CALAIS
Trapped on the Border

A brief history of solidarity squatting practices
Trapped on the Border: a brief history of solidarity squatting practices in Calais, France

Calais, a port city in northern France, is one of the last remaining hard borders in Europe and the main bottleneck at which people who travel clandestinely to the United Kingdom (UK) are held. For those illegalized travelers, Calais is an incredibly inhospitable place where they are forced to live in a humanitarian crisis created by French and British government policy. The state manufactured mechanisms inducing hardships on clandestine migrants there are presumed to deter those illegalized travelers from attempting the journey to England, or at least use Calais as their place of passage. A fundamental component of this state engineered torture of migrant groups in the city has been the constant denial of shelter through both refusing to provide them with sanctioned sleeping spaces alongside the invasion, eviction and destruction of their autonomous living places. We will briefly explore how practices of squatting in Calais persist in this hostile context through examples from the city’s history of ‘migrant squats’ of various kinds. Written from the perspective of native Europeans who have been squatting in Calais for many years, we aim to show how squatting has been critical in not only addressing the immediate problems of illegalized migrant accommodation here but also in confronting, redressing and challenging the political discourse while simultaneously creating bonds of solidarity and encouraging autonomy in migrant communities.

Calais Migrant Solidarity, 2015

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1 Calais Migrant Solidarity (CMS) is an international network of autonomous people involved in practical solidarity work with the migrant communities of Calais. First getting involved in 2009, the group has since been busy with monitoring police activity, squatting, supporting migrant’s political protests and direct actions, distributing food, clothing, water, blankets, and tents, doing outreach and publicizing the situation in Calais, and providing migrants with asylum and immigration information for the UK and other European countries.
Introduction
Calais, a port city in northern France, until very recently, was one of the last remaining hard borders in Europe and the main bottleneck at which people who travel clandestinely to the United Kingdom (UK) are held. For those legalized travelers, Calais is an incredibly inhospitable place where they are forced to live in a humanitarian crisis created by French and British government policy. The state manufactured mechanisms, inducing hardships on clandestine migrants there, are presumed to deter those illegalized travelers from attempting the journey to England, or at least using Calais as their place of passage. A fundamental component of this state engineered torture of migrant groups in the city has been the constant denial of shelter through both refusing to provide them with sanctioned sleeping spaces alongside the invasion, eviction and destruction of their autonomous living places. We will briefly explore how practices of squatting in Calais persist in this hostile context through examples from the city's history of 'migrant squats' of various kinds. Written from the perspective of native Europeans who have been squatting in Calais for many years, we aim to show how squatting has been critical in not only addressing the immediate problems of illegalized migrant accommodation here but also in confronting, redressing and challenging the political discourse while simultaneously creating bonds of solidarity and encouraging autonomy in migrant communities.

Until very recently, the illegalized migrants in Calais had no stable place to live. They were constantly denied shelter as a matter of French and British immigration and housing policy and were often quickly and repeatedly expelled if they settle anywhere. In this context, when migrant communities squat and carve out a space for themselves, it is as both a militant and resistant practice. Squatting not only reasserts people's rights to an autonomous and dignified life while trapped in France but also actively subverts British border controls by supporting those who attempt to cross the border clandestinely. In this chapter, we will first give a brief history and explanation of the border in Calais and the living situation of clandestine travelers trapped on it to provide a background to consider their squatting practices. Then we will present a general description of the different ways in which people squat in Calais and their motivations for using these spaces. After that, we discuss three different squatted spaces, their histories, and our personal reflection on how these spaces functioned. Finally, we will end with a brief description of the current situation as the state begins to change its strategy to deal with migrant squats and their supporters in the city.

Brief background
In 2003 the British and French governments signed the Le Touquet treaty in which they agreed to establish juxtaposed immigration controls on cross-Channel ferry routes. This meant that all travelers between the two countries would have to clear immigration in the country of departure rather than on arrival. This externalized the entire UK border to France in order to keep would be illegal entrants off the British mainland as they would be in France if they were caught rather than on British soil.

The juxtaposed controls were only one part of a broader strategy to prevent people moving to England, the other half of which was the closure of the Red Cross managed refugee center in Sangatte, existing since 1999. In the eyes of the governments the center had a 'magnet effect' and attracted 'illegal immigrants', supposedly creating the problem rather than responding to it. They equated the minimum humanitarian standards for sustaining life with 'pull factors' that threatened the sovereignty of the UK's border with undesirable migrants to justify their erasure.
This is an excuse that has been repeated over and over again for the refusal of any sort of meaningful humanitarian support for migrants in Calais at a state level. Today politicians still cite fears that a “New Sangatte” would attract more migrants than those already present, and is their primary reason for denying the provision of any housing arrangements for migrants in Calais.

The year 2003 then marks the beginning of the modern deterrent policies and practices in Calais, which consist of the simultaneous tightening of security measures at the ports and attacks on the clandestine travelers’ living spaces. This is an ongoing pattern that has had many iterations since. For example, in 2009 there was the eviction and destruction of the jungle in which approximately 2,000 people were living at the same time the British made a fifteen million pound investment in new technology to search goods and vehicles at the port. Again in 2014 fifteen million euros was pledged by the British to increase funding for border controls and border police forces in the city amidst the eviction and destruction of the jungles and squats where migrants were dwelling. Despite the increasing difficulty of the border crossing, the number of people coming to Calais to attempt it has been rising over time along with the urgency of the housing crisis that faces them here.

**Squats on the border**

Most of the people who are squatting in Calais do not want to be. They are trapped in the city without the papers needed to continue their journeys to the UK and are forced to accept whatever form of shelter they can whilst they try to cross the border; a task which takes most migrants many months. Most of them have not squatted before or plan to continue squatting once they regularize their status and are able to work and access social services. Even those who choose to stay and ask for asylum in France often remain without accommodation and in the squats for years while their cases are considered. For all of them squatting is not a choice but rather a necessity for survival.

There are also handfuls of native Europeans, or people otherwise having legal status, who squat in the city along with the migrants in Calais. These people often have previous squatting experience, a political analysis around housing and migration issues in Europe, and often are associated with Calais Migrant Solidarity (CMS). For them, to squat and share skills and knowledge about squatting with the migrants there is an act of solidarity stemming from political convictions. They have varied involvement in the different squats in Calais either by just visiting, spotting buildings that can possibly be squatted, opening buildings with/for migrants to take shelter, trying to establish legalized squats, or occupying squats along with other residents. This is done in combination with other forms of support work such as documenting police violence; collecting food, clothing or blankets to distribute; and sharing information on the asylum process in England to migrant groups. We write here as members of this group of squatters in Calais and from the collective perspective of CMS.

**Types of squats in Calais**

Squats in Calais take the form of a multitude of abandoned and non-abandoned spaces such as houses, factories, vacant land, holes that are dug under roads and sidewalks, spaces behind stacks of washing machines in laundromats, park benches, or abandoned World War II pillboxes. Despite the extreme variety of squats, there are three broad types of occupations popularly known as 'jungles', 'kharabas', and 'legal squats'. The people who create and inhabit these squats often depends on their legal status in France (EU citizen, asylum-seeker, or
clandestine not wanting to regularize their status until reaching the UK), relationship to Calais (whether staying long-term or trying to cross as quickly as possible), and previous experiences of squatting in Europe.

Most common in Calais are the 'jungles', a term taken from the Pashto word 'dzhangal' which is used to refer to squatted camps. Jungles are highly improvised and autonomous squats, the purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for migrants to rest while they traverse the French/UK border. These encampments are usually comprised of tents and makeshift structures made of pallets and tarpaulin, and are set up in open spaces either in the city itself or slightly outside its urban center. Jungles can be quite small, consisting of not more than a few tents, or large with hundreds of individual living arrangements. Some of Calais' larger jungles have even had impressive mosques, churches, restaurants, and stores in addition to sleeping spaces. The jungles are situated close to amenities necessary for the survival of the squatters living there such as water standpipes, food distribution centers, or lorry parks to travel to England. While there are covert jungles where people live unobtrusively to avoid contact with police, most jungles in Calais are obvious and have the maximum number of people possible living in them. Usually a jungle is squatted by a small group of people and, as time goes by, more people join the occupation. In this way the jungles grow until the point the state gathers enough political support and police for their eviction and destruction.

Another type of squatted space for migrants in Calais is the 'legal squat' which is also the main type of squat that we will be discussing in the following sections. This is a squat that has a formal legal complaint taken against its occupation. French law stated that if a squatted building is the primary residence of the occupants and if they can show they have been there for a significant amount of time (in practice this worked out to be forty-eight hours although this was not written in the law) then the police cannot evict them until the case is resolved in a civil court. However, this law has recently been changed in the French Senate through a process initiated by Calais' mayor to give more legal tools to evict migrant squats, an issue that will be returned to later. In securing this type of squat citizenship status came into play. People seeking asylum and native European citizens were needed to declare it as their primary residence and defend the squat in the early first days in order to force the legal process. After the legal process has started, the squat became normalized and secure from police, so those without papers could join the occupation without fear of a sudden eviction. Legal squats are some of the best resourced spaces as the security they provide allows infrastructure to be built within them. They also usually have utilities and are some of the only places in the city where migrants can access toilets, running water, or electricity. They are frequented by all types of people for many different reasons; including getting food and tea, charging telephones, meeting up with friends, permanently residing there, or just occasionally resting.

A final articulation of squatting in Calais is that of the 'kharaba'; an Arabic word meaning an empty or dilapidated house. A specific example of a 'kharaba' is Africa House, the first example of a squatted space that will be recounted in this chapter. This term is used to refer to the occupation of abandoned and often heavily damaged buildings. These squats seldom have basic utilities, lockable doors, or complete shelter from weather conditions but are not as exposed as the jungles. However, just like in the jungles they are not secure spaces and residents face frequent ID controls by police and the constant threat of eviction. Calais is a city of run down and abandoned buildings and often kharabas are located in the heart of the city. This gives the occupants more access to the city's resources, but with a greater distance to travel to its periphery where they can try to cross to the UK. Kharabas are often squatted by a mix of people including native Europeans, migrants without status, and people that are claiming asylum in
France or who have been deported back to France under the Dublin legislation. Generally the occupants are long-term squatters who have been living in Calais for many months or years, or have had previous experience squatting in other European countries. Kharabas are often taken by people who desire more secluded and private spaces, and where they have marginally more comforts than the camp like living arrangement in the jungles. Before 2013 kharabas were the main type of squat CMS was involved with, an example of which was 'Africa House', a series of 3 squatted buildings inhabited between 2009 and 2012.

**Radical migrant solidarity and squatting in Calais: History and Practice**

*Africa house: a recollection by Raven*

Over time, many buildings in Calais have been given the name 'Africa House'. The one I was most familiar with was the squatted Pagniez sawmill, which many folk think of as the 'original' Africa House though it was actually not the first. It was a pan-African space – mainly Sudanese, with some Ethiopians and Eritreans, occasional Somalis, Nigerians and others – located near the center of Calais. From the city street, all you saw was a 10 foot rusty sheet metal gate. Behind this, a set of dilapidated industrial buildings around a central yard. The back of the compound joined onto a large, rutted car park but had been walled off by the authorities in an attempt to stop people getting in. This plan backfired when the migrants discovered that the cops couldn’t climb half as well as they could.
Africa House came under daily police attack in spring 2010, leading up to an eviction in the summer. You can’t quantify the psychological damage of being arrested every day, sometimes beaten up, in a country so far from home. A close bond developed between migrants and CMS activists, some of whom made Africa House our personal focus in Calais. We slept there, we got arrested there. Sometimes we taught English there during the day and occasionally helped instigate large multilingual meetings in the yard. Late at night we sat around the fires in the huge warehouse space, sharing cigarettes and watching people burn off their fingerprints.

We would wake ourselves in the cold dawn, quickly pack our stuff, get out, and sit on the high back wall with whistles in the half-light of the morning. Often, another early riser would come and bring us sugary tea, though most people were still asleep after spending all night trying to smuggle themselves to the UK. If the cops came we would gather evidence, obstruct them and make a lot of noise. This gave people the chance to disappear. The cops could be brutal, though they would tone it down when we were present. They would usually nick everyone they could find and sometimes leave racist graffiti, destroy property and pepper spray everything.

The warehouse had huge gaps in the floor, full of junk, where some of the sawmill machinery had been. Part of the police routine was to pepper spray down into these long, partially exposed basements. There were also back rooms, really dark and full of unstable floors, rusty saw blades and human detritus. A Sudanese friend showed me a room that had a ladder down into the basement level, though it was choked with dangerous metal, huge drifts of sawdust and fuck knows what else. It took half a dozen of us three days to clear part of the basement, with access through this dodgy room, and put up a membrane to stop pepper spray from drifting in. When it was ready 40 people could hide down there during a raid. We saw the confusion daily on the faces of the police officers. Africa House would be empty, fires still lit, no-one home. It was priceless. The cops never found the hidden space.

Apart from the 'kharabas' of which Africa House was a specific example that CMS was involved with, most of our squatting practices relate to opening and sustaining legal squats. In this section, we will narrate the situations of a few of the legal squats we were involved in occupying, managing, and supporting between Winter 2012 to Summer 2014. First we discuss our initial legal squat in the city and how squatting this building became a crucial action - symbolically setting a precedent for a new type of squatted space in Calais. Then, we will detail the story of a coordinated mass squatting action that yielded three stable legalized squats, before describing one of them in more detail. Simultaneously, we will contribute to the discourse on how squatting here has helped in building solidarity and shaping a community of resistance across lines of citizenship, race, class, origin, and language. Although this discussion primarily details the legal squats since 2013, we will now briefly pass over the events and squatting culture that prevailed between 2009 and 2012.

Squatting by illegalized people in the city goes back much further than 2009. However, this is a well documented period due to the constant presence of CMS affiliated people in Calais who concerned themselves heavily with documenting and intervening in police raids and evictions of squatted spaces. During this period, although some unsuccessful attempts were made at legal squatting and there were certainly people squatting smaller places clandestinely in the city, the main articulations of squatting were those of the jungle and large kharabas. Life for illegalized people in these spaces involved a constant game of cat and mouse with the state authorities. An area of land or an industrial space would be occupied and encampments built to which the police would then regularly come to harass people living in them by checking papers, pepper spraying belongings, and arresting people. This pattern would continue for a period of time until police had gathered sufficient information and mustered large enough
forces for mass evictions. They would then clear the occupation, destroy the encampment, brick the building up, or raze it to the ground. Following this clearance a new jungle or kharaba would appear in the same place or another abandoned space in the town, and the cycle would continue. Over the years, this process of occupation, harassment, and eviction has become a constant part of life in Calais for its illegalized migrants.

**Rue Caillette**

In response to this pattern of violence a small group of people, in the winter between 2012-2013, occupied a house owned by the town hall, in the center of Calais, on a street named Rue Caillette. They were for the most part native Europeans affiliated with CMS who had previous experience squatting in other cities in Europe and were aware of the legal rights that squatters had. This group explicitly took this house to resist the police when they arrived, inform them of the law, and force them to make a legal action against the occupation in the civil courts. The tactic behind this occupation was to set a new precedent in Calais for dealing with squats where police did not enter the space until the courts had ruled. It must be stressed again that this is how squats should be dealt with in France according to law; however, in Calais, because squatters for the most part have no access to the law as they are undocumented, squat evictions are conducted there illegally and with impunity.

The space existed for quite some time without any contact with the authorities. However, in early February, almost a month after it was first opened, an employee of the municipality tried to enter the house but could not as the locks had been changed. He called the police. Then, for the rest of the day the authorities tried to enter with a locksmith but were unable due to the barricades. On the door of the occupied building, a legal notice was posted that explained the rights of the occupants, and that a bailiff was needed to begin the legal process required for an expulsion. There were also masked people in the windows of the occupied house explaining the law to the police and dogs barking from behind the door. This further deterred them from trying to enter and eventually the police returned with a bailiff who took the name written on the front door and went off to file the paperwork. This was the beginning of the first successful ‘legal squat’ in Calais.

During the next couple of months this squat was primarily used as a work and sleeping space for people involved with CMS. At this time a previous office rented by CMS was being used as a sleeping space by almost forty men who were trying to cross the border. For this reason many people connected with CMS felt as if they wanted a space that was separate in which they could rest, work, and feel safe, and so advance their presence in Calais. It was also unknown how the police would react to the new legal squat if they knew a large number of people without papers were residing in it. However, at the end of March 2013, the contract on that rented office was terminated and the people who had been staying there were now without accommodation. Another legal squat was targeted for occupation to house those migrants; however it was immediately and illegally evicted. Thereafter the squat at Rue Caillette was opened to shelter those migrants now living on the street.

The first weeks with everyone were difficult as attempts were made to try to divide the spaces and assert control over them. In particular there were a few problems when people started fights inside the house using extremely racist and sexist insults. However, gradually the situation began to stabilize and the cohabitation process continued smoothly. But problems like migrants extracting rent from others in order for them to stay in the squat, or claiming that it was a space only for one specific ethnic group persisted. The CMS squatters had to spend a lot of time combating this and insisting that it was a free and open space. As counter-examples
CMS detailed other squats in the city that were controlled by specific migrant communities or smuggling networks and were unwelcoming to outsiders or those without the money to pay for a place to sleep. The police also respected the fact that they had no right to enter this squat and did not try to make any early morning raids there like they had previously done in the kharabas, or as they were continuing to do in the jungles.

During that time, between when papers were served and the date for the court hearing, Rue Caillette was an illustration of how a very diverse group of people sharing extraordinary circumstances could live together in solidarity. Although not without occasional problems, the fact that thirty to sixty people shared a single house with one toilet and seven rooms, in spite of all individually experiencing the mental agony of being far from home, hunted by police in the street, and having to find a way to cross one of the most highly secured borders in the world, was remarkable. More than that, Rue Caillette became people’s homes and provided them a place they could feel was their own in such a hostile city.

This positivity continued and in some ways was strengthened by the intense pressure on the squat from outside. The city tried to cut the water and electricity four times; however, with the skills and knowledge of the people living inside the buildings utilities were restored. Native French racists also shouted abuse and threw objects at the building. Patrols of CRS (French riot police) also regularly stopped and controlled people down the street from the squat as an intimidation tactic. Additionally, in late May, after the eviction and destruction of a squat on the East side of town all the inhabitants of that building were directed to Rue Caillette by police. This was particularly ironic because the state authorities were proposing an illegally occupied building that they were also looking to evict as soon as possible as the accommodation solution for those who they were now evicting. A local humanitarian association also thought this was the best option for the recently evicted and helped the migrants transport themselves and their belongings from the evicted building to the door of the squat on Rue Caillette. This doubled the population of the squat overnight and was obviously an attempt by the authorities to increase the pressure on the people inside, hoping that they would begin to fight more and give the state a pretext for their own eviction. However, this did not happen and the inhabitants welcomed and gave the new arrivals space in the house that was already far too crowded. There was recognition from those already staying in Rue Caillette that the existence of their squat was as well fleeting and that any shelter that they as legalized migrants had access to in Calais needed to be shared with the entire community.

The city received another defeat in their strategy to evict Rue Caillette when in July the court in Calais declared the municipality’s request for eviction “unreceivable”. This meant that the city had made procedural errors in submitting their case and that they would have to resubmit it before the case could be heard by the court. This failure further highlighted that the municipality was unaware of the procedures to evict a squat through a legal process. This response from the courts also gave the occupants more time, stability, and security inside the squat. However, not long after this victory the squat unfortunately was brought to a very sad and abrupt end by a small group of people that did not respect the space or even live in it themselves.

Members of a smuggling network took one person who used to be involved with them to sleep in the squat on night as he was just released from prison and had nowhere else to go. In the meantime they organized a revenge attack from a previous dispute with him for the morning. Although “only wanting to teach the guy a lesson”, and despite the efforts of the paramedics who responded to the incident, the person whom they attacked died from his wounds inside the
building. The police came immediately forcing everyone outside and closed the squat as a crime scene. After the initial investigation they bricked over all entrances, doors, and windows not allowing anyone back in even to retrieve their belongings. This was an extremely frustrating end for all the occupants as these actions did not reflect the spirit of the place at all, and provoked the eviction which everyone had been fighting so hard against. Furthermore, this tragedy provided legitimacy to the authorities in calling for the evictions of future squats, and further served to demonize migrants in the local media. However, despite this very terrible ending, many took their experiences from Rue Caillette as a positive example of how a very diverse group of people can live together in solidarity in Calais if given a small amount of security and autonomous control over their living space. It was also a very strong motivator for people to try and create many more similar spaces in the future.2

Struggling to secure more legalized squats

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2 The time between the Rue Caillette occupation and the mass squatting action that took place in 2015, there was another legal squat that was taken on the East of the city on a street called Boulevard Victor Hugo. It was set up to be a safer space for women, children, and particularly vulnerable people rather than a general shelter for all of those homeless and on Calais' streets like Caillette had been. Unfortunately, space in this text does not permit us to discuss it as its history is very complicated and deserves a full length analysis, but this was a very important action in the history of squatting in Calais.
After the closure of Rue Caillette, Calais’ authorities began to operate a no tolerance policy to the squatting of new buildings in the city. Whilst the Mairie (Town Hall) appeared to tolerate the various jungles spread around the city, any attempts at making another legal squat were swiftly, and often illegally, crushed by state forces. Eight attempts were made between Autumn and Winter of 2013 but every time the municipality discovered the squats, they were immediately evicted and the residents arrested, no matter the period of time they had been squatted for. The pattern was always similar. Soon after the squatters announced their occupation and provided the evidence they gathered to prove that they had been living there already many days, the police would arrive and collect a testimony from a neighbor or the owner who would say they have not seen us there before. The police would then declare that the occupation only had begun on the day we made it public and so they still had forty-eight hours to act. Ignoring the squatters’ evidence they would then come back to break down the doors and arrest the squatters. During this time CMS affiliates ended up pursuing a court case against the Prefecture of Nord – Pas de Calais for their illegal eviction of squats. However, parallel to this legal action CMS also decided to take direct action in its biannual network meeting, which happened in December 2013. It was decided here to organize a mass squatting action in which squatters from all across Europe would be invited to come and support the opening of multiple legal squats in one coordinated action. The idea behind this was that if squatters opened enough buildings in one day, state authorities would be overwhelmed and not able to evict all of the squats, only sending police to one or two of the new squats before the others would have been in public occupation for the minimum forty-eight hours needed to start a legal process.

Beginning on February 25th, 2014, nearly a hundred squatters arriving in groups of five to ten people occupied empty buildings around the city. The occupants tried their utmost to stay unnoticed, taking their supplies in with them and limiting their movements in or out of the squatted buildings. Furthermore, a team of ‘decoy squatters’ was tasked with making abandoned buildings not being occupied appear like they were squatted by posting banners, turning on lights or making noise inside the buildings. One factory this team pretended to occupy was raided twice during the action week by police and was in fact just down the road from one of the real targets. It was a funny moment when the CRS vans tore down the street to evict an unoccupied building driving right past the squat was actually being opened.

In a single night, a total of five buildings (one large factory and four smaller town houses) were occupied across the city. During this period, one of the buildings was discovered and evicted prior to the forty-eight hours required to begin a legal process. However, on February 28th, 2014, CMS announced the occupation of “a number” of buildings across the city. After this announcement, one of the squats at Impasse Leclercq (which happened to be the only one owned by the Mairie) was evicted, re-squatted and then evicted again by police. This left a total of three squats in the city after forty-eight hours had passed, a large factory on Rue Massena, and two town houses at Rue Auber, and Rue de Vic.

Now that we had some assurance that these spaces could be securely inhabited by migrants for at least a couple of months, decisions had to be made about how these spaces could be utilized. After extensive debate for many days between CMS affiliated people, asylum seekers in Calais, and people trying to cross about how to use and maintain the new legal squats, decisions were made based upon the form and the utility of the buildings. For instance, Rue Auber, was occupied by a collective of long-term residents in Calais and was chosen as a private and closed residence, with limited access. Rue Massena was initially chosen to be a non-residential social center that would offer bike repair, phone charging, a multilingual library, language classes, and
a boxing gym but eventually became a sleeping space as well. Finally the third house, Rue de Vic, became a private residence for a group of Eritreans and Ethiopians who were also trying to cross the border and whose previous house had recently been burnt and destroyed. Each of these squats offers interesting insights to the different needs of people squatting in Calais and how those needs are negotiated in the midst of the humanitarian crisis found there. However, only the occupation of Rue Massena will be discussed in depth in the following section because it represents the most successful social center and housing solution for migrants and non-migrants in Calais that came out of this action.

**Rue Massena**

Rue Massena was an old factory that had been abandoned for many years and was in a state of extreme disrepair when it was occupied in February, 2014. The space began its existence as a social center shortly after its occupation with little or no sleeping space except for a few residents who were working on repairing and organizing the space. Within a few weeks rotten floors had been rebuilt, holes in the roof and the ceiling were repaired, a kitchen was built, a running water system was established, and a bike workshop with dozens of frames and components was set up. The space began to attract more and more visitors and people started to take help from the workshops and other utilities located in it. New English language classes were started and so were the boxing and fitness activities. The social center was a residence for some people but simultaneously developed as a center for various skills training for all, free of cost.
After the eviction of the 'Sudanese Jungle' in the North of Calais on April 11th, 2014, Rue Massena became an emergency sleeping space and then eventually transformed into a permanent home for sixty Sudanese people, most of whom were travelling through Calais on their way to England. These transformations in Rue Massena offered an interesting and vibrant dynamic to the squat. The space was symbolic as a huge collective social space, where many people of different cultures, backgrounds and aims could meet, organize, and manage the space together. On April 15th, 2014, the squat hosted a trans-European gathering of antifascists who were responding to the threat of a fascist demonstration and the anticipation of attacks against other squatted spaces in the city. The gathering attracted around one-hundred people, many of who stayed at the Rue Massena squat for a week. This strengthened the connections between the residents of Rue Massena, local urban inhabitants, and international antifascist groups. The squat also became well known in the European squatting community and was visited on many occasions by traveling musicians, people who provided information tours about autonomous struggles in other cities, and by friends of the squatters.

This open form of squatting and the formation of a social center run collectively by people with European passports, people claiming asylum, local Calaisiens, and people attempting their journey forward to England stood as a fantastic example of community self organization - indicative of how squatting can create bonds of solidarity, friendship, autonomy, and self management across cultures, race, citizenship statuses, skills, age, and gender. The Massena squat was a creative resource for all of these different communities, not only offering material support in the form of food, shelter, and free bicycles, but also emotional and political support. The links that were created through active solidarity at the social center had a larger message than simple mutual aid. What was happening at Rue Massena was emblematic of collective strength as people struggled together against police brutality and repressive border control mechanisms.

The Massena squat also played a fundamental part in supporting and organizing the waves of hunger strikes in Calais in June 2014. Many squatters from this building were involved in the occupation and defense of the SALAM food distribution center following the evictions of the jungle just outside it that month, as well as the later occupation of the Galloo squat. Additionally it functioned as a radicalizing space for some local Calaisiens, who were exposed to the situations, ideas, and analysis of migrant and radical communities they would otherwise not have known. Furthermore, the space took an active role in resisting the British immigration system, by offering skill shares and workshops on what to expect from the asylum interview process once people arrived in England, and formulated an important and cohesive element to the 'no borders' struggle.

**Fort Galloo and the repression of squatters rights**

There has also been another major legal squat in addition to those mentioned here and which lasted for eleven months before it was evicted on June 2nd, 2015. The ground and buildings on it were taken as part of a large demonstration of five hundred people supported by local associations. In this respect Galloo was important as it was the first squat that was occupied and then openly supported with the help of local NGO's. Before this, CMS had organized squatting actions autonomously or with small migrant groups, but working together with associations for this occupation not only helped to reduce the legitimacy of any state repression against it but also involved many people in taking direct action who may not have done so before. The site was an abandoned metal recycling workshop located in an industrial area that backed onto
railway lines. Surrounded by a high wall, the 12,000 square meter complex included a house, a hanger space, and a large courtyard. It was open to absolutely everyone, except the police, and at its high point around 400 people lived there. The residents included migrants of different genders, backgrounds, and with various legal status, as well as native Europeans, and activists associated with CMS. With so many people staying in one place it was sometimes difficult for the residents of what became known as Fort Gallo, to manage their living space collectively. In this regard Gallo was both a success and a failure, it was a nightmare to organize collectively but provided a space safe from police harassment. In fact, though Fort Gallo was deemed an illegal occupation after only four months it was occupied for almost one year.

The current situation
The eviction of Gallo and the other large jungles existing in Calais during 2015 only took place after the opening of a ‘day center’ by the state where people could access basic services like showers and medicine but under no condition sleep there (remember the paranoia of creating a “New Sangatte”). However, the state did openly declare that it would tolerate the establishment of a jungle on the outskirts of Calais close to this center and even specified the land that could be used for this. This was an acknowledgment that their previous strategy of evicting squats without any alternative accommodation solutions did not in fact make the people living in those places disappear and had to change. Although it may be tempting to consider this as a victory and positive response to the high profile legalized squats and political struggles that had taken place around migrant accommodation over the years, this would be a naïve assumption. This day center and tolerated jungle are in fact part of a larger strategy to finally defeat the autonomous living spaces created by migrants and their supporters, and fulfill the mayor’s
declared goal of “zero squats” in Calais. They coincided with the adoption of her new anti-squatting law through which she is seeking to remove the previous legal protections for squatters in all of France. They also serve as a ready made political justification for the eviction of any future squats by being the alternative accommodation solution that never existed before. By concentrating the migrants into such a small area they also increase the tensions between communities and make the population as a whole much more easy to police. In fact the recent changes haven't had much to do at all with seriously tackling the problem of accommodating migrants in Calais, but is rather an effort to ghettoize the migrant community and transform their situation from a political struggle for dignity at Europe's borders into a neutral humanitarian crisis to be managed by the state and large NGOs.

Given these recent changes in terms of the legal landscape of squatting and the creation of the Jules Ferry ghetto for migrants in Calais, the future of squatting and particularly of legal squatting in this city is quite uncertain. As the new generations of migrants passing through the city are taken in by this cynically ‘tolerated jungle’ they do not get exposed to the squatting tactic or the radical solidarity networks that work to make them happen. Unless we can find ways of transforming how we get into contact and build relationships with those who continue to get stuck on this border it will become more difficult to work together in the future on confrontationally occupying new buildings to highlight and protest the conditions migrants are forced into in Calais.