The Memory of Sangatte 1999 - 2002

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From China
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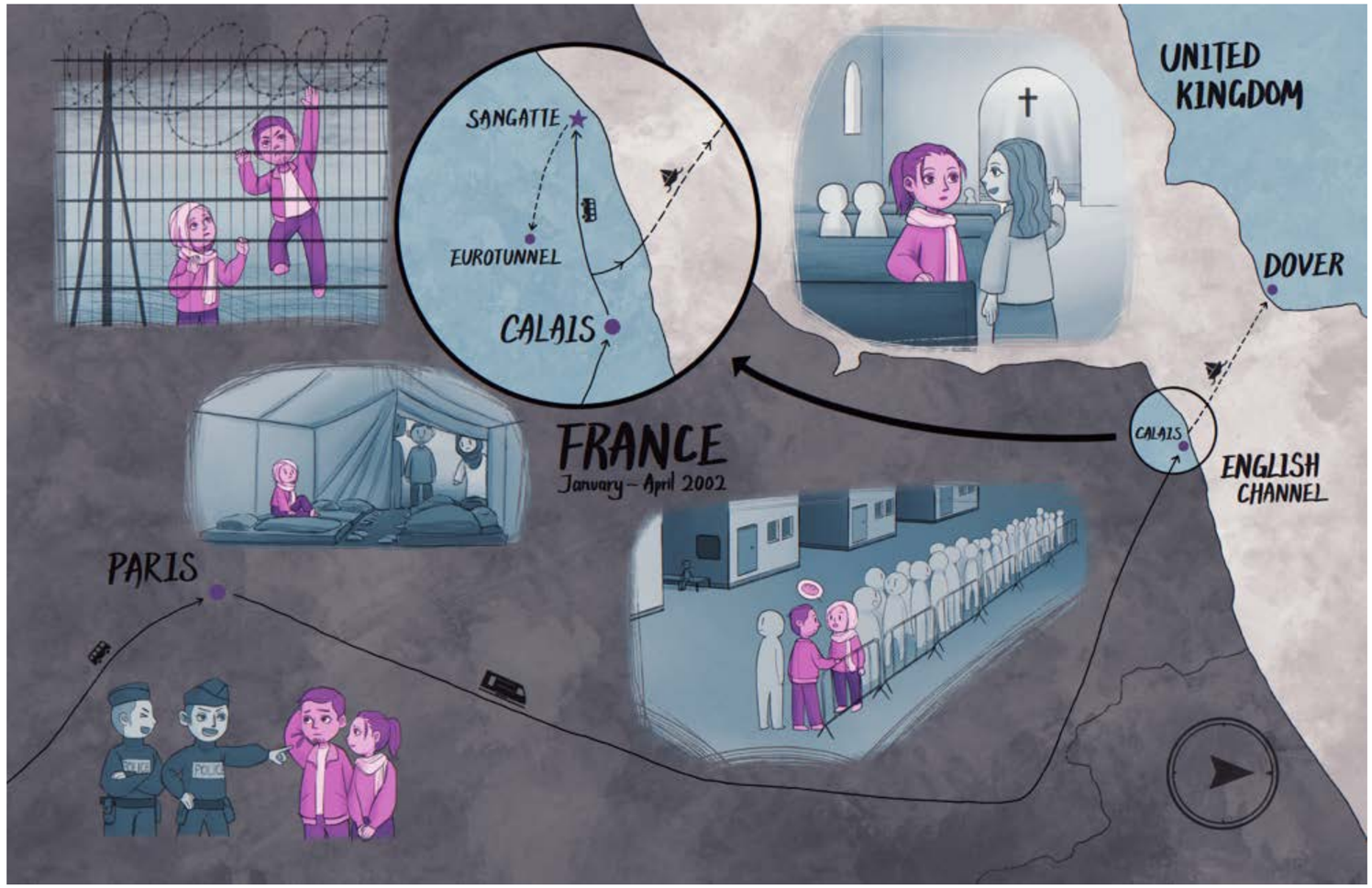
Despite the complete demolition of the Sangatte camp in 2003, both its existence and the fear consistently portrayed in the political and media campaign still deeply influence the political and geographic formation in Calais. The complexity of the history of Sangatte Camp was reduced to a useful political rhetoric to dehumanize homeless migrants and illegalize humanitarian support provided by the solidarity network in Calais. In this text, the history and the memory of Sangatte Camp unfolds with the process of bordering in Calais from 1999 to 2002 through policy and spatial analysis, literature and archive review, archival findings from the French Red Cross, UNHCR, and GISTI, and testimony from former Red Cross staff, migrants, and social workers. In this text, the immigration and border policies, including local government orders, national, bilateral, trilateral, and regional policies and collaborations in controlling and removing undesirable migrants from Calais are analyzed in the context of how those policies shaped the experience of asylum seeking and border crossing. Then, the spatial transformation in Calais is portrayed, including the migrants' occupation of abandoned buildings and public parks with the support of local solidarity networks, along with the process of bordering and fencing in ports and the Eurotunnel site. Next, the development of the Sangatte Camp is explored, including its spatial evolution, camp management, and the daily life of migrants living there. Finally, the stories of female migrants are recounted, ranging from memory segments in Calais to a whole journey across several countries. Though the stories of women were not often portrayed in the media and literature findings at that time, buried in silence, this research has uncovered the stories of women, who each had their own memories of Sangatte.