916 treaty between the UK and France that led to the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent French and British occupation of territories including Iraq. Stipulations in the agreement frustrated Kurdish leaders’ attempts at establishing an independent Kurdish state. For the agreement’s wider historical context, see Appendix A.

...results in the tragic loss of life. A family of five drowned on their way to this country – our country – only last year; in 2019, thirty-nine victims were found dead in Purfleet in the back of a refrigerated lorry. That is inhumane [...] I will not apologise for being abundantly clear that an illegal journey to the UK is not worth the risk. That is what this plan is about: tackling illegal migration, protecting lives, and, of course, alongside that creating new routes (Patel, P., 2021b).

The introduction of restrictive immigration policies under the guise of ‘protecting lives’ is not new. Despite its prohibition under the Geneva Convention, the Australian government practices non-refoulement by pushing back migrant boats. They justify this policy, enforced through Operation Sovereign Borders, by illegalising asylum seekers who arrive by boat and by claiming to ‘save lives at sea.’ Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency that operates in the Mediterranean, is also accused of conducting boat pushbacks, and similarly claims to ‘save lives at sea’ (Fallon, 2020). While Patel claims that her post-Brexit plan for immigration will create new routes to asylum, the Nationality and Borders Bill¹²⁴ does not create viable routes to asylum for those in Dankix or similar informal camps. It proposes, instead, to limit asylum only to those who apply for resettlement directly from their countries of origin (Nationality and Borders Bill, 2021).

The Home Office has adopted this language as part of the fictitious reality they have curated about why people are dying in the Channel. There are four key legal and political claims that are useful to analyse here. (1) Home Office officials have repeatedly stated that migrants who seek asylum, such as Nima, come to the UK illegally. Yet, according to Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which the UK is a signatory, those eventually granted refugee status cannot be considered illegal entrants and cannot be prosecuted as such.¹²⁵ Further, British asylum policy has made it virtually impossible for people to seek asylum by any other means than through irregular entry. A ruling in December 2021 exemplifies this: several migrants

¹²⁴ As mentioned in the Introduction, the Nationality and Borders Bill is (at the time of writing) being considered in the House of Commons. The Bill forms the UK’s post-Brexit immigration system. The Conclusion considers the Bill in detail.

¹²⁵ The Nationality and Borders Bill severely curtails the protection offered under Article 31, and irregular entrants’ claims to asylum will be rendered inadmissible. For more information, see the Conclusion.

who arrived via the Channel were charged with and convicted for assisting illegal immigration to the UK because drone footage had shown their hands on the dinghies' motors (which, as is shown in Chapter Three, likely means that they traded their navigational abilities for cheaper or free passage). On appeal, a judge quashed their convictions on the basis that these men could not have been assisting illegal immigration, because no illegal immigration had taken place. The men and all other passengers had immediately claimed asylum, rendering their means of arrival completely licit (Dearden, 2021).

(2) Second, while the Home Office argues that migrants who travelled through France are ineligible for asylum in the UK, there is in fact no requirement for asylum seekers to claim asylum in the first 'safe' country of entry. For instance, as is noted in a Commons Briefing Paper on this subject, in the case of *R v Uxbridge Magistrates Court (ex parte Adimi)* (1999) Imm AR 560 it was held that "some element of choice is indeed open to refugees as to where they may properly claim asylum" (Gower and Sturge, 2020). This means, again, that people who are found to be refugees cannot be prosecuted for the means of their entry. It is therefore deceitful to claim that people who will seek asylum upon entry to the UK should not do so because they are entering illegally.

(3) Third, while the UK is no longer beholden to the Dublin III Regulation, it was still a member of the EU at the time and the stipulations of the Regulation must therefore be considered here. However, Dublin's provision that an asylum seeker should claim in the first EU country of entry was designed solely to determine in which country one's case should be processed and not whether their application is legitimate (Gower and Sturge, 2020). Crucially, it is within the asylum seeker's rights to claim asylum in the UK after having given Eurodac fingerprints in another EU country (*ibid*). Upon arrival in the UK, it is the responsibility of the Home Office and the EU country in question to collaboratively determine where the case for asylum will be considered, rather than the duty of the asylum seeker herself.

(4) Finally, as is clear from the vignette above, the concept of safety is deeply contested. Many of those who claim asylum in France are not immediately allocated housing nor provided financial support for basic needs including food and hygiene items. Consequently, some continue to live street homeless until they are adequately sheltered by the state. The men in the above vignette argue that, due to these example cases, they would not be safe were they to claim asylum in France.

The Home Office's claims concerning (1) legal and illegal means of entry, (2) claiming asylum in the first safe country of entry, (3) the Dublin III Regulation, and (4) notions of 'safety' undermine the lived reality of those in Dankix, as we see in the vignette above. Many of them cannot claim asylum in France for various reasons, are ineligible for family reunification (which since has been scrapped by the UK government) and had to quickly flee Kurdistan and therefore could not wait the months or years it takes to process an application for resettlement. If they do choose to attempt resettlement, they most likely must wait in a humanitarian or state-run refugee camp. In Dankix, Home Office officials spent much of their time attempting to dissuade migrants from travelling by boat to the UK, for they risk their lives and would be sent back to France. While, indeed, several dozen kochberan were sent back in this way,¹²⁶ it was a small number (twenty-one people were sent back in 2019) and since leaving the European Union the UK no longer has recourse to deport migrants to EU countries (Taylor, 2020b).¹²⁷ Since this time, asylum seekers in the UK subject to removal to EU countries will remain in the UK indefinitely, and new arrivals with Eurodac fingerprints will not be subject to removal because the UK no longer has access to this database.

The Home Office has therefore created a fictitious reality in which boat crossings are illegal, migrants coming illegally will be sent back, and smugglers drive migrants into making risky journeys. Kochberan, who have first-hand experience of both the British and Common European asylum systems, know those statements to be untrue, as the above vignette demonstrates; boat crossings are legal for those seeking asylum, most migrants will not and cannot be sent back, and they are forced onto the Channel due to their illegalisation and lack of other viable, legal routes to the UK. The story of Rebin's death in October 2019 further exemplifies this:

Rebin has a mother with refugee status in the UK. He met with a non-profit organisation offering legal advice in France to discuss his options, as he believed he could legally join his mother and was willing to wait the six to nine months it normally takes to process the application. The legal advisors explained to him, however, that only children under the age of eighteen are

¹²⁶ They were sent back as part of Operation Sillath.

¹²⁷ This is accurate as of the time of writing in spring 2022.

eligible to join their parents, and that there was therefore no legal way for him to be reunited with his mother. Upon hearing this news, he decided to try crossing by dinghy. He had been in Dankix for seven months already, and border security had tightened so much in the past year that despite his continual attempts at a lorry crossing, he never made it across. During his first attempt at a boat crossing, he drowned.

The dangerous and rough waters of the Channel have been weaponised by the state, as the Sonoran Desert is in the United States (Boyce, et al., 2019). The epistemic murk that now engulfs the Channel is perhaps best summarised by the words of one of the Home Office agents in the vignette above, who characterises making the journey by boat as “suicide,” and is rebuffed by a kochber who counters that it is “murder.” While representatives of the state present Channel crossings as both illegal and a choice – and place responsibility for ensuing death upon smugglers and kochberan themselves – many kochberan perceive Dankix itself to be equally as harmful, traumatising, and deadly as the Channel waters. To kochberan, they are both spaces in which death is not only made possible, but inevitable.¹²⁸ As a result, knowledge about what happens to the dead and disappeared is denied through competing narratives that produce an opaque and oppressive epistemic murk. This murkiness has the effect of obscuring structures of violence and power, particularly those that produce the conditions in which kochberan are rendered disappearable and at risk of death in the first place. As occurs in the wake of Nima’s death, while epistemologies are made murky and knowledge is denied, one fact remains clear: that there is somebody to blame. Just as those responsible are identified, however, they seemingly vanish, leaving those who remain with only the acute awareness of the space of death in which they reside.

While the UK government operationalises border deaths to sustain a fictitious narrative about why kochberan are dying, I demonstrate below that the French government’s identification practices for human remains has the effect of immobilising kochberan in death. Bureaucratic procedures stall repatriations, leading the body to decompose until it is unrecognisable when it is returned to Kurdistan.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the consequences of this perception for substance use and addiction, see Jamshid’s section in Chapter Five.

The following vignette exemplifies this. It summarises the repatriation process of Hemn, who drowned alongside Rebin in the Channel in October 2019. I focus on the experiences of Hemn's family to demonstrate the effects of this immobilisation, as well as examining the ways in which their relationship to Hemn's repatriation was digitally mediated.

Immobilisation and digital mediation

Although their friends and family identified their bodies beyond any doubt, it took five months to repatriate Rebin's body, and ten for Hemn's. As soon as Rebin's mother arrived from the UK, we went to the morgue and she identified her son's body, while Aryos, who was a close friend of Hemn's, identified that of Hemn [as was discussed in Chapter Four]. The police commissioner explained to us, however, that they do not want to "send the wrong bodies to the wrong families" and the court in Dunkirk ordered that DNA testing confirm their identities. The commissioner said that DNA testing only really works with a mother and child, so they would have to send a DNA kit to Hemn's mother in Kurdistan. After several weeks without news, the commissioner then said that the Iraqi embassy in France warned that the postal system in Kurdistan is unreliable, so the commissioner instead sent a DNA kit to Hemn's brother in the UK [who is an asylum seeker without a travel document and could not come to France at the time of his brother's death]. This decision was made despite the commissioner's assertion that a familial link cannot be proven by DNA testing between siblings.

Hemn's brother completed the test and sent it back to the commissioner in France. After months of waiting, the results of both tests came in. Rebin's identity was confirmed, his body was released to his family, and we began the repatriation process. Yet for Hemn, the court in Dunkirk ruled that there was no evidence showing that it was indeed Hemn's brother who took the test. Perhaps, they argued, it was another man posing as his brother. He would have to travel to France to take the test at the police station.

This was, of course, impossible due to his migration status in the UK. Instead, the commissioner sent me the DNA kit, and I drove up to see Hemn's brother in the Midlands. I captured our movements on video from the moment we opened the DNA kit until it was in the postman's hands. I wrote a letter to the court attesting on my honour that it was Hemn's brother who took the test. Hemn's brother was exhausted and angry.

After several more months of waiting, through the first Covid-19 lockdown in spring 2020, the DNA kit had still not been processed. In response to a desperate letter I sent on behalf of the family to the attorney general of Dunkirk, the court decided to drop their requirement for DNA testing and allowed Hemn's body to be repatriated to his family in Kurdistan. By the time flights between France and Kurdistan resumed, Hemn's family had waited ten months. Their primary concern throughout these months was the state of his remains. Every few weeks his brothers called me from Kurdistan, distraught. They knew that as time passed, their brother's body decomposed further and further. By the time the body was repatriated, Hemn was unrecognisable. For ten months, his family was in mourning as they awaited the funeral.

The court order mandating DNA testing before the bodies were released had the effect of immobilising Rebin and Hemn in death. The immobility-mobility spectrum has been developed by migration scholars as a mechanism through which to examine the affective, social, and geographic (im)mobilities of undocumented migrants imposed by, and practiced in the face of, restrictive and xenophobic immigration policies (Glick-Schiller and Salazar, 2013). Despite their seemingly contradictory nature, mobilities and immobilities are relational, co-produced, and intersectional processes. In Dankix, for instance, a kochber might feel affectively immobilised whereby 'life' has been put on hold until he reaches the UK. On the other hand, he may also be involuntarily hypermobile in that he climbs aboard a lorry which he believes is destined for the ferry port, but in fact takes him to the Netherlands. He is then caught by Dutch police and detained, before making his way back to Dankix upon his release. On the French-Belgian border he is again arrested by police and is taken to a short-term holding facility in Lille. As is discussed in

Chapter Five, kochberan often experience such forms of involuntary carceral im/mobility.

By ordering a DNA test that was – for Hemn’s family – impossible to fulfil, the state effectively immobilised Rebin and Hemn once more. As months went by, their bodies decayed and decomposed. By the time Hemn’s repatriation process was completed, his face was unrecognisable to his family. Similar to how the state lets migrants die by funnelling them into deadly and harsh environments, the delay imposed by the court order had the effect of desecrating the corpses from a distance (Reineke, 2019). Again, nature – here being time – does the work of necroviolence (De León, 2015). Indeed, Hemn’s family perceived this as an act of violence. His body was blackened and liquefied, showing signs of the defilement to which it was subject. Hemn’s family are Sunni Muslims, for whom burial normally takes place within a day of death. The delay therefore denied his family the ability to hold an appropriate funeral and burial, and they were in mourning from the day of his death until after the funeral was held, nearly one year later. Upon the arrival of Hemn’s remains in Kurdistan, his family opened his casket. The horror and trauma of not recognising their son and brother led some of his family members to reject his remains, and to insist that it was not the same body as that which was identified by Aryos ten months before.

Since Hemn did not have family in Europe with travel documents, his family had no choice but to trust Aryos and me to act in their stead. They did not have access to a French translator, and so they could not speak with the police commissioner nor the attorney general themselves. They therefore relied on Aryos and me to do the care work associated with the identification and repatriation process, and to communicate with them through social media.

It is well-documented that migrants are, through the proliferation of smartphones and social media, digitally connected (Diminescu, 2020; Leurs, 2019). This thesis has made reference to the use of smartphones and social media across several moments: Aryos uses his phone’s GPS to navigate the *rega*, Zryan speaks with – and hangs up on – his family in Kurdistan via video chat, and kochberan look to their phones as they attempt to cross the border, waiting for their digital clocks to turn back one hour, marking their arrival in UK territory. Smartphones form part of a digital infrastructure that make kochberan “visible, connected, and networked” while also complicating their efforts to remain hidden from surveillant actors – both in

Kurdistan and in the countries through which they move as they head towards the UK (Gillespie, et al., 2018). In seeking to examine this further, Baldassar, et al., propose the concept of “ICT-based co-presence” to “capture and explore the diverse ways in which people maintain a sense of ‘being there’ for each other across distance” (2016: 134). Donya Alinejad further develops this to identify practices of “careful co-presence” in the sense that they involve the production and circulation of care and intimacy, and Koen Leurs argues that transnational connectivity can be considered a form of digital care labour (Alinejad, 2019: 2; Leurs, 2019).

Aryos and I conducted digital care labour by acting in the family’s stead and remaining in constant communication with them. We identified the body, liaised with the police and court, organised the repatriation, and ensured his remains were prepared in the casket according to Islamic tradition. Aryos had to do the work customarily done by the father or eldest brother, despite being much younger than Hemn. He consoled the family on video calls and sent them photographs of the morgue and of Hemn’s body. The family’s experience of Hemn’s repatriation process was digitally mediated, and also mediated through the relationships of care we developed with one another. Video calls enabled us to generate a ‘careful co-presence’ through each step of the process while, for instance, sitting in the medical examiner’s office or walking through Jangaleka.

Over the course of these ten months, however, posts circulated on popular Kurdish diaspora Facebook pages claiming that Hemn had no family and would be buried in France, or that he had not died at all and that the body was still unidentified. In a context in which most border deaths are not reported by news outlets (in Kurdistan or Europe), kochberan and their families rely on digital social media for news along the *rega*, or the journey to and through Europe. Due to these false reports, published based on incomplete or old information, Hemn’s family were suspicious of me. There were many moments of anger wherein they were convinced that I was lying to them. On several occasions, family members called me and accused me of working with intergovernmental agencies such as Interpol. They believed that Hemn had already been buried in France, and that I was perversely stringing them along a false repatriation process. While digitally circulated networks of care can bind its members in co-presence and togetherness, they also have the capacity to produce tension, especially in the context of unequal relations of power (Leurs, 2019). Hemn’s family relied upon the information I gave them and did not

have the ability to substantially challenge or object to how the repatriation process occurred, nor my involvement throughout. While Aryos was able to console Hemn's family, tell them stories of their son and brother, and share photographs with them, I was perceived as having the power to determine what would happen to Hemn's body. As much as I perceived myself as powerless in the face of state bureaucracy, I had access to cultural and social capital that Hemn's family did not. If they wanted to follow up with the district attorney, for instance, or if they had questions for the medical examiner, they were forced to wait until I had the time to write a letter or make a phone call. Not only was their experience of their son and brother's death mediated through the digital, but it was also mediated through my own whims, affect, and behaviour.

For some families, this mediation leads to particular practices of grieving and attachment. In order to illustrate this, I include the following vignette featuring the repatriation of Wlat, who, as is detailed in the Introduction, fell from a lorry in May 2019, was medically induced into a coma, and died three weeks later.

I cringe whenever we hit turbulence, especially during take-off and landing. How is Wlat secured? He is in the hold. I know because I saw them load his coffin into the airplane back in Paris. I had been sitting next to the window at the gate, watching as the plane rolled in and passengers from its previous flight disembarked. Men in yellow hi-vis vests drove a long, green rectangular box over to the hold. Wlat's coffin is made of light wood and is adorned with gold handles, but they needed to enclose it in air-tight lead or zinc for it to comply with flight regulations. The green box is probably the metal casing.

Four men walked to each corner of the box and gently lifted it up. They placed him onto a conveyor belt, and he disappeared into the hold of the airplane. When I saw this, I sent a voice note to Saman and Zana (Wlat's cousin and brother in Kurdistan) and Malik (a French volunteer in Dankix). After they listened to my note, Saman and Zana announced Wlat's death to the rest of their family, including his mother. They were unable to get visas to come to France and take Wlat home. I am therefore a proxy, acting on their behalf and giving them information as it happens in real-time. They see his body, the petrol

station in which he fell, and Kampeka through my eyes using photographs and videos.

Malik also began announcing Wlat's death to his closest friends in Kampeka. When I was on the train to the airport in Paris, I had sent Malik a voice-note in Kurdish that would help him to explain everything when the time was right. It explained how Wlat had died last Friday after three weeks in a coma, but that we could not tell anyone. I told them that his mother had a heart condition and that Saman and Zana were concerned for her health and wanted to delay telling her until they were sure his body would be repatriated. We could not tell anyone in Dankix until she knew. I told them how painful it was not to tell them the truth.

On the airplane, I look out the window at the mountains below us and then turn to watch our flight path on the screen in front of me. We are flying over Serbia. Wlat was in Serbia last November when he learned that his father had died. Zryan, who had travelled with him since Turkey [and is introduced in Chapter Three], told me that Wlat found out about his father's death on Facebook. I imagine Wlat in each of the countries over which we fly, and remember his stories from Italy, Croatia, Romania... and how long it took him to cross each of these borders. Wlat's family paid for this repatriation using the money he was supposed to use to cross to the UK. I am disturbed by the feeling that we are going the wrong way.

[...]

When I repatriated Wlat's remains, I stayed in Kurdistan for only twenty-four hours. It is now two weeks later, and I have already returned to Kurdistan on a trip I had planned months before. One of Wlat's friends in Dankix gave me the last of Wlat's personal effects to give to his mother: a strip of fake fur that lined the hood of his winter coat. I am staying in Slemani for most of my visit but travel seven hours to see Wlat's family in Soran, at the northernmost point of the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq. His mother grabs me when I step out of the car and holds me tightly. She is beaming. "You smell like him," she says,

“When you’re here it feels as if the shadow of my son is here. You’re my daughter just as he is my son.”

After we eat, I hand one of Wlat’s brothers the strip of fur. He gives it to their mother, who holds it over her face and breathes in deeply. She begins to wail, so one of her sons gently attempts to take the strip of fur from her hands. She clutches it tightly and speaks, her voice muffled under the fur, “Let me cry.”

I was surprised by Wlat’s mother’s reaction when I arrived. I had assumed that his family perceived me as a distanced ‘professional.’ I had worked hard to cultivate this persona with his family in order to assure them that I knew what I was doing, and that their son’s remains would arrive home safely. In reality, I was inexperienced and deeply distraught throughout most of the process. Wlat was my friend, and the first person I had ever repatriated. I was grieving as I watched him die. In order to reassure Wlat’s family of my capabilities, I presented myself as merely a translator and facilitator. Yet, I had misunderstood the relationship built between Wlat’s family and me over the course of those three weeks. Just as Hemn’s family’s experience of the repatriation process was mediated through both myself and the digital, Wlat’s family also organised his repatriation with Malik and me through social media. We exchanged messages, photographs, and calls nearly every day from the night of his fall until I arrived in Kurdistan. Rather than an unequal form of ‘digital care labour,’ these digital exchanges were profoundly valuable in helping me through my own grief. While I had assumed that the digitally mediated relationships we built with one another enabled them to generate a co-presence with Dankix as a space and a community, and with Wlat while in a coma, they had also created an intimacy between us that altered the way in which we grieved.

Similar to how digital mediation produces co-presence among transnational friends and family, I became the subject through which Wlat’s mother practiced co-presence with her late son. In the above vignette, when she tells me that I smell like him, she does not mean that I exude a literal odour but rather that I embody affective phenomena that recall her son. I was with Wlat in the moments before his death, and my proximity to him in time and space enables her to feel his presence through me, as she was not able to smell nor hold her son in over two years.

Yael Navaro argues that objects and spaces of ruin, or remnants of the past, contain and release emotive energies for those interacting with these objects and spaces today (Navaro-Yashin, 2009). The environment discharges affect which is, in turn, embodied by those who inhabit the environment (Lupton, 1998). The environment is then symbolised, interpreted, and politicised through the framework of these sensations, thus projecting affect back onto the environment, as Wlat's mother does when she tells me that she can feel the shadow of her son in the spaces I occupy. She wraps herself in the fur from his coat because her grief becomes attached to this object. He had bought that coat in Turkey, just as he set off on the *rega*, the journey to and through Europe. He wears it in all the photographs they recovered from his friends as they travelled through Europe before arriving in Dankix. Just as I imagine Wlat in the mountains over which we fly, for his mother the fur from his coat contains remnants of his past. It holds and releases affective flows that facilitate her grief and circulate among everyone who witnesses her as she buries her face within its fibres. The strip of fur is, in this way, the link between Wlat's life in Europe and his family in Kurdistan. It provides her with a "passage to the dead," through which Wlat's world surges into her with overwhelming force (Favero, 2018: 100).

Conclusion

As is the case with Wlat and his mother, most who die attempting to cross the border from France into the UK had not seen their families for several years. Digitally mediated co-presence enables them to maintain close, albeit transformed, relationships while they wait to be granted a travel document.¹²⁹ Yet, video calls do not allow a woman to hold hands with her younger sister and share the warmth of her palm, a man to carry his new-born niece and feel the softness of her skin, or a mother to embrace her son and inhale the scent of his hair. As Wlat's mother shows us when she says that I smell like her son, sensoriality is deeply significant for

¹²⁹ Most kochberan say that returning to Kurdistan for several weeks is the first thing they will do upon receiving their papers. UK refugee travel documents allow travel to any country except one's country of origin because refugee status is granted based upon the recipient's fear of persecution in their home country. Most people therefore travel to neighbouring countries and smuggle themselves into Kurdistan.

preserving and producing affective attachments. One of Wlat's brothers was later able to secure a visa and travel to Dankix. Although Wlat's body had already been repatriated, it was important for him to be in the spaces through which Wlat had moved. He had seen, in photographs, the petrol station where his brother had fallen from a lorry. But he felt a need to be in that space, and to see the 'shadow' of Wlat setting up a tent, laughing with friends in the dinner queue, or lying in the sun by the lake.

Conducting repatriations via social media limits families' ability to reproduce these affective attachments. They do not have access to the objects that populated the lives of the dead, nor the spaces in which they moved since they set off on the *rega*. As was the case for Rebin, Hemn, and Wlat, families are unable to organise the repatriation nor speak directly with the caretakers of their loved ones' bodies. When bodies are held by the French state for many months and the dead become unrecognisable, families cannot look upon them during the funeral, and some cannot be sure that the body is indeed who the state claims it to be. Uncommon bureaucratic identification procedures that are impossible for families to follow – such as DNA testing – have the effect of immobilising both the dead and their families.

At the same time, death is operationalised by the powerful to promote the narratives that keep them in power, such as that smugglers were not involved in Nima's disappearance, or that the Home Secretary is tough on those coming 'illegally.' Within Dankix, competing narratives that emerge after a death and are espoused by various actors, including security guards who are employed by city hall and unknown actors referred to only as 'Nima's friends in the UK,' spread uncertainty and feelings of precarity among *kochberan*. The effects of this affective economy are felt particularly among those who are at disproportionate risk of experiencing the types of violence conjured in rumours and gossip, in this case interpersonal sexual and gender-based violence. Fear and mistrust are fostered, circulate, and escalate tensions among those living in Dankix.

The ultimate effect of these diverging narratives is that border deaths are constructed as the fault of migrants themselves. These fictitious realities are a crucial mechanism by which the state illegalises *kochberan*. The characterisation of crossing attempts as individual 'choices' obscures the political processes and associated structural violence that render Dankix a space of death. As De León argues, necroviolence is the final stage of deterrence policy (2015). It is both its last

bastion (in that it aims to deter others from joining the dead), and evidence of its materiality, in the form of the misshapen and discoloured remains of men and women who drown in the Channel. The epistemic murk that shrouds knowledge about deaths at the border legitimates the introduction of increasingly restrictive immigration policies and rises in public spending on security infrastructure along the border. Put simply, border deaths are paradoxically used to justify the policies that produce them in the first place. Yet, as Taussig points out and as is demonstrated by the interactions between Kochberan and the Home Office officials during their visit, these fictitious realities undermine the lived experiences of those against whom violence has been justified and legitimated (1999).

CHAPTER SEVEN | Conclusion

At the end of 2019, one month after I returned to London from Dankix, I was arrested. I awoke in the early hours of the morning to banging on my front door. At the time, my partner and I lived in an old, crumbling Victorian house in Haringay that we shared with six other people. We had spent the last of our money in northern France and managed to make it to London with just enough for a deposit and first month's rent. As is typical in London, the house was once home to a single family before it was, at some point, divided up into individual bedrooms which are now rented out separately. Our bedroom was where the living room once was and featured a bay window that looked out onto the street – and straight to the front door.

The hammering on the door startled us awake. My partner and I froze, afraid and instinctively knowing not to move so as not to alert those outside that we were home. After what seemed like several minutes of more banging, we heard a voice shouting: "Home Office, open up!" Bleary-eyed, I rose and walked into the hallway to open the door. As soon as I unlocked it, three men pushed it open and marched in, causing me to stumble backwards. One of them placed me under arrest for events they suspected to have occurred in Dankix. I cannot recall the exact words we exchanged. Only snapshot images and intense feelings remain in my memory. They searched my room and car while my partner and I watched on. I asked if I could change into proper clothes, so they brought in a female officer who watched me closely as I dressed. One of the few things I do remember – because it was so bizarre – is that she thanked me for being so 'nice.'

I was taken to a police station and placed in a holding cell until the early afternoon, before being interrogated for nearly two hours, and then released under investigation. There would be no news until the Crown Prosecution Service decided whether to charge me. The arresting officer told me it should only take a few months. I waited for a year and a half.

Soon after the arrest I discovered that it had contributed to me developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In addition to the typical symptoms of PTSD, including flashbacks and nightmares, insomnia, and difficulty concentrating, I felt deeply unsafe and existentially precarious. I was terrified of how quickly my life did and could change at the hands of others. The control that I thought I had over my aspirations, future, relationships, and body was artifice, and I felt naïve for allowing it

to trick me. Every knock on the door from that day onwards left me unable to breathe.

I was at work in May 2021 when I got a call from the solicitor. By then, we had just begun to emerge from a five-month pandemic lockdown, this one our third, and I was working as a Covid-19 vaccinator. I was in the clinic with a patient when I saw the solicitor's name flash up on my phone screen. My stomach dropped; he had never called before. If it was good news he would have emailed. I chose to see another patient. And another. He called me again. I continued seeing patients.

I thought only of deportation. My home – London, my partner, the contours of my life – seemed to be slipping from my fingers. While I was innocent and falsely accused, I did not trust that the justice system would protect me. He called again. This time I answered. “They’re not charging you,” he said, “they don’t have evidence, obviously, and your file will be scrubbed.”

It took me months to feel safe again. I still do not feel at ease in terms of my presence in this country and believe I will not until I obtain citizenship. One of the lingering after-effects of the arrest is that I am unhealthily obsessed with this goal. It governs all my decisions and shapes the possible futures that I imagine for myself. Yet, even before the arrest, I have always been acutely aware that I am subject to immigration control. In the UK, this is due in part to the hostile environment, or the system of policies and practices that diffuses the border throughout everyday life in order to coerce migrants into voluntarily leaving. We must prove our ‘right’ to be in the UK when doing ordinary things such as opening a bank account, renting a flat, or finding work. Bank tellers, estate agents, and employers do the work of border agents or face steep fines. The process of securing the means to live in safety is, therefore, fundamentally shaped by our lack of citizenship. Each day, we re-encounter the border and are reminded of our guesthood.

While all who are subject to immigration control share some commonality of experience, it is well-known that most of the precarity ensuing from our migration status is sculpted by power and positionality (see, e.g., Chacko and Price, 2021; Kunz, 2020). I never before had considered that one of my visa applications could be rejected, or that I could face deportation. Since I speak English as a native language

and carry both an American passport and white privilege,¹³⁰ my experience of obtaining and renewing residency in the UK until my arrest had been uneventful, if expensive and bureaucratic. This mundanity had implicitly communicated to me that I was *entitled* to live here. The arrest and ensuing risk of incarceration and deportation served as a bitter reminder that I must prove that I am worthy of being here – that I deserve to be here. Until then, my choices are shaped by the fact that key decisions about my future are not fully mine.

Even then, the subjection to power that was imposed upon me is incomparable to that of the people involved in this research. While it allowed me some affective insight into loss of control, insecurity, and unbearable periods of waiting, the context and consequences are vastly dissimilar. The immense and intersecting privileges that I carry – which will be multiplied as a result of completing this thesis and obtaining a doctorate – mean that my brush with detainability and deportability does not mean that I share the experiences of my participants. Aryos, who was trying to lighten the mood and make me laugh when I told him about my situation, made a joke that summarises this well: “Take me with you if you get deported! I’ve always wanted to go to America.”

The arguments that emerge from this thesis are directly related to these feelings of precarity and subjugation. As a whole, this thesis is undoubtedly about the way that power expresses itself in everyday life, and the multiple ways in which one’s range of choices are restricted or, at times, redirected entirely by violence. We see this first in Chapter Two, whereby different key actors engage in practices that reify the power they have over the larger kochberan population. In Chapter Three, we see how forms of structural violence that illegalise kochberan can lead them into deeply violent and exploitative relationships. Chapter Four shows us how both detention and the threat of detention are used to punish kochberan for what they represent to the sovereign French state. The following chapter, Five, examines how expressions of power and violence can be located in and on the body. And the final chapter, Six, demonstrates that necroviolence – or violence enacted upon the

¹³⁰ White privilege refers to the passive advantages held by those perceived as white over those perceived as non-white in societies organised via a logic of racialisation (including that of the UK). For an introduction to the term and its relationship with structural violence, see Peggy McIntosh: “I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious...[it] is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (1989: 10).

remains of the dead – is the final stage of this spectrum of border control whereby families wait in agony for their dead to return home.

Before continuing to the concluding remarks, it is important to note that since conducting the fieldwork that generated this ethnography, a great deal has changed. The UK has left the European Union and is no longer beholden to the Dublin III Regulation. Kochberan, upon arrival in the UK, consequently no longer fear deportation back to the EU. They are therefore now unconcerned with fingerprinting practices at borders along the *rega*, the route to and through Europe. Two further changes that have occurred while writing this thesis is the route of passage to the UK, as well as the time spent in Dankix before making it across. Over the past two years, smugglers have continued to build their professional expertise of the water route. In 2018, around 300 people were recorded by the media and Home Office to have crossed to the UK by boat (Brown, 2021). This figure rose to 1800 in 2019, 8500 in 2020, and at least 28,431 in 2021 (*ibid.*; BBC, 2022). This does not, however, indicate that more people are choosing to seek asylum in the UK (the number of new asylum claims has not proportionally increased, as is shown in Chapter Six). Instead, the route itself has shifted. Since passage has been much more successful by boat than it had been by lorry, moving through northern France is reportedly a much easier and quicker process. Research participants with friends and family currently in Dankix say that most people now stay for around one or two weeks before successfully crossing. Many of them now arrive in the UK only one or two months after leaving Kurdistan; this is also due in part to the opening of a new route through Belarus in the summer and autumn of 2021 (see Gerdžiūnas, et al., 2021). This route, however, is now largely closed.

A further change is that the post-Brexit UK immigration system is taking shape with the Nationality and Borders Bill, as is referenced throughout previous chapters.¹³¹ Home Secretary Priti Patel characterises the aims of this Bill as, “to deter illegal entry into the UK, breaking the business model of people smugglers and protecting the lives of those they endanger” (Patel, P., 2021b). The Bill relies on the carefully constructed myth (as was analysed in Chapter Six) that irregular migration to the UK is the result of a lack of border control (UK Home Office and Patel, 2021).

¹³¹ The Bill is, at the time of writing, being considered in the House of Commons.

I provide here a brief summary of the most consequential policy changes brought forth by the Bill. It introduces differential treatment of refugees depending on whether they have been resettled or have arrived through irregular means (Nationality and Borders Bill, 2021: Clause 10).¹³² Irregular arrivals are stripped of the protections afforded by Article 31 of the Convention (that which prohibits the prosecution of refugees for their irregular means of entry; Clause 34). These arrivals will be criminalised and face a sentence of up to four years' imprisonment for the means of their arrival (Clause 37). Those not imprisoned will have their claim to asylum rendered inadmissible and will become subject to 'removal' (deportation; Clause 14). To put it plainly, the Bill makes it legal to convict, incarcerate, and then deport those who come to the UK by boat and lorry.

Those who are, despite this legislation, eventually granted asylum will have their protections severely curtailed. Their protection will be temporary, and they will therefore be reassessed at regular intervals for deportation. Their rights to family reunion will be restricted, and they will be subject to the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' policy, to which nearly all other migrants are currently subject and which means they are ineligible for any form of state financial assistance (such as Universal Credit – which encompasses what is usually referred to as 'unemployment benefits' in other countries).

Furthermore, Clause 11 standardises the use of semi-closed asylum seeker camps in the UK. In 2020 and 2021, the Home Office trialled the use of such camps. One is called Napier Barracks, and is an old, disused barracks in Folkestone that was deemed unfit for habitation years ago. Many of the people included in this thesis were sent to the barracks upon arrival in the UK. Most of them were told they would be housed there for a maximum of three weeks, but many were there for months on end. Some of its quasi-detainees protested and participated in hunger strikes while Covid-19 outbreaks repeatedly swept the barracks in waves. They were not moved, however, until a few men set the cafeteria alight. Even then, those remaining were forced to stay in the barracks for days (without heat and electricity, as the infrastructure was damaged in the fire). Despite facing several legal challenges raised by some of its former residents (including victims of torture whom the Home

¹³² Clause numbers are accurate according to the Bill as it was initially introduced. The exact clause numbers may change upon the Bill's passage as a result of ongoing debates in and between the House of Lords and House of Commons.

Office neglected to identify as such before forcibly sending them to the barracks) the Home Office has deemed it a success and the Bill will greenlight the government's ability to expand this accommodation system across the country.

The Bill also paves the way for the Home Secretary to develop an Australian-style offshore processing system for asylum seekers. The sections of note are Clause 11's expansion of large-scale camp-style accommodation centres as well as Clause 12's introduction of 'designated places' from which people may claim asylum, and the ability of the Home Secretary to remove asylum seekers from the UK while they await a decision on their claim or case (as introduced in Schedule 3). Taken together, these measures form the legal foundation upon which the Home Secretary will be able to implement offshore processing (which, in Australia, has been shown to be a deadly and costly failure, see Boochani, 2018b; Gleeson and Yacoub, 2021).

This thesis has shown many of the reasons that restrictive immigration policies, such as those introduced in the Bill, will not deter Kurdish irregular migration to the UK. As restrictions are imposed, routes of migration do not disappear; they merely shift. Often, as was the case in the shift of route from lorry to boat, this results in further violence and death. What, then, can the government do to achieve its aims of 'breaking the business model' of smugglers, reducing immigration, and preventing border deaths?

Policy proposals

Many of those in northern France who eventually make it to the UK and claim asylum are subject to further, albeit differing, forms of racialised border violence. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to suggest ways in which the British state can fix the current asylum system and end the violence inflicted upon migrants by the state and other actors. Others, including non-governmental organisations, advocacy campaigners, and members of civil society, have developed comprehensive suggestions to this effect. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for instance, published a report in 2021 detailing their suggestions for alleviating the backlog of pending asylum cases in the UK, advocating for an empathetic and humane approach that would also be cost-effective when compared to the current system (2021). The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants has published

varying works documenting the policy failures that led to the Windrush scandal (2018) and promoting the expansion of migrants' right to work (Gardner, 2021), among other issues. The Refugee Council has compiled an impact analysis of the Nationality and Borders Bill (2021a) and outlined the consequences of the asylum-claim backlog (2021b). There are dozens of other organisations conducting similar work and advocating for changes to the current migration and asylum systems.

On the other hand, to prevent the forms of violence experienced by kochberan as outlined throughout this thesis I propose the following three policy changes that, I believe, would have the largest immediate impact. They are not comprehensive, however, in that they do not abolish the bordering regime itself, which is both informed by and productive of entrenched, systemic forms of colonial and racist violence. Even if kochberan were able to travel directly to the UK from Kurdistan through safe, legalised routes, the need for such routes is a manifestation of these overarching forms of violence. Nevertheless, these suggestions are a start.

Allow claims to asylum in British short-term holding facilities

The quickest solution is to allow would-be asylum seekers to lodge their claims to asylum in extraterritorial spaces over which the UK has control in France. As was discussed in Chapter Four, there are four British short-term holding facilities in northern France. They are considered British territory: the clocks are turned back one hour, workers are UK residents who travel to France for their shifts, and kochberan who are released from short-term detention are considered to have been expelled from the UK. As was also mentioned in that chapter, however, Article 9 of the Le Touquet Treaty (2003) and Article 4 of the Additional Protocol (2000) to the Sangatte Protocol prohibit people from claiming asylum in these spaces. If they do so, they will be handed to the French border police who will process their claim in France.

By rescinding these articles, the UK government would enable kochberan and others in northern France to claim asylum (as they already do after reaching the UK through irregular means) and would immediately eliminate the demand for smuggling services. Asylum seekers would have no need to reside in informal camps in northern France, as they would travel directly to these state-run facilities. Dankix, alongside similar informal camps across the country, would likely vanish. The

violence in Dankix that results from living conditions and street homelessness would also come to an end. The infrastructure needed to receive thousands of applicants already exists in the form of short-term holding facilities, which could easily be repurposed by the large numbers of UK Home Office staff already present. Funding is clearly no issue, as since 2010 the UK has spent at least £484.9 million on increasing securitisation, developing surveillance technology, paying for French police patrols along beaches, and building and maintaining French asylum seeker reception centres (Darmanin and Patel, 2021; Parliamentary Answer, 2020; Sandhurst Treaty, 2018; UK Home Office, 2017).

Such a policy change requires certain safeguarding procedures. Those who claim asylum in these facilities should be immediately transferred to the UK mainland (a relatively easy feat as all four of the short-term holding facilities are located at border points from where dozens of ferries, buses, and trains travel to the UK daily). This immediate transfer is crucial because upon claiming asylum in the UK, destitute claimants (the vast majority of asylum seekers) are entitled to Section 95 support, which includes housing and basic living expenses. Without immediate transfer, the state might attempt to fulfil its Section 95 obligations by building reception centres in northern France in which people would live until they receive a decision on their asylum claim. During the time of fieldwork, a route of passage existed allowing eligible unaccompanied minors to apply for family reunification in the UK from France. As they awaited a decision on their application, they were housed in reception facilities in France. Since the family reunification process took months or years and was not a guarantee of passage to the UK, many of those undergoing this process fled their accommodation centres and crossed to the UK through irregular means, taking matters into their own hands.

Reception centres outside of the UK used for the purposes of housing asylum seekers would, therefore, not abolish the demand for smuggling services nor the need for an informal camp like Dankix from which to attempt border crossings. Without immediate transfer to the UK mainland, such a policy change would therefore do little to protect those seeking asylum from street homelessness nor from risk of injury or death during a crossing attempt. It would also, consequently, do little to transform Dankix and the Channel from a space of death. Without such a policy addition, and further safeguarding procedures, the only other viable option is to abolish juxtaposed controls entirely and return the British border from France to the

UK, allowing people to travel to the UK and claim asylum upon arriving in the border control zone (as is already the case for those who arrive by air).

Reinstate and expand routes to family reunification

Maryam is a kochber who drowned alongside twenty-six others in the Channel in November 2021. Her fiancé lives in the UK, but there were no routes allowing her to join him aside from smuggler-facilitated irregular means. As a result, she travelled without documents to the France-UK border and boarded a dinghy, which sank and resulted in her death. To prevent further risk of traumatisation and death, the UK must reinstate routes to family reunification. Any family reunification policy must allow people to apply from any British embassy or consulate so that applicants are not forced to travel to the British border. It must also be expanded to encompass a wider range of cases, including allowing those over the age of eighteen to join their families, the definition of which should also be adjusted to include parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles. Many of the parents and siblings of those seeking asylum have passed away as an indirect or direct result of the conflicts from which they are fleeing. Expanding the definition of 'family' would reflect the reality of forced displacement.

Family reunion was, at the time of fieldwork, governed by the EU-wide Dublin III Regulation. Since the UK left the European Union in January 2021, however, the Home Office has not replaced the old legislation with new procedures, and there are therefore no routes to family reunification. Most kochberan travel to the UK specifically because they have family members there (which reflects the way colonial histories impact contemporary migration routes). Such a policy would immediately reduce the need to travel undocumented to and through Europe. The Home Office could introduce a triaging process by which some applicants (e.g., victims of torture and/or trafficking) are transferred to the UK where they would live while their application is assessed. The categories of applicant used in this triaging process should be co-developed with policymakers, the UNHCR, researchers, and regional experts such as those working in local non-profit organisations in countries of origin. It is vital that political elites in these countries are not included in this process, the reasons for which are discussed in the following section. Crucially, triage categories should not be universal nor static. They should be region-specific (rather than

country-specific) and subject to change, reflecting continuously updated socio-political circumstance and conflict.

Reorient international aid

Most importantly, to achieve the Home Secretary's oft-stated aim of reducing initial asylum claims, global north state powers must reorient their material and political support for the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) duopoly. As is discussed in Chapter Three, many kochberan describe the reasons they left Kurdistan as resulting from corruption, clientelism, and eroded civil rights, including the threat of state retaliation after speaking out against one of the two ruling parties. It is important to note that these reasons are applicable to Southern Kurds – or those from the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan that lies within Iraq's borders (the Kurdistan Region of Iraq or KRI) – who make up the majority of those in Dankix and therefore of those who participated in this research. Eastern Kurds, or those from the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iran, more often cite religious and political persecution as the causes of their migration to Europe.

The KRI is run by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which itself consists of two main opposing political parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). These parties each control a separate region of the KRI, visualised below. Military and security forces are similarly separated and party-affiliated, including many Peshmerga (KRG military) units. After both parties were embroiled in civil war from 1994 to 1997, Kurdistan was divided into 'green' and 'yellow' zones, each representing the KDP or PUK. Despite reaching a Washington-mediated agreement in 1998, Duhok and Hewler¹³³ governorates are now administered by the KDP while Slemani is administered by the PUK, as illustrated by the figure below. Public officials including police officers, mayors, and directors of universities and other public institutions have maintained their KDP or PUK affiliation (Mhamad, 2015).

¹³³ Hewler is called Erbil or Irbil in English and Arabic.

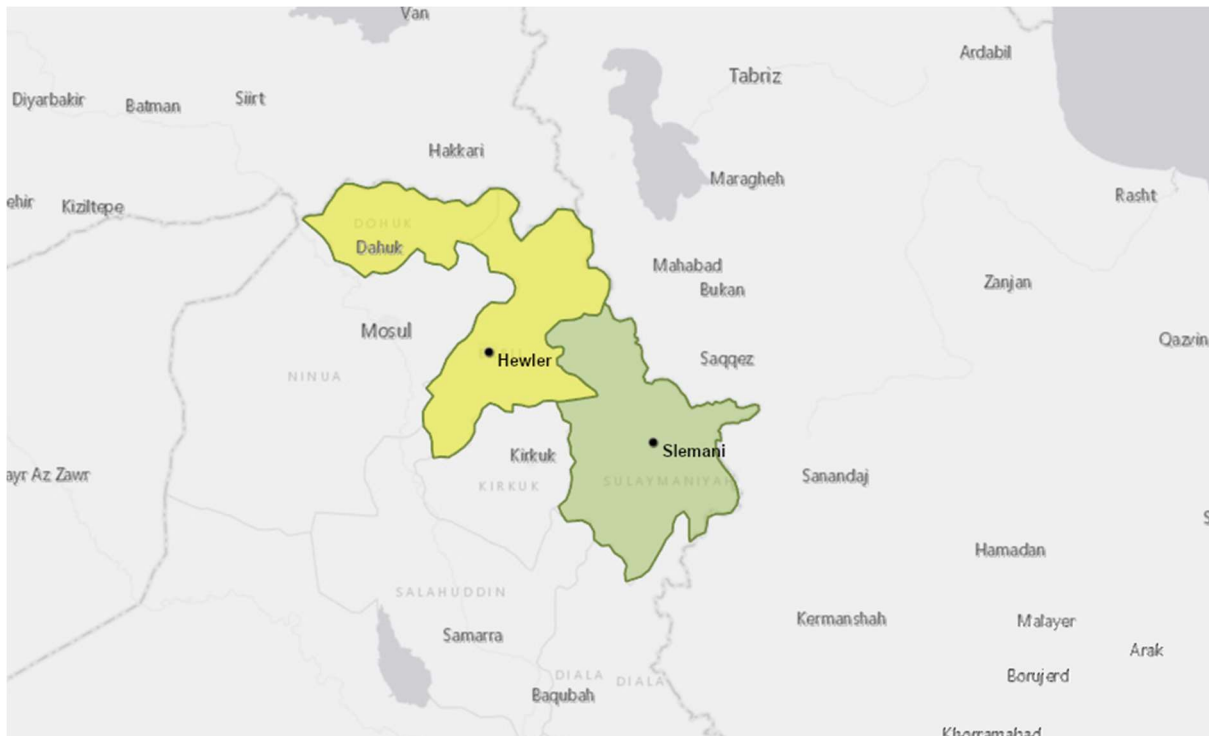


Figure 20 - Map of Southern Kurdistan showing the regions controlled by the KDP (yellow) and PUK (green); image by author.

As is examined in Chapter Three and outlined in greater detail in Appendix A, widespread corruption within these two parties alongside decades-long colonial interference and violence inflicted upon Iraq by Britain, France, and the United States has led to acute economic insecurity and authoritarian rule. The two parties are controlled by two families: Barzani of the KDP and Talabani of the PUK. They both run a clientelist patronage system whereby those with political connections receive public funds and resources (especially oil revenue) and those without are largely left with very little financial and social support from the state (van Bruinessen, 2016). Since 2020 there have been ongoing protests throughout the KRI against the lack of public services such as water and electricity, withholding of pay for public sector workers, the high unemployment rate, restrictions on civil rights, and political corruption (Chomani, 2021a; Rodgers, 2021). Hundreds of those who participate in these protests or are otherwise publicly critical of the ruling parties are threatened, unlawfully detained, and imprisoned without due process (see, e.g., Amnesty International, 2021; CPT, 2021; Hawramy, 2022). Despite increasingly restrictive immigration policies and practices in European countries such as the UK, those

living in the KRI will continue to choose to migrate to Europe unless the social, economic, and political situation is ameliorated.

The KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) relies on international financial support. The United States (US), for instance, has provided millions of dollars in aid and training to the Peshmerga forces since 2014 (Ali, 2021). In 2020, it set aside 126 million USD for this purpose alone (Cornish, 2021). The US also provides financial support to internal security agencies, such as the Asayish (federal security), intelligence, and counter-terrorism forces (all of which have their own party-affiliated branches acting as partisan paramilitary organisations) (Bakr, 2020). While previously most aid was funnelled by the KRG directly to party-affiliated forces, in January 2021 the Pentagon informed the Peshmerga that military aid will now be given to 'mixed' and 'a-political' Peshmerga forces only (i.e., units with both KDP and PUK members) (Jangiz, 2021). There is, thus far, little information publicly available about the impact of this shift.

Some Kurdish political analysts promote the complete withdrawal of international aid from the KRG (see, e.g., Chomani, 2021b). This argument acknowledges that international aid funds the militias that are committing human rights abuses against protesters. It predicts that by withdrawing financial support, the two parties will topple under the pressure of their own people. Yet the complete withdrawal of aid risks crippling the KRI and could lead to further instability and crisis that disproportionately impacts those in the most precarious positions. Others argue instead that aid, as it is currently delivered, takes Kurdish political elites' requests and justifications at face value (see, e.g., Bakr, 2020; Rodgers, 2021). It should instead be organised in ways that do not bolster the KDP-PUK rivalry, exemplified by the Pentagon's decision to provide aid directly to the Peshmerga Ministry rather than to the KRG – although, again, whether this aid is being used solely by mixed units is as yet publicly unevicenced (*ibid*). In this view, aid must be reoriented to address the acute needs of the Kurdish population, rather than those of its political leaders, by prioritising infrastructure improvements while also recognising that local parties are responsible for their delivery (Rodgers, 2021). Otherwise, the provision of millions of dollars of aid will continue to entrench the current clientelist duopoly and encourage corruption, and Kurds will continue to leave for Europe.

Concluding remarks

One of the key aims of this research, as outlined in the Introduction, was to examine the particularities of informal, unsanctioned, migrant-built camps. There is very little comprehensive research about these spaces and their residents, not least because of the methodological challenges they pose. Conducting research among an illegalised group of people in an illegalised place is necessarily risky, to which my arrest attests. Yet anthropologists have long been placed under surveillance, detained, and sometimes imprisoned in the places in which they conduct research. Katherine Verdery was placed under surveillance for fifteen years by the Romanian Secret Police, who suspected that she was involved in espionage (2012). Michael Herzfeld was similarly accused of espionage and was arrested in Rhodes. Seth Holmes was arrested while crossing the border from Mexico to the United States through irregular means with a group of his research participants (2013).

What is especially challenging about working in informal camps, however, is that it is difficult to research a group of people who are in transit. The population in Dankix is ever-changing as people cross to the UK, claim asylum in France or other EU countries, and newcomers arrive. Some of the research participants included in this thesis were in Dankix only for a number of weeks or months. Consequently, unlike other field sites within which the anthropologist can approach community leaders to gain access and initial insights, social structures and hierarchies in Dankix are largely ambiguous and unclear, even to insiders. Those who have lived in Dankix for several years and are well-known to most residents are usually involved in smuggling, and I avoided becoming knowledgeable about these people and networks as much as possible in order to protect myself and my research participants. As is evidenced by the content of this thesis, however, knowledge about *derchwn* – the practices involved in being smuggled to the UK – presented itself to me regardless of my intentions. *Derchwn* is the ultimate goal of those living in Dankix. It is, therefore, discussed incessantly and gaining knowledge about *derchwn* is arguably inevitable.

This brings us to the first particularity of informal camps: residents, themselves not a fixed population, are temporally oriented to a near future in which they feel they have a stake. Very few of those living in Dankix at the time of fieldwork were awaiting the result of an administrative, bureaucratic procedure to which they

were subject. The exceptions include those who had claimed asylum in France, unaccompanied minors awaiting family reunification in the UK (a route of passage that has since been closed by the Home Secretary), and those returning to Kurdistan through a state-assisted 'voluntary return' programme. Much of the literature on asylum and experiences of time in Europe examines them through the lens of waiting. This body of research is found dotted throughout this thesis and has been helpful in developing my own conceptualisation of temporality, being, and becoming in Dankix. Most scholarly work, however, is concerned with waiting for a decision that is out of the hands of the person subjected to a wait. People wait for a decision on their asylum claim (Haas, 2017; Phillimore and Cheung, 2021; Rotter, 2016), to be deported (Hasselberg, 2016; Tecca, forthcoming), and to be released from detention (Bosworth, 2014; Turnbull, 2016). Kochberan, on the other hand, are waiting to arrive in the UK, but perceive that near-future as attainable through a mixture of their own efforts and of luck. And yet they, too, are delayed. They are delayed by the infrared cameras that seek them out in lorries, by the border agents who seize their dinghies and order them to walk back to Dankix, by the policies passed in Parliament that funnel migrants into the Channel. Although these delays might be seen as stumbling blocks or obstacles placed in their path that they need only avoid to make it across, their effects are not so dissimilar from those awaiting a decision from a faceless, powerful other. As Bryar says in Chapter Two, 'time goes by for free' in Dankix.

Waiting can encompass anticipation, hope, restlessness, anxiety – as an orientation to the future it shapes the present in powerful and plural ways. The title of this thesis, *To Where the Clock Changes*, alludes to this. The clock changes as soon as one crosses the invisible line in the water that marks entry to the UK. Everyone who is in Dankix for the purposes of crossing to the UK is moving towards this line, existentially and physically. They are engaged in a constant and continual process of 'becoming' that fundamentally alters their 'being.' As Shahram Khosravi says in the preface to his edited volume about waiting, "Waiting is about the senses. If you do not sense it, there is no waiting" (2021: 9). As is evidenced throughout the second half of this thesis, I have found Sara Ahmed's concept of affective economies a useful tool through which to explore the sensorial, emotional, and affective experiences of time and the self in Dankix (2004). Many of them, I argue, are produced by violence.

This thesis set out to examine how structures of violence become visible and shape the everyday. As the chapters demonstrate, often violence becomes visible when it attempts to invisibilise. In Chapter Two, the queue is a domesticating mechanism that silences kochberan by demanding their compliance. Those who attempt to resist the queue are ejected immediately and removed from the area. In Chapter Four, we see how repeated detention is used by the prefectural government to scatter those living in Dankix and weaken its visibility as a ‘fixation point.’ After one major eviction, the subprefect claimed that “[t]here are no more makeshift shelters” and that “[n]obody sleeps in the woods anymore” despite 300 people still living in Dankix (Constant, 2019). Even the threat of detention – detainability – leads some kochberan to remain hidden in their living areas, afraid to venture past the police perimeter. In Chapter Five, Rozhin is invisibilised by the medical system when she cannot access la PASS. Only through la PASS is she ‘translatable’ as having the right to medical care (Giordano, 2014). Finally, Chapter Six shows how British political discourse surrounding asylum and irregular migration obscures the structures of violence pushing people into dinghies and lorries, and displaces responsibility for ensuing death onto smugglers.

As these examples show, violence (in)visibilises both relations of power and kochberan themselves. Kochberan are rendered overtly visible (to some) through their surveillance by police and border security technologies. They are simultaneously rendered invisible through processes of othering, exclusion, and racialisation. This thesis has also shown that kochberan, at times, subvert and undermine their (in)visibilisation. Some, upon making it to the UK, choose not to claim asylum. They ‘live black,’ as the Kurdish phrase goes, to remain invisible to the state. Others, while still on the continent, successfully refuse to be fingerprinted by border agents, keeping their identifiable biometric details out of the asylum database. They practice what Édouard Glissant (1997: 189) has called “the right to opacity” – the right not to be understood, not to be known, not to be ‘translated,’ to borrow Giordano’s phrase once more (2014). Invisibility, too, can subvert structures of violence.

As was discussed in the Introduction, I did not initially aim to examine violence. Most of my research participants, however, were uninterested in discussing anything else. This is itself a testament to the ways in which everyday life in Dankix is shaped by forces of power and coercion, and how their productions and

consequences can be identified through the lens of affect. Violence – examined here through the frameworks of the structural, symbolic, everyday, necropolitical, and others – is simultaneously enacted through both the mundane and the spectacular. It leads to a further particularity of informal camps that emerges from this research: their spatial politics.

In informal, unsanctioned camp-like spaces such as Dankix, residents are ostensibly free to come and go. There are no walls or fences, and no ‘authority’ officially running and managing the camp (although, as we see throughout the chapters, the camp is managed by an assemblage of different actors whose power ebbs and flows). Yet that relative freedom of movement – control over one’s body and time – can be and is taken away at a moment’s notice. In returning to Ghassan Hage’s concept of ‘stuckedness,’ discussed in Chapter Two, forms of existential immobility are conditioned in Dankix by these spatial politics. Kochberan are ‘stuck’ in France as they are prevented from moving freely to the UK, but they are also ‘stuck’ in complex ways within Dankix. When an eviction is ordered, kochberan are subject to carceral hypermobility and are moved, suddenly, across the country. There are bordered and bordering spaces that surround Jangaleka, such as the commercial shopping centre, whereby a trip to Auchan can mean spending the night in a short-term holding facility or deport centre. People come and go in Jangaleka until a police perimeter made up of semi-permeable checkpoints is established after an eviction. Leaving for *derchwn* may mean being unable to return to Dankix for days or weeks. Aid workers and volunteers determine distribution times and locations, the resources they are willing to supply, and who they perceive to be ‘in need.’ It is for these reasons that I refer to the collection of disparate spaces and places through which kochberan move and in which they live as ‘Dankix’ rather than ‘Dunkirk’ or ‘Grande-Synthe.’ Kochberan are sensorially (visually, auditorily, olfactorily) identifiable as ‘migrants’ – they are visibilised in some ways and invisibilised in others – and are subject to the racialising bordering practices that concretise these spatial politics.

This thesis has argued, however, that violence does not chip away at people until nothing remains, but rather transforms the economy of affective attachments through which people experience and interpret themselves and the world which they inhabit. Violence can, in this way, be imagined as a pendulum. The threat of violence is always looming and, at times, rushes towards you. Some more than others are

able to jump out of the way of this pendulum before it knocks them off their feet. Healthy men travelling alone can much more easily run and hide before evictions. Those with access to wealth can rent rooms in hotels. Women are less likely to be incarcerated, but disproportionately experience sexual and gender-based interpersonal violence. This back-and-forth, looming and disappearing threat of violence is mirrored in many research participants' affective perceptions of their own safety and wellbeing. In Chapter Four, Aryos at times recounts his detainability with humour, joking that the police station is a luxurious place to sleep because it is indoors and sheltered from the elements. At other times, however, he is angry and desperate. When he is caught by police while on his way to identify Hemn's remains at the morgue, he says that he feels hunted down like an animal. He oscillates between defiance and despair, hope and exhaustion, illustrating the ways in which violence and affective states swing back and forth in tandem. A death in the community marks one such swing of the pendulum, precipitating an affective economy that has far-reaching consequences for those grieving. Further, it reveals the ways in which both Dankix and the Channel operate as a space of death in which killing is not only made possible, but misrecognised as inevitable.

With another swing of the pendulum, violence does not feel as all-consuming. This thesis is filled with descriptions of interpersonal encounters and conflict, such as that between Zryan and his parents during their phone call in Chapter Three, or, in the same chapter, between Shkar and his friend who betrayed him by cutting off contact upon his arrival in the UK. It also includes moments of love and laughter, as we see in Chapter Five with Aryos in the way that he attempts to show me how trench foot feels, or the kindness with which healthcare professionals care for Rekar when he is hospitalised for tuberculosis. Others attempt to seize power themselves in defiance of certain types of violence they identify around them, as with Farhad who builds his café in Chapter Two. Perhaps surprisingly, many of the research participants included here who have now claimed asylum in the UK are, at times, nostalgic for the time they spent in Dankix. Scholars working in similar contexts but with other communities have described parallel versions of the *rega*, the route to and through Europe, as a "school of life...where only the fittest will succeed" (Abbasi and Monsutti, 2017: 8). Indeed, many *kochberan* reminisce fondly about the sense of brotherhood and community they found along the *rega*. They rewatch videos of moments that they shared with one another, such as showering in freezing weather

by standing in an Auchan shopping cart while their friends pour buckets of water over their heads, or racing one another in those same shopping carts by pushing them as fast as they can along the paths in Jangaleka until one of them falls over.

By including these intimate moments and encounters, this thesis takes its place among a growing body of work sometimes referred to by scholars of migration as 'post-Agambenian,' a term referenced and explained in the Introduction (Banerjee, 2021; Boano, 2021; Carter-White and Minca, 2020). It problematises the notion that camp-like spaces such as Dankix reduce their inhabitants to 'bare life,' whereby biological life is prioritised over the way that life is lived (see Agamben, 1998). To better understand these spaces, it is crucial that further research is conducted in similar informal settlements across Europe, such as in the Balkans, Spain, and elsewhere in France. As is mentioned above, a key characteristic of informal camps like Dankix is that they are not built nor administered by an authoritative body (whether that be the state or a humanitarian institution). Dankix is not a space (in)to which its residents have been sent, but one built by its residents – again and again – to facilitate their movement across borders. They are not structures that mark a 'protracted emergency' (whereby refugees remain encamped for decades) and do not hold the promise to eventually return home. They are purpose-built transitory spaces that aim to fulfil the needs of its inhabitants, rather than of an authoritative institution. They are also, as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, spaces that enable subtle, systemic, and spectacular forms of violence. Yet one of the most important outcomes of studies of violence is that they reveal its manufactured nature. This thesis has shown that violence in Dankix is the product of an interrelated, wide-ranging series of decisions that can be challenged and can, therefore, be changed.

APPENDIX A | Coloniality in Southern Kurdistan

Stop stealing our oil, and we'll stop coming.

– Sangar¹³⁴

This thesis examines violence and its affective consequences and interpretations in Dankix. This is but a snapshot, however, of the migration journeys of the research participants involved. While an examination of the contexts before departure from Kurdistan and upon arrival in the UK is beyond the scope of this thesis, I include here a discussion of the socioeconomic context in Kurdistan. I situate it within its historical and colonial context to show how British coloniality has had a direct impact on contemporary migration patterns.

The presence of kochberan in Dankix forms part of a historical trend of Kurdish migration that stretches back to 1974. Erlend Paasche examines Southern Kurdish (the region of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq) historical migration patterns through the lens of Douglas Massey's cumulative causation – or the theory that 'pioneer' migrants pave the way for future migrants (Massey, 1990; Paasche, 2020). He points out that scholars have neglected to apply this theory to those who are forcibly displaced. While I disagree with the dichotomisation of migration as driven by *either* 'economics' or 'conflict' (as, to an extent, does Paasche), Paasche's research is a valuable contribution to understanding the cumulative and regenerative effects of migration from Southern Kurdistan to Europe. He demonstrates that there have been three distinct 'waves' of Southern Kurdish migration to Europe: (1) from 1974 to 1991, among well-connected 'elites' of high socioeconomic status and education level who fled political persecution under the Ba'athist regime, (2) from 1992 to 1998, among those with mixed socioeconomic means who migrated as a result of extreme economic precarity brought on by Saddam Hussein's sanctions against Kurds, and (3) from 1999 to 2014, among those with few socioeconomic opportunities who left as a result of a "culture of migration" (*ibid.*: 6). By a 'culture of migration,' Paasche refers to the normalisation of departure and its embodiment into a broader cultural habitus. Contributing to this culture of migration are several political and socioeconomic forces compelling kochberan to leave. Most cite their reasons for

¹³⁴ Sangar, Frishta's husband, is introduced in Chapter Two.

leaving as economic precarity, social and gendered responsibilities, and/or the emergence of an urgent danger (e.g., persecution for one's sexual orientation, running from the repercussions of a crime, from an abusive spouse or partner, or from retaliation from the state if they have spoken out against the ruling political party).

Economic precarity

Because nearly all kochberan in Dankix are Southern Kurds (with only a small minority from Eastern Kurdistan, or Iran-controlled Kurdistan) I focus primarily on the socioeconomic and political context of Southern Kurdistan. I hereby use the term 'Kurdistan' to refer to this region (officially called the Kurdistan Region of Iraq or KRI), in line with how the term is often used among Southern Kurds themselves. The majority of Southern Kurds with whom I spoke about their reasons for leaving said, "There is no *work* in Kurdistan. There are no salaries." Indeed, according to a population census conducted jointly by the Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office and the International Organization for Migration in 2018, the unemployment rate for men in Kurdistan (excluding IDP camps) is 8.1 (an increase from 5.2 in 2012) (IOM, 2018). Additionally, most individuals actively searching for work are aged between eighteen and thirty-four. Of unemployed men aged eighteen to twenty-four, 31% have lost hope in finding work. This figure more than doubles to 65% for unemployed men aged twenty-five to thirty-four. I concentrate on young men because women represent only 15% of the work force, and between 78% and 93% (depending on the age bracket) of unemployed women of working age are housewives (*ibid*).

Not only do the men in Dankix tell me that there is no work, they also explain that there are no salaries. Most employed men work in the public sector (44%), and those with a formal degree are twice as likely to secure public sector jobs than those without (*ibid*). Those without formal education are most likely to be self-employed or daily wage workers (e.g., working in a barbershop, a newsagent, restaurant, or car wash). Since the labour market is dominated by public sector jobs, nearly two-thirds of all households are dependent on public funds either in the form of payroll or pensions (*ibid*). The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), however, has only seldom paid employees' salaries over the past several years.

Salaries have been withheld due to a combination of several factors. Kurdistan is entitled to a portion of the central Iraqi government's annual budget. In 2014, however, during the war with Daesh, the Iraqi military withdrew from the oil fields surrounding Kirkuk (a disputed oil-rich territory between Kurdistan and Iraq despite being Kurdish-majority). Kurdish forces took advantage of the Iraqi military's retreat, took control from Daesh of key oil fields around Kirkuk, and began to sell its oil independently of Iraq (Salih, 2015). The KRG took most of Iraq's share of the revenue, against an arrangement previously made between the two governments (*ibid*).

Once Kurdish forces successfully drove Daesh from the region in 2017, the KRG held an independence referendum. The central Iraqi government responded by recapturing Kirkuk from Kurdish forces (Al Jazeera, 2017). This led to a decrease in private sector jobs in Kurdistan, from 730,000 in 2013 to under 73,000 in 2017, and slashed the KRG's oil revenue in half (Hussein, 2018). Between 2014 and 2017, the KRG had borrowed billions of dollars from Turkey, trading houses, and Russian state oil firm Rosneft against oil that they had not yet extracted (Zhdannikov, 2017). Since losing so much of their oil revenue, the KRG still has no viable way to balance their deficit, continuously cuts public sector payrolls, and generally pays public sector employees one quarter of what they are due (Hussein, 2018). Furthermore, as a result of the Kirkuk conflict, from 2014 until 2018 the central Iraqi government refused to send the KRG its portion of the annual federal budget (Jalabi and Rasheed, 2018). The KRG relies almost exclusively on their budget allocation and international aid to pay government employees' and Peshmergas' salaries (Hussein, 2018). These payments are erratic and often mean someone may go for months without an income, before receiving only one month's wages and having no idea of when to expect their next payment. All the while, they are working full-time as teachers, doctors, or in other public sector jobs.

Colonial dispossession

Kurdistan's dependence on Iraqi oil revenue and the tensions between the KRG and Iraqi central government have been produced in part by a long history of colonial and imperialist violence. In anticipation of their defeat of the Ottoman Empire, France and Britain secretly partitioned the region according to their colonial interests in the 1916

Sykes-Picot Agreement. Under the Ottomans, what is now known as Iraq had been split into three distinct provinces: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. Mosul loosely encompassed what is known today as Southern Kurdistan, or the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Upon the Ottomans' defeat, the principal Allied Powers of the First World War and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, whereby Britain and France separated the area known today as Iraq into two 'Mandates' or colonies. A line was drawn in the middle of Mosul province, in which "[was] supposed to be one of the richest oil fields in the world" (Buell, 1923: 931; Ali, 1997). In 1918, France conceded their occupied territory of Mosul (whose territory is demarcated as 'A,' in the below figure) to Britain ('B,' in the below figure) and decreed that Britain would occupy all three provinces under the name Mandatory Iraq (Al-Jaf, 2018; Dodge, 2003). In 1921, the British Colonial Office installed King Faisal to the throne of the new Kingdom of Iraq, someone they considered malleable and amenable to British colonial interests (Al-Jaf, 2018).

Prior to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and Germany had already established a company called the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC), whose aim was to exploit the oil in the region (Al-Jaf, 2018). After 1920, France took Germany's shares (25%) of the TPC and Britain (with 75% of the shares) granted the United States permission to buy into the TPC over several years (*ibid*). In 1929, the TPC was renamed as the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) and held a monopoly on all oil exploration and production in Iraq until Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist government nationalised oil operations in 1972 (Kwarteng, 2012). From 1929 until 1972, roughly one quarter of IPC shares were held by French and American companies, while nearly half were controlled by British companies. The IPC became both "the economic instrument and symbol of Britain's dominance over the country" (*ibid.*: 68).



Figure 21 - Map illustrating the Sykes-Picot Agreement (The National Archives, 1916)

Articles 62 through 64 of the Treaty of Sèvres had explicitly made room for the formation of an independent Kurdish state within one year of its signing (Treaty of Sèvres, 1920). Turkey, however, resisted the terms of the Treaty and attempted to claim Mosul province by arguing that British rule would foment Kurdish aspirations for self-determination (Al-Jaf, 2018). Yet Britain had a vested interest in dispossessing Kurds of their oil, using Mosul province as a 'buffer zone' against Russian and Turkish expansion, and securing a railway leading to Persia (Al-Jaf, 2018). In order to appease Turkey, Britain dropped the Kurdish Articles from the Treaty and invited Turkey to join the League of Nations (Ali, 1997).

Kwasi Kwarteng, a British Conservative MP, argues in his book *Ghosts of Empire* that Britain's continuous instalment of unfit but malleable rulers lay the foundations for the emergence of the Ba'athist regime (2012). In 1919 and 1920,

large-scale revolts against British rule occurred in both Baghdad and Mosul provinces (Tripp, 2007). In Kurdistan, this was led by Sheikh Mahmud, whom the British had installed as governor of Slemani under the assumption that he would defer to British colonial interests (*ibid.*: 33-34). Winston Churchill, Secretary for Air and War and then the Secretary for the Colonies at the time, responded to the Kurdish rebellion by bombing civilians, citing the economic effectiveness of 'aerial policing' over traditional military occupation (Hechter, 2013). While, over a number of years, Sheikh Mahmud was able to install a parallel Kurdish government in and around Slemani, the British royal air force alongside King Faisal I's army continuously defeated Kurdish resistance movements and drove Sheikh Mahmud and his supporters into the mountains along the Persian border (Ali, 1997).

Britain's colonial rule, while ending officially in 1932, effectively ended with the 1958 Iraqi uprising against the monarchy and the subsequent establishment of the Iraqi Republic (Tripp, 2007). The IPC, however, still controlled most of Iraq's natural resources and 80% of its wealth, and demands for an Iraqi share in the IPC's revenue reached a crescendo in the early 1970s (Kwarteng, 2012). In 1972, Saddam Hussein, with the support of the Soviets and the French, who had underwritten their oil, nationalised the IPC. Iraq's oil revenues skyrocketed from 575 million USD in 1972 to 26 billion USD in 1980 (*ibid*). This allowed military expenditure to increase from 800 million USD in 1972 to 12.5 billion USD in 1983 (Alnasrawi, 1986).

Kurdish resistance to British and Iraqi rule did not cease after Sheikh Mahmud was driven out. Kurds waged several revolts and long-term wars against Iraqi rule from 1958 through to the twenty-first century. This is infamously marked by Saddam Hussein's genocidal Arabisation campaign which aimed to drive Kurds from oil-rich areas and contributed significantly to the first wave of Kurdish emigration (Paasche, 2020). The Kurdish genocide was funded by the oil revenue Hussein had seized from the IPC (see Alnasrawi, 1986), and the Ba'athist regime rose to power along a wave of extreme nationalism that resulted directly from decades of British colonial violence and the incompetence of their Iraqi puppet leaders (Dodge, 2003; Kwarteng, 2012). British interference in Iraq created an environment where violence, corruption, and authoritarianism were predictable and arguably inevitable (Dodge, 2003).

Following the Second Gulf War, or Iraq War, the new American- and British-backed Iraqi government auctioned off the means for oil exploration and extraction.

Private British, American, and other foreign companies took control of over 60% of Iraq's previously nationalised oil fields (Muttitt, 2012) and the KRG has signed over sixty oil and gas contracts with international oil companies (Hasan, 2019). Indeed, the Chilcot Inquiry (an investigation into Britain's participation in the Iraq War) shows that oil interests significantly influenced the UK government's decision to invade Iraq alongside the US military in 2003 (The Iraq Inquiry, 2016). The latest oil production report from Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was compiled by Deloitte and published in 2021. It is based on figures provided by foreign oil companies operating in major oil fields (Deloitte, 2021). It does not include what percentage of oil fields are controlled by the KRG or Kurdish interests versus international corporations but does show how oil revenue is allocated: from April to June 2021, 41% was sent to oil producers while 2% was used to repay debts (*ibid*).

As was mentioned above, the KRG borrowed money from international oil companies against oil that had yet to be extracted and many of the deals they struck with foreign companies involved prepayment schemes. For instance, one of Kurdistan's fifty-two oil blocks is 100% owned by Norwegian company DNO ASA and Anglo-Turkish company Genel Energy (DNO, 2021). Despite multiple payments annually of over 80 million USD, the KRG still owes them over 360 million USD in arrears for oil sales from November 2019 to February 2020 alone (DNO, 2021; Genel Energy, 2021). In total, the KRG currently owes approximately 4.3 billion USD to dozens of foreign oil producers (Deloitte, 2021; Sirwan, 2021). The specificities of oil production in Kurdistan – including a lack of transparency, corruption, and clientelism – has led to much of the remaining oil revenue falling into the hands of political elites in both parties of the duopoly (Hasan and Perot, 2021).¹³⁵

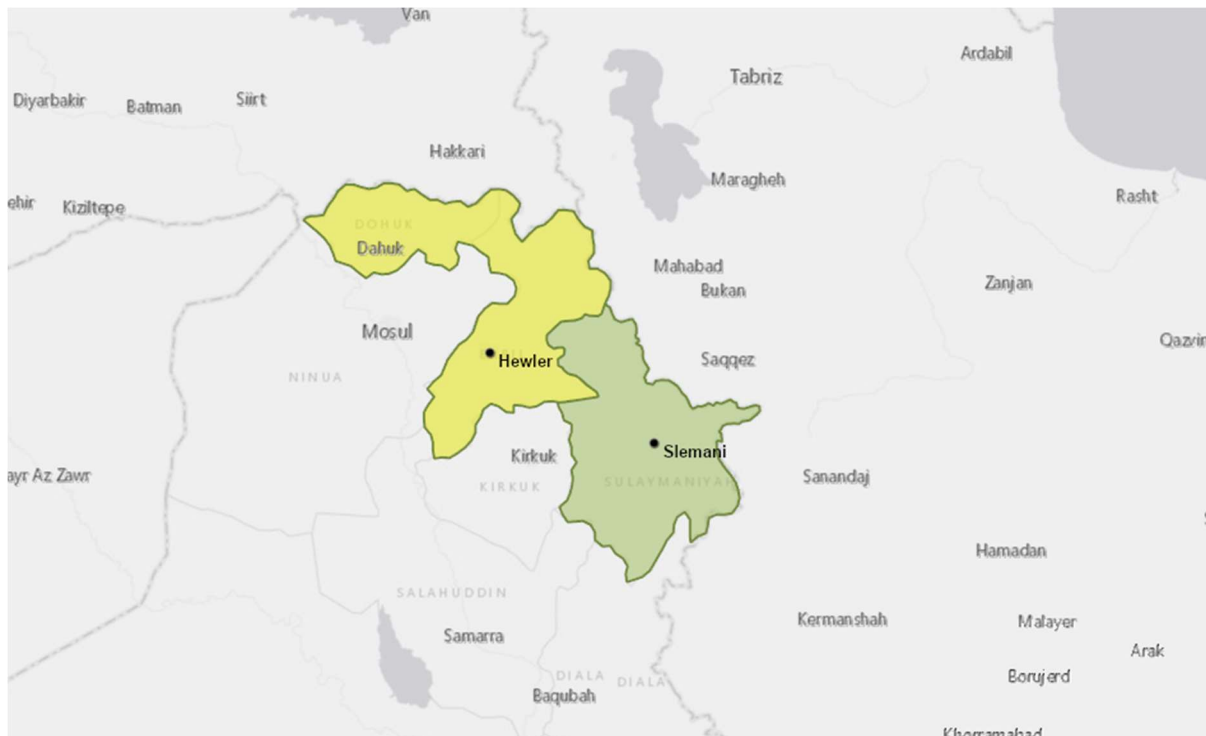
Considering the brief historical outline I have included above, it can be argued that British colonial dispossession, as well as British and American imperial violence in the twenty-first century, have contributed significantly to today's political instability, government corruption, and economic precarity in Kurdistan.

¹³⁵ As is explained in the Conclusion, the duopoly consists of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

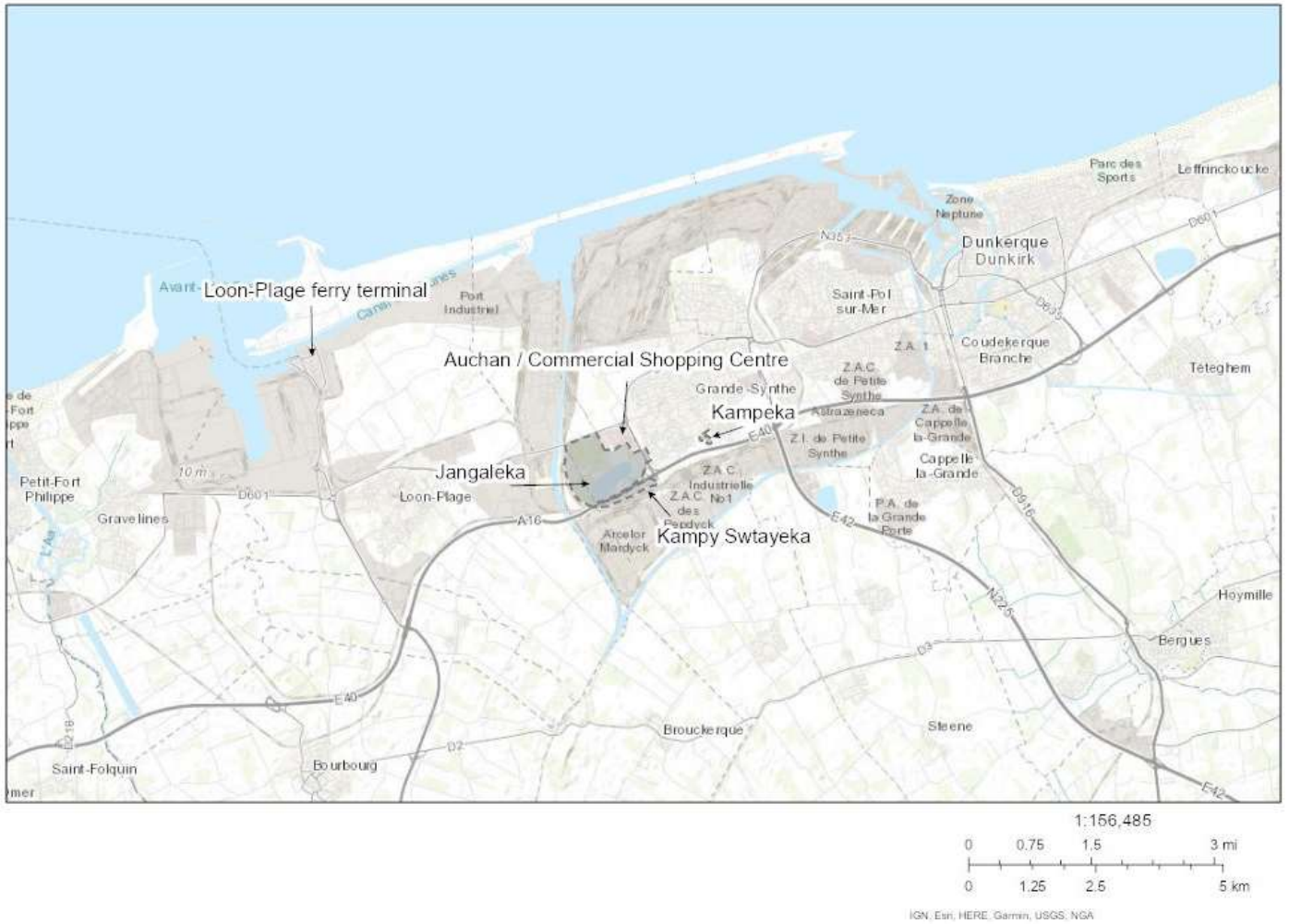
APPENDIX B | Maps



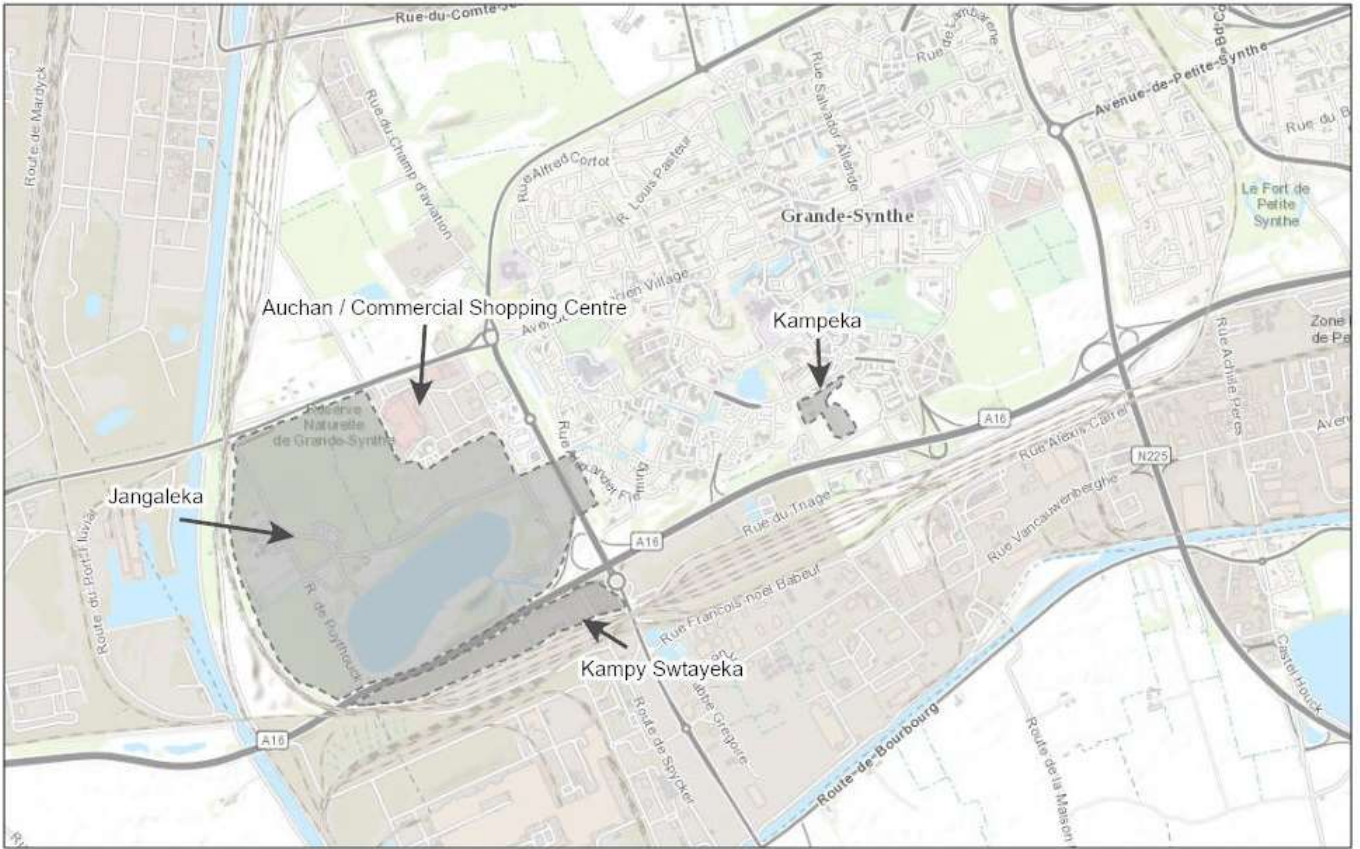
Map of Kurdish-inhabited areas; image by author.



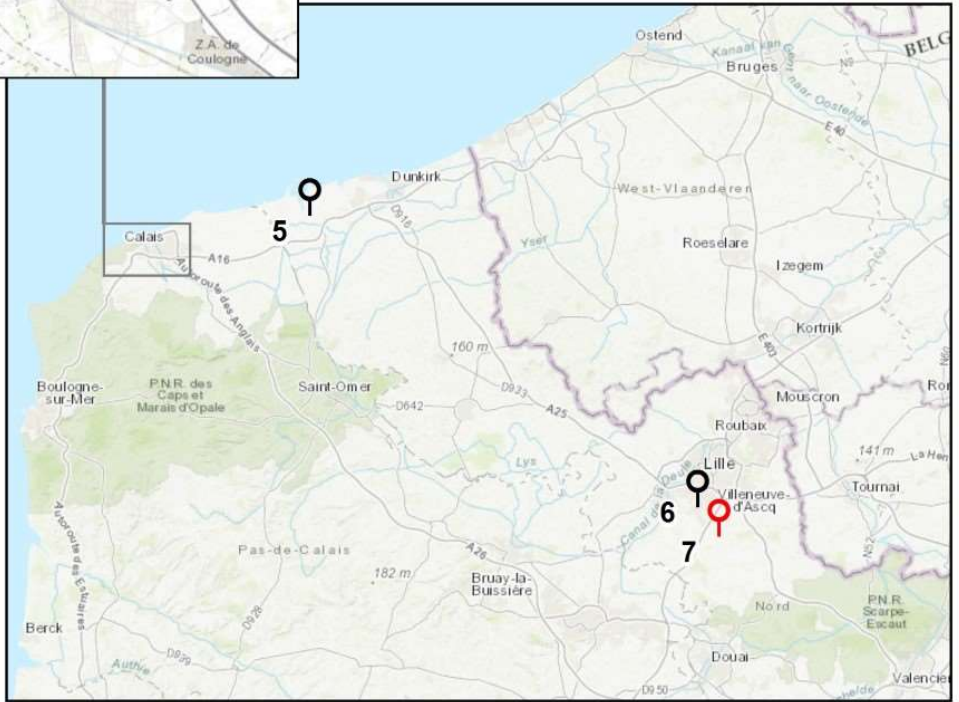
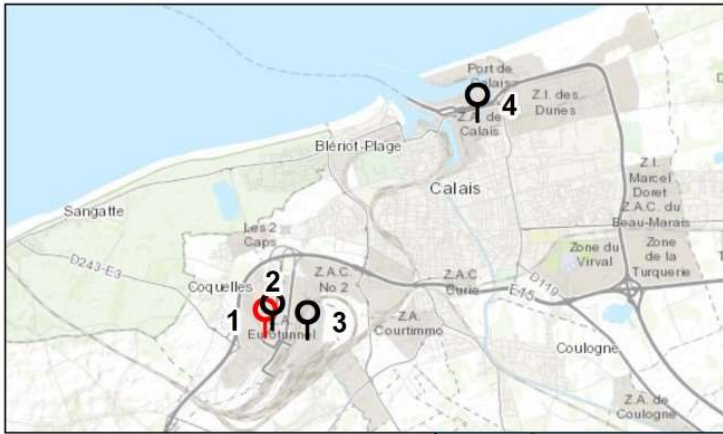
Map of Southern Kurdistan showing the regions controlled by the KDP (yellow) and PUK (green); image by author.



Large-scale map of Grande-Synthe featuring key areas of Dankix; image by author.



Small-scale map of Grande-Synthe featuring key areas of Dankix; image by author.



KEY	
	1 Coquelles Deport Centre
	2 STHFs: French (PAF) and British (Coquelles Tourist)
	3 STHFs: French (PAF) and British (Coquelles Freight)
	4 STHFs: French (PAF) and British (Calais Tourist)
	5 STHFs: French (PAF) and British (Dunkerque)
	6 STHF: French (PAF)
	7 Lesquin Deport Centre

Map of spaces of detention. Black markers are short-term holding facilities, and red are deport centres. Image by Rheyta Sward, commissioned by author.

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