Review article

Planet of camps: border assemblages and their challenges

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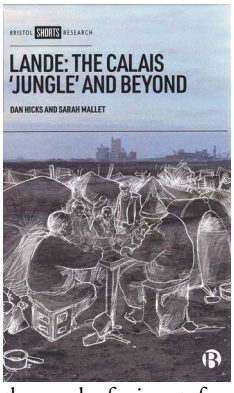
'Lande: The Calais "Jungle" and Beyond'. Temporary exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, 27 April–29 November 2019.

Dan Hicks & Sarah Mallet. 2019. *Lande: the Calais 'jungle' and beyond*. Bristol: Bristol University Press; 978-1-5292-0618-0 £45 & freely available online at https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/lande-the-calais-jungle-and-beyond (accessed 16 September 2019).



In his 2017 masterful film *Happy End*, the European auteur Michael Haneke returns to some of his favourite themes by portraying the life of a contemporary dysfunctional, white bourgeoisie family in Calais, France, struggling to deal with the skeletons in their cupboard. They are also mostly oblivious to the thousands of migrants from the Global South attempting to negotiate yet another borderland and cross into Britain. In the final scene, a group of them bursts uninvited into the family's engagement party. This classic Hanekean tense moment reminds us that contemporary global migration, rather than being a novel and unexpected 'crisis', amounts to an unavoidable return, a return of the oppressed and the colonised; it is a moment in the unfinished histories of white European global domination. In that sense, rather than being a 'migration crisis', it can be better described as a reception crisis (cf. Christopoulos 2016), a crisis of the contemporary nation states in the Global North who find it impossible to come to terms with their own histories.

This now widely accepted thesis is also adopted by the curators of this exhibition and the authors of the companion book. Calais is their focus, more specifically a series of migrant encampments and particularly the most recent one (destroyed by French authorities in March and October 2016), which became known as the 'Jungle'. They have opted for the term 'Lande' (heath), used to denote the broader area in which the camps were located. I am writing these lines from another borderland, a key entry from the Global South to the Global North, the island of Lesvos in Greece, where since 2016 I have carried out an archaeological ethnography of contemporary migration. Here, Afghani, Farsi-speaking migrants tell me that the overflow area outside the notorious Moria 'hot spot' (the EU-funded reception, registration and detention centre), an olive grove that for the last few years has become another camp, is also known by them as 'jungle', out of the Farsi word for a forested area, *djangal*. There are many 'jungles', both in Calais and around the world. The connotations of this word for Western audiences, animality, backwardness and lawlessness, are central to this exhibition and book project, which explores the material and visual culture of the 'Jungle' camp, and which is described by the authors as a project of contemporary archaeology. Both the book and the exhibition are structured around four themes: environmental hostility, temporal violence, visual politics and giving time. The Jungle is seen not as a camp but as a borderland, a landscape that categorises people, produces illegality and enacts hostility and violence upon the bodies of border crossers and migrants. Further, the borderscape of Calais commits certain forms of temporal violence: it brings up the *longue durée* of the colonial history of Britain, it produces time as the experience of immobility and the time of waiting, but also becomes an apparatus of allochronisation (rendering the other as living in another time, following here Fabian's analysis on

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the denial of coevalness, originally posed as a key anthropological trope). The authors write that:

> *In the Calais landscape these ongoing (post)colonial survivals are experienced vividly by displaced people through the strange epoch into which they are forced: a technological Mesolithic, where, apart from the smartphone, there is no modern technology of shelter, of transport, of lighting, heating, or community based on sedentism, but instead just walking and running, constant mobility, long journeys measured through time passed* (p. 52).

Yet a detailed ethnographic exploration would have perhaps revealed that rather than living a Mesolithic existence, migrants in borderlands such as the Calais Jungle, or the various camps along the Greek-Turkish border, produce through their own agency and work a multi-temporal experience: they reconnect with technologies and materials that we tend to associate, in our own sequential and lineal temporal thinking, as belonging to another era (soil and stone platforms, makeshift tents, sunken ovens—*tanurs*—made of clay jars and mud-brick), alongside smartphones, social media platforms and a global, underground reservoir of knowledge and network of communication, sharing and connection.

In the final two, wide-ranging, chapters of the book the authors shift from critiquing the border regime to outlining forms of resistance in the shape of visual politics and of materiality, seen as memory work. They discuss the work of a number of artists but also volunteers and NGOs, in Calais and elsewhere, and propose the concept of 'giving time', borrowed from volunteer discourses, not only as contributing to solidarity efforts but also as providing the temporal space, in museums and elsewhere, for reflection and critique. In using Hannah Arendt's concept of the 'space of appearance', they attempt, through both the book and the exhibit, to "bear witness […] through a form of Visual Archaeology" (p. 110).

This book engages with a number of important theoretical writings in cultural studies, anthropology and post-colonial studies, and the reader will learn much from it. As a book on the contemporary archaeology of a specific borderland, however, it has not succeeded, and can be best described as an insightful theoretical reflection on borders. It is hard to know what kind of fieldwork underscores its production, and nothing is mentioned in the preface to that effect. The few quotes from ethnographic interlocutors are drawn exclusively from secondary sources, and save for occasional passing remarks, the reader does not get much sense of the material and spatial layout of the camps, their texture, their daily routines, their sensorial realities, the ways through which they produce certain experiences and subjectivities, or even their state of ruination. Despite the author's evocations of concepts such as counter-mapping, there is not a single map or informative drawing. The evocative photographs by Caroline Gregory, from the time when she volunteered at the Jungle in 2015–2016, compensate to some extent for such a fundamental lack of attention to the material world of the camps. The authors' *bête noire* is another book on Calais, produced by Michel Agier and his team (for the English edition, see Agier *et al.* 2019). They are in constant dialogue with this work and are mostly highly critical of it. Yet, ironically, of the two books, the one by Agier and his team is the most thoroughly archaeological, with detailed descriptions of the material and visual worlds of the camps, with a clear exposé of the layouts (using very informative as well as evocative drawings), despite its theoretical limitations, which the authors rightly criticise, especially its evocation of abstract universalism. Furthermore, the authors chose not to reference or engage with, save for one or two brief passing remarks, the growing body of work on the archaeology and heritage of contemporary migration, nor do they acknowledge their debt to them, learn from them and the methods proposed so far, or offer their own critique (e.g. McGuire 2013; de Leon 2015; Soto 2016; and dozens of contributions in Hamilakis 2018, first launched as a journal issue in 2017, and Holtorf *et al.* 2018).

Migration and refugee studies is a huge, growing and diverse trans-disciplinary field of scholarship and activism. That diversity does not come through in this book, and the authors often castigate the field *tout court*, especially for its adoption of the tropes of emergency, humanitarianism and utilitarianism. Yet such criticisms have been voiced, time and again, within this field. Furthermore, one of its most dynamic threads, ignored here, is the approach known as the *autonomy of migration*, which sees the phenomenon as a social and political movement that is reshaping our world, not as a crisis moment. Political solidarity rather than humanitarianism is the preferred response in this approach (cf. Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013). For the archaeology of contemporary migration to have an impact on this vast field it will need to show that it can contribute novel insights

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not gained from other approaches and methods, based on detailed, almost forensic examination of the materiality of migration and its sensorial worlds. Moreover, such an approach can in fact activate the affective power of matter, and can engender political responses, much more effectively than other means. Finally, such detailed work relying on both thorough description and analysis of spaces, images and materials, as well as the foregrounding of the voices of migrants themselves, is an act of deep ethical-cum-political responsibility: it entails the valorisation, appreciation and mnemonic preservation of the material resistance of migrants themselves, of their own attempts at emplacement against often violent and forceful displacement. Borderlands offer lessons to us all today; they are both places of classification, racial profiling and violence, as well as zones of contact, laboratories of solidarity and modes of communal, post-national and transcultural living, especially crucial in the nomadic age ahead of us. But if we are to learn from these contexts, we need a detailed exploration of their material, sensorial and affective realities. At the same time, migration is not a phenomenon that involves only peoples who are on the move; it involves a whole heterogeneous assemblage in the Deleuzian sense, a sensorial assemblage of migration (cf. Hamilakis 2017a & b), and it is the co-functioning of its diverse components that needs to be addressed. We need to hear the utterances and explore the material apparatuses of other agents, from volunteers to state officials and guards, also in the spirit of 'studying both up and down'. The UN tents, the container-type prefab boxes used for shelter, the razor wire technology that has replaced the barbed wire, deserve close attention and thorough analysis. To be fair, the authors evoke the concept of assemblage here but with no further elaboration.

Where the book fails, the exhibition to a large extent succeeds, thanks not only to the curatorial efforts of its staff, but primarily due to the affective import of the things that were assembled. This is a crowded show, hidden in a side room in one of the most iconic

Figure 1. Objects displayed at the 'Lande' exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (photograph: Yannis Hamilakis, 26 May 2019).

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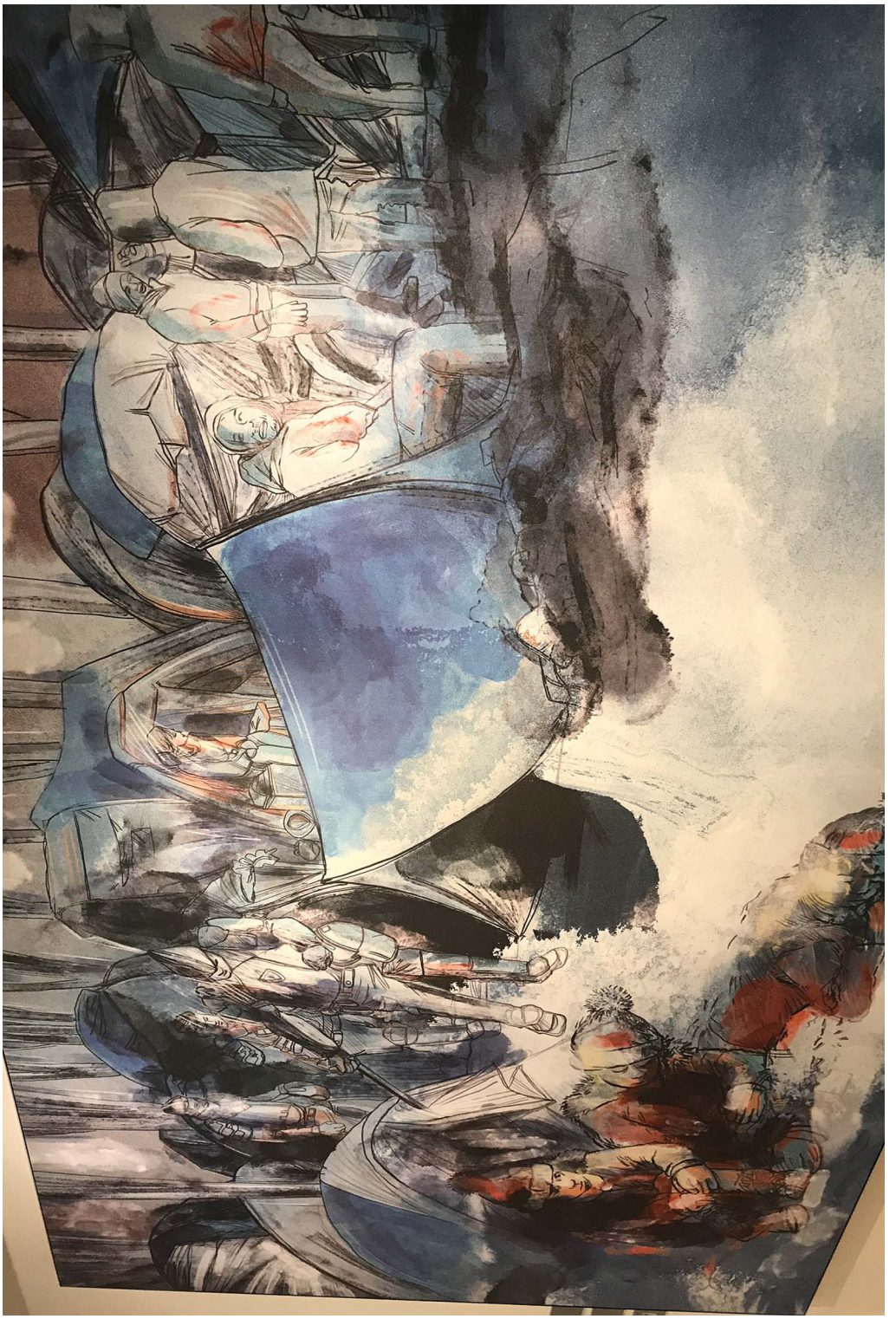

Figure 2. The wind will take us away *(Majid Adin, 2019, digital illustration). From the 'Lande' exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (photograph: Yannis Hamilakis, 26 May 2019).*

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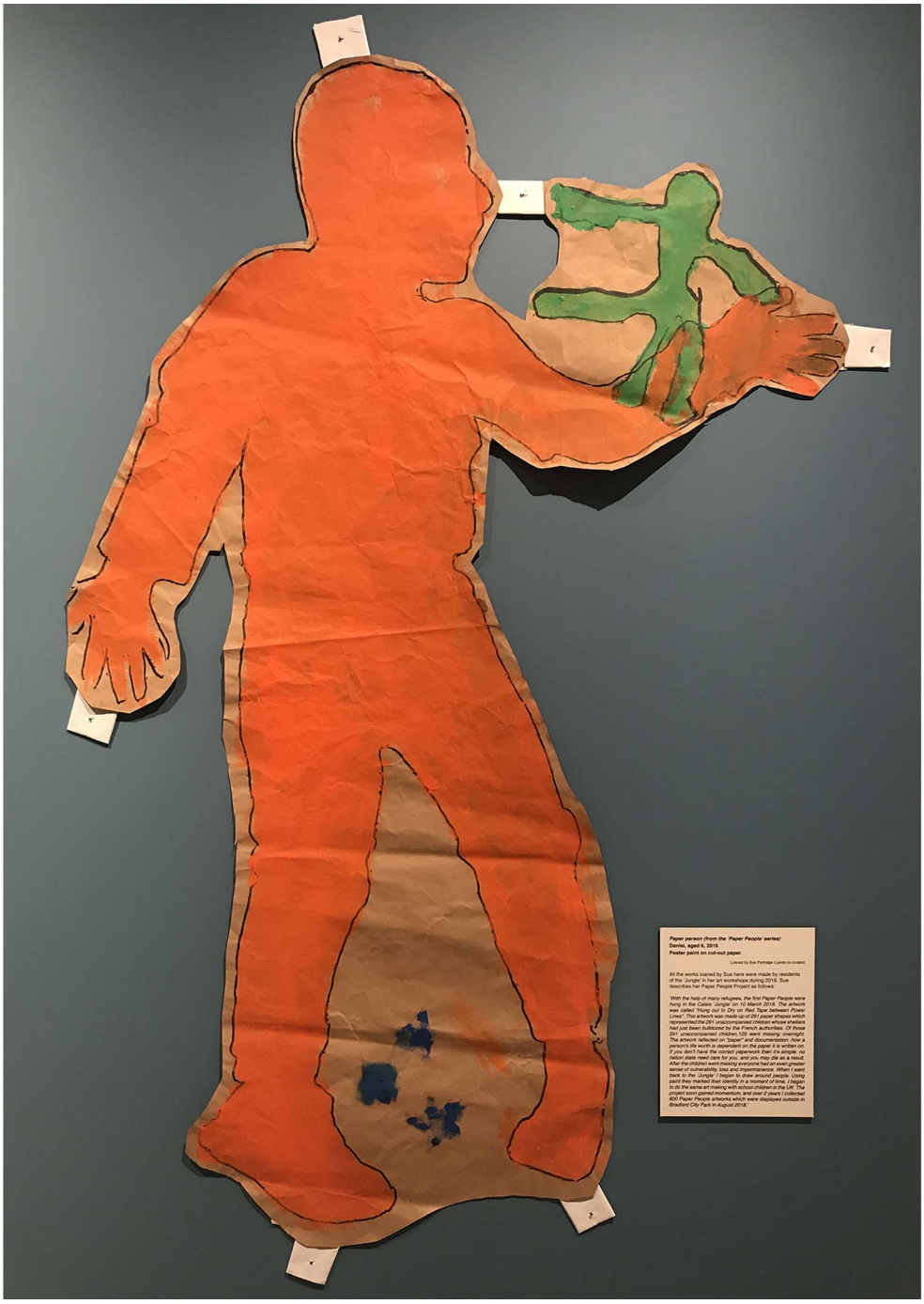

Figure 3. Paper person *(Daniel, aged 6, 2016, poster paint on cut-out paper). From the 'Lande' exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (photograph: Yannis Hamilakis, 26 May 2019).*

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anthropology museums in the world, but still a significant feat. The arrangement follows the themes outlined above, although visual culture, in the shape of photographs, drawings and paintings, dominates over other non-representational material objects. Photo-projects done by artists and volunteers, including the photographs by Caroline Gregory, paintings by migrant residents of Calais, objects such as a cross from one of the dismantled churches (donated by the Bishop of Bangor), canisters from the tear gas used by the police, two school chairs and a metal stove are some of the materials on show (Figures 1–2).

One of the most evocative exhibits is the artwork called 'Paper people', made by residents of the Jungle in the art workshops run by one of the co-curators, Sue Partridge: paper cut-outs in the shape of the human form, offering a poignant commentary on the agency of 'paper' and its multiple meanings. It is the possession or the lack of 'papers' that can determine the fate of a migrant person (Figure 3). All of us who work in borderland contexts are acutely aware of the power of papers in this digital age, and the care and attention with which migrants invest their papers, always kept inside plastic sleeves or even laminated and hoarded as their most precious possessions. On Lesvos, the colour of a stamp on a piece of paper can determine a person's mobility and eventually freedom: blue, and you can travel onto the mainland and possibly farther; red, and you are confined to the island, sometimes for years, which becomes an open prison. This is an important exhibition that deserves visiting and revisiting, a show that engenders not only anger and sadness but also reflection and hope. Towards the exit, visitors are asked to donate to migrant support charities, giving time and some financial contribution, a highly meaningful gesture on the part of the curators.

The authors of this book and the curators of this exhibition are keen to draw a homological connection between the anthropological museum and the contemporary borderlands, as spaces of colonial and racial classification but also as locales of possibility. They are right, but the problems of exhibiting such material and visual realities in a museum, especially in a museum rooted in colonial heritage such as the Pitt Rivers, do not seem to bother them much. If a borderland and its borderwork are matters of colonial histories and heritage, then their museum treatment should be a matter of decolonial reflection and action, not only over borders, nations and migrations, but for museums themselves. Who owns these objects and who has the right to exhibit them, and how? Should they stay in private hands, as these exhibited objects are, or should they be accessioned by a public museum? Are there any public museums today that archive and preserve the material objects of contemporary migration?

Moreover, let us think about the migration of objects and the migration of people together, connect the migration of people with the mobility or immobility of objects, and with the urgent matters of restitution and cultural reparations. These objects have made the crossing from Calais to Britain safely, whereas many migrants have not. Western, especially colonial-era, museums are full of cultural objects originating from the countries in the Global South from which millions of people are now fleeing; and yet these people are routinely denied entry by the border apparatuses of the Global North, a regime that some scholars would characterise as 'militarized global apartheid' (Besteman 2019). As Aminata Traoré, the author and former Culture and Tourism Minister of Mali, has put it: "Our cultural works enjoy civil rights in places where even our entire community is denied permission to stay" (Die Bündniskampagne No Humboldt 21 2013). What happens in that side room of the Pitt Rivers Museum today cannot and should not be seen as separate from what happens, and what should happen to its main chambers, exhibits and cultural logics.

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