

Identifying and Analysing the Barriers to Developing an Active and Constructive Relationship

Introduction

NGOs are not wholly active participants in their relationship with AMTs. However, their passivity does not reflect a lack of conviction - NGOs can broadly be characterised as institutions committed towards realising the social, material and protective rights of vulnerable populations. Shortcomings within their levels of engagement, can therefore be better understood as a product of barriers constraining them. Such barriers range from state-induced inefficiencies to NGOs' capacity to even conceptualise AMTs as a population in the first place.

Whilst active *participation* in the relationship is a phenomena which can be discretely assessed on the autonomous actions of the individual stakeholders within the relationship, an active *relationship* only manifests in the participation of both stakeholders, invariably negotiated by one another. Therefore, an exploration of barriers facing AMTs is equally pertinent.

However, these barriers manifest throughout the life-cycle of NGO-AMT relationships, placing constraints not only on the progression towards an active relationship, but capacities to build more constructive relationships. This report will explore the barriers presented by NGO-AMT mutual invisibility, mischaracterisations of AMTs, autonomous refusal of service, and state constructed barriers.

Whilst there exist further constraints from capacity and funding, to communications which deeply challenge general service provision, this report focuses on those uniquely or disproportionately influencing the way in which relationships with AMTs are realised, rather than assessing whether the general circumstance exists for humanitarian relationships to provide genuine relief. Though AMT-specific, a further challenge which shall be omitted from the following paper is concerns surrounding the exploitation of adolescents due to perceived or realised increased access to NFI. Though raised amongst interviewees as an occasional driver of service differentiation and of consideration during design, a lack of conclusion around whether this promotes approaches non-differentiating AMTs from the broader migrant population, or necessitates their distinct and active address, complicates its consideration as a key barrier to active and constructive engagement, and perhaps warrants distinct further investigation.

An overview on the context of France's transitory environment can be found in the introduction to the first paper: Establishing the role of NGOs: Framing NGOs within migratory social protection ecosystems, and characterising the needs of adolescent minors in active irregular transit.

Mutual Invisibility in the NGO–AMT Relationship

A lack of knowledge or ability to conceptualise or identify the other key stakeholder in the AMT-NGO relationship prevents the catalysis of a live relationship and its consistent constructive realisation.

Social Invisibility of AMTs as a population

AMTs as a liminal and thus non-addressed population

Neither wholly conforming to the concept of a child or adult, AMTs are a highly liminal population - mentally and physically operating with capacities across the constructed boundaries of childhood and adulthood. This is codified most authoritatively in General Comment No. 20 (2016): Implementation of Rights During Adolescence on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasising the need to ensure appropriate and distinct services in recognition of their unique category and challenges facing them. Whilst theoretically increasing awareness of the distinct capacities with which this group operates, it remains structurally undermined by its integration into the CRC, continuing to shoehorn adolescents into the category of 'child'. The consistent and tangible way in which comprehensive concepts of 'minority' and child are embedded with dissonant clarity into institutional and legal frameworks often work to prevent the extent of independent consideration they need and the recognition of their liminality. This is especially acute within humanitarian NGOs' operating context of significant resource limitations and crisis response, lacking time resources to develop discrete counter-institutional, counter-intuitive frameworks.

Though rigid boundaries could not be expected to reflect nuanced social and developmental realities, the permeation of these boundaries into the social perceptions and the broadbrush categorisation of under 18s problematises it:

- Non-consideration of adolescents in their own right: Institutional and legal frameworks embed conceptualisations of under-18s as a cohesive group across the collective consciousness, concealing them within a group in which they do not effectively conform to, preventing NGO's intuitive recognition and therefore active consideration of them.
- Infantilisation of provision: Mainstream conflation of the term minor with social concepts of young children embeds and perpetuates a perception that making accommodations for young 'children' equates to making accommodations for minors - thus embedding infantilising logics and practises within minority-contingent provision. However, in absence of their self-standing categorisation, AMTs are primarily categorised as minors, meaning even where provision intends to address them, it can remain non-constructive and implicitly exclusive.
- Exclusion from provision: The above conflation and discursive binding of the term minor with ideas of young children and acute vulnerability, has the consequence of 'excluding unchildlike individuals' and older-presenting minors (AMTs) from visual conceptions of minors and thus in cases the ability and perceived entitlement to access the accommodations made towards minors they may require.¹

¹ Christinaki, Artemis. "Age assessment and migration control: 'child as method.'" *Global Studies of Childhood*, 19 Feb. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106251319471>.

Therefore, due to AMT's liminality within the 'minority' age category and its embedding across humanitarian approaches, AMTs not only rarely benefit from provisions targeting 'minors', but are not as a concept are not intuitively considered - challenging efforts for active or constructive engagement in their relationship with NGOs.

The attempt of NGOs to reconcile such categorisations with their realised exposure to 'non-conforming' minors can be seen in efforts to pursue alternative methods of categorisation and accommodate unaccompanied minors. Whilst commendable and necessary, this does not achieve the active and wholly constructive meeting of the unique and developmental needs that this population faces, nor engage with them in whole. Moreover, it restates the conceptual difficulty of defining alternative and discrete age categorisations.

Embodied and physical invisibility

Practical difficulties identifying adolescents due to their developmental proximity to adulthood further compound barriers to actively pursuing the construction and realisation of relationships with them: adolescents may present in carriage or appearance as adults. Challenges intuiting age through demeanor can be found in the aforementioned increased autonomy and maturity of AMT's due to their migratory and pre-migratory experiences, and challenges intuiting through appearance are evident. Interviewee responses and fieldnotes therefore reflect varying levels of difficulty experienced during efforts to identify and thus provide age-contingent support to adolescents.

When making subjective assessments of age based on carriage and appearance, it is particularly relevant to note within the context of France, the western paradigms under which predominantly white NGO workers are operating. Fieldnotes observed that the majority of NGO staff and volunteers in Calais were white-presenting from Western European backgrounds, a demographic trend influencing both organisational approaches and the dynamics of interaction with migrant communities. Despite genuine and impactful efforts to mitigate the repercussions of this reality² persistent consequences were recognised and evident. One such can be found in the context of AMT identification: the (largely incidental) racialised adultification of non-white children³ leads to their perception as more 'adult-like'⁴. This disrupts the identification of AMTs and thus building of an active relationship through lending both to the subconscious treatment of non-white children as adults⁵, and the active categorisation of them as adults⁶. The following report 'Addressing the limitations of age determination for unaccompanied minors: A way forward', though focussing on state age-determination mechanisms and challenges, contextualises the challenges presented by racial perceptions of childhood within migratory experiences, discussing their compounding due to the distinct developmental and cultural backgrounds of migrant children⁷.

Amongst the challenges to identifying adolescent minors, existed a significant aversion to asking individuals if they were of minority age through fear of placing undue stress, causing offense, appearing intrusive or coercing incorrect

² One example includes training resources sent out to incoming volunteers by Collective Aid Calais covering topics such as eurocentrism, racism, white saviour complexes, etc.

³ Goff, Phillip Atiba, et al. "The essence of innocence: Consequences of dehumanizing black children." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 106, no. 4, Apr. 2014, pp. 526–545, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035663>.

⁴ Epstein, Rebecca, et al. "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood." *SSRN*, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 27 June 2017, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3000695.

⁵ Small, Deborah A., et al. "An Age Penalty in Racial Preferences." *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, vol. 3, no. 6, Feb. 2012, pp. 730–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550612438228>.

⁶ Cooke, Alison N., and Amy G. Halberstadt. "Adultification, Anger Bias, and Adults' Different Perceptions of Black and White Children." *Cognition and Emotion*, vol. 35, no. 7, July 2021, pp. 1416–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2021.1950127>.

⁷ Kenny, Mary Anne, and Maryanne Loughry. "Addressing the Limitations of Age Determination for Unaccompanied Minors: A Way Forward." *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 92, Sept. 2018, pp. 15–21, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.05.002>.

responses. Given this, fieldnotes reported the use of visual ‘context clues’, such as the assessment of social groupings. Whilst literature assessing social grouping during active migration is both limited and varied in conclusion⁸, a number of interviewees, alongside fieldnotes, reported general trends within Calais for adolescents to ‘join together’, describing a ‘sort of solidarity’. However, rather than lend to the identification of AMTs, this at times exacerbated difficulty, as ages within these groups reportedly ranged from mid-late-teens to early-mid-20s, and some volunteers reported discomfort in offering solutions only available to some. Moreover, AMT integration into older-presenting groups can work to further conceal vulnerability and the identification of need amongst AMTs due to group conformation.

Challenges persisted where age was self-reported, with uncertainty expressed over whether some claiming minority age were young adults⁹, towards both authorities and NGOs. Similarly evident in literature analysing data on migrant demographics, however, are minors claiming to be majority age, fearing a loss of agency upon admitting their minority age.¹⁰

AMT Awareness of NGO Actors

Though there exist various mechanisms through which AMTs can become aware of the NGO services available to them, enabling them to activate and engage in a constructive relationship, the extent to which AMTs are markedly flawed and thus AMT awareness remains low. One interviewee told us they believed there to be ‘no support’ for them until very late into their journey, when they became exposed through word of mouth.

Low information amongst AMTs does not only impact their relationship with NGOs through preventing their realisation and engagement with them, but further undermines protective goals within the relationship, through increasing their vulnerability to dangerous informal information brokers.¹¹

Bounded NGO Outreach

A 2016 report by UNICEF highlighted the aversion of young people to actively seek support, emphasising the need for proactive outreach to promote awareness. There exist several mechanisms through which NGOs endeavour to promote awareness of their services amongst migrants (and by virtue of this AMTs) - most notably in Northern France through the work of the Channel Information Project, who coordinate with organisations across France to monthly gather and disseminate reliable and relevant information through resources such as their New Arrival Guide. Iterations of this can be found throughout France, such as in the also monthly guides released by Watizat on the services available, rights and other key information available to migrants in Paris, Lyon, Toulouse and Oise. Similarly prominent as an effective method noted in fieldwork, are maraudes, building trust in the community and advertising services face to face whilst - or (more rarely) prior to - carrying out services. These are however limited in impact due to the constructed spatial fragmentation of migrant communities through the ‘zéro point de fixation’ policy - constrained by the number of migrants who can be made contact with in a given outreach session¹². A

⁸ Mougne, Christine. “Trees Only Move in the Wind: A Study of Unaccompanied Afghan Children in Europe.” *UNHCR*, UNHCR, June 2010, www.unhcr.org/ie/sites/en-ie/files/legacy-pdf/4c1229669.pdf.

⁹ Christinaki, Artemis. “Age assessment and migration control: ‘child as method.’” *Global Studies of Childhood*, 19 Feb. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106251319471>.

¹⁰ “Unaccompanied Minors in Greece: Passing on The.” *Oxford Law Blogs*, 3 Dec. 2014, blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2014/12/unaccompanied d.

¹¹ Carlson, Melissa, et al. “Rumors and refugees: How government-created information vacuums undermine effective crisis management.” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 3, 20 Aug. 2018, pp. 671–685, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqy018>.

¹² Refugee Rights Europe, 2020, *The Failure of French Authorities to Respect, Protect and Guarantee the Rights of at-Risk Unaccompanied Children (UAC)*, <https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Failure-Of-French-Authorities-To-Respect-Protect-Guarantee-Rights-Of-At-Risk-UAC.pdf>.

second challenge can be found in the nature of the task of trying to disseminate information within a constantly evolving population, as the flow of migrants into France outpaces capacities to disseminate information. This is reflected in local situational reports claiming unequal levels of information and regular contact with individuals exhibiting little to no awareness of available services¹³. Interviewees told us they relied on ‘networking’ and ‘other young people’ to find information, often struggling to get responses from NGOs they were able to find online.

Difficulty Leveraging Social Capital and Informal Knowledge Networks

Much investigated is the horizontal dissemination of information surrounding migration routes, navigating asylum systems and accessing humanitarian aid. Literature on the subject highlights the reliance on technology¹⁴, social media platforms¹⁵, and word of mouth¹⁶, with varying conclusions on their dominance. Consistent across sources, however, is the idea that though crucial, these sources remain approached with caution and limited in efficacy. Within the context of Calais, the extent to which these networks can flourish is limited to an even greater extent by the deliberate spatial fragmentation of migrant communities, undermining productive social ecologies of solidarity and relationality which otherwise could emerge around consistent sites of interaction and lend to the brokering of information.

As previously discussed, reliance on informal networks can especially expose AMTs to vulnerability, placing them at greater risk of exploitation. Further than being subject to corruption, they often contain the very actors attempting to manipulate and isolate AMTs from potential support - such as that of NGOs. Save The Children's interviews with minority-age migrants travelling through Balkan routes revealed an awareness of this risk amongst children, who reported with consistency a lack of trust of other migrants, likely factoring into and deterring decisions to engage¹⁷. One interviewee told us it was ‘all up to luck’ whether they were helped or constrained by those they approached for help.

Summary

The bureaucratic and social liminality of AMTs, which converge with their embodied categoric invisibility to compromise the capacity of NGOs to, at worst, conceive them as a group within their organisational logic, or, at best, identify them on an individual level. Whilst the constitution of specialist NGOs limits their experience of such barriers to producing only individual consequences, the vast majority of NGOs, possessing broad demographic mandates, lack the same foundational imperative to conceptualise AMTs as a distinct group, exposing them to the above challenges. This therefore limits the extent to which NGOs are collectively disposed to identifying AMTs and thus having the capacity to catalyse an active relationship on a collective or individual level.

Though the barriers facing AMT contributions to the achievement of a live and constructive relationship are more mitigatable and tangibly actively addressed, there remain difficulties in building awareness of NGOs and thus fully realising or consistently engaging with their relationship - compromising the extent to which it is wholly active.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Beretta, Paola, et al. “Immigrants’ Information Experiences: An Informed Social Inclusion Framework.” *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, vol. 67, no. 4, Oct. 2018, pp. 373–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2018.1531677>.

¹⁵ Collins, Joshua. “Fleeing on Foot from a Country in Collapse.” *Medium*, 28 June 2019, j-collins.medium.com/fleeing-on-foot-from-a-country-in-collapse-f2097cfd9ba.

¹⁶ Chang, Adam. *Networks in a World Unknown: Public WhatsApp Groups in the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis*, <https://arxiv.org/abs/2005.05883>.

¹⁷ Burgund Isakov, Anita, et al. Save The Children International, 2022, *Wherever We Go, Someone Does Us Harm: Violence against Refugee and Migrant Children Arriving in Europe through the Balkans*, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/wherever-we-go-someone-does-us-harm-violence-against-refugee-and-migrant-children-arriving-in-europe-through-the-balkans>.

Mischaracterisations of AMTs

Difficulty in achieving an accurate characterisation of AMTs can present challenges in developing realised imperative underpinning and driving the active address of AMTs, and effectively developing programmes and practises facilitating the complete meeting of their needs - limiting the extent to which the relationship may attain a constructive function.

Consequences of liminality

Even where AMTs are recognised, their developmental liminality, paired with personal impulses to categorise individuals - especially within fast-paced humanitarian environments favouring categorical shorthand - can often lead to the omission of nuance, and thus the mischaracterisation of AMT needs. This challenges the extent to which NGO efforts to actively engage with AMTs may be truly constructive, and misaligns engagement, arguably to the extent that NGO-side participation in the AMT-NGO relationship is displaced to participation in a relationship with a distinct imagined population.

Assumptions of Self-Sufficiency

The developmental liminality of AMTs, caught between the needs of children and adults, can be seen in the first report's discussion of the increased maturity and independence expressed by adolescents - a trait only amplified within AMTs. This can be conflated with self-sufficiency, on an individual level causing AMTs to fall through institutional gaps in care, and on a collective level causing them to be overlooked in the design of care, due to assumptions it is unneeded.

Adultification

The over-emphasis of vulnerability¹⁸, middle-childhood and young children in social conceptions of 'child' - as discussed - leads to the instinctive denial of child-based developmental rights and opportunities from adolescents. This is acute within AMTs exhibiting hyper-independence as their 'adultification' thus presents lesser conceptual friction due to their embodied *and* abstract divergence from the culturally dominant template of a child. Similarly acute is the manifestation of this phenomenon in contexts of highly active transit, such as throughout the non-northern border regions of France, where, as discussed in the second report, very few organisations existed addressing the child-status related needs of AMTs, indicating how the social negotiation of childhood increases during periods of more active migration. This is encapsulated in the following reflection of a volunteer : 'I guess the sense that these children deserve way more opportunities to just be a child just feels a lot more overt when you are around younger children. Whilst you really try not to, you sometimes forget that older children who might be caring for themselves are still children too - they shouldn't be doing that either'.

Infantilisation

Though, as highlighted, a primary consequence of AMT's liminality within minority status is their nonconsideration in and exclusion from provisions, it can also lead to their overinfantilisation, through the conflation of minority age status with dependency and assumed incapacity. This dynamic often leads to disillusionment and thus disengagement with services. More concerningly, it can lead to the internalisation of misfit, wherein AMTs perceive themselves as non-entitled or non-deserving of child-oriented support, despite inadequacy residing in the service design and applicability rather than themselves. Such internalisation complicates the ease with which NGOs more broadly can deliver age-contingent support, as the categories underpinning eligibility and engagement become internally contested or rejected by AMTs themselves.

¹⁸ Christinaki, Artemis. "Age assessment and migration control: 'child as method.'" *Global Studies of Childhood*, 19 Feb. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106251319471>.

Navigating Ambiguity

The liminality of AMTs, compiled with other factors such as their diversity as a group (discussed in the first report), render interactions difficult to navigate. Whilst efforts to establish and promote best practise manifest extensively from the building of networks and publishing of learnings¹⁹ from AMT work, challenges will always present in reconciling autonomy, developmental factors impacting judgement and childhood affirming needs - amongst much else. An interviewee from a specialist NGO noted that navigating this is 'far from easy', regardless of one's experience and will always require case by case consideration - a key part of the challenge. They commented on the natural tendency of people to exclusively pursue AMTs' best interest, but the importance of balancing this with respect for their autonomy, which if ignored risks their withdrawal from services.

Circumstantial Pressures

Amongst the retrenchment of already weak state social protections, contractions in sector financing, and a growing humanitarian caseload, NGOs face remarkable material, temporal and personnel constraints. One such observed example was the consistent inability to meet need in areas of crucial NFI distribution such as tents in the winter. Therefore whilst dependent on the nature of aid provided, the saturation of vulnerable groups within transient migrant populations, necessitates the electing of a 'most vulnerable' group. Inherent flaws in this aside, this especially limits the extent to which AMTs are prioritised and afforded active, particular engagement, due to their common mischaracterisation as less vulnerable. However, even where AMT needs are identified, resource constraints can prevent the development of distinct services and active engagement in relationships. Limitations on personnel, for example, undermine an organisation's capacity to engage in critical trust building exercises such as repeated informal site visits- a prerequisite to the building of constructive relationships. Another key impact observed was through the time constraints placed on distribution rounds - crucial to ensuring multiple sites could be visited but deeply undermining of efforts to engage with AMTs and develop understandings of need.

Implicit Bias

As highlighted, despite genuine efforts to combat the racial and cultural prejudice deriving from the dominant white-western-european constitution of NGO staff and volunteers, bias invariably persists. Literature on the topic extensively documents the impact of cultural and racial bias in lending to misattribution of emotion, most especially anger²⁰, assessment of maturity²¹, and judgement of need²². This therefore impacts the positioning and executing of constructive and active engagement with AMT populations through skewing their characterisation.

Summary

The developmental and presentational liminality of AMTs lend to their adultification, categoric erasure from conceptions of 'minor' or 'child' and mischaracterisation as self-sufficient. All of which block the realisation of AMTs' unique need amongst NGOs - a realisation necessary to motivate their subsequent active address. Whilst AMTs inappropriate infantilisation is not a characterisation obstructive to their active address, it can shape such address in a non-constructive - even detrimental - manner, in extremes, presenting such 'address of AMTs' as de-

¹⁹ ECPAT International, 2024, *Case Study: ECPAT France in Calais, France*, https://ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Boy_Case_Study_FRANCE_2024Sep_ENG_v4-1.pdf.

²⁰ Cooke, Alison N., and Amy G. Halberstadt. "Adultification, Anger Bias, and Adults' Different Perceptions of Black and White Children." *Cognition and Emotion*, vol. 35, no. 7, July 2021, pp. 1416–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2021.1950127>.

²¹ Epstein, Rebecca, et al. "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood." *SSRN*, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 27 June 2017, papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3000695.

²² Small, Deborah A., et al. "An Age Penalty in Racial Preferences." *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, vol. 3, no. 6, Feb. 2012, pp. 730–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550612438228>.

facto displaced to the address of more infantile populations. Even where characterisation is broadly accurate, the extent to which it can achieve appropriate levels of nuance and therefore preclude truly constructive engagement, is limited by circumstantial pressures, implicit bias, and the complex profile of AMT populations.

Resistance of NGO Support

AMT resistance of support from NGO services deriving from low levels of trust or limited appeal of services present a significant barrier in NGOs' capacity to develop an understanding of the population and deliver constructive services, alongside the extent to which AMTs enable a constructive relationship to be realised. Moreover, it can limit the level of AMT reciprocal participation in their 'active' relationship.

Low Levels of Trust in Humanitarian Actors

The aforementioned UNICEF report investigating UAMs on the Northern France border, highlighted that further than awareness, there needed to be trust in services.²³ Fieldnotes and interviews underscored the centrality of trust - emphasising its underpinning of active and constructive engagement. One interviewee working in a specialist organisation told us that without trust that the NGO has their best interests at heart, most services are unable to make an impact.

An interesting caveat noted in fieldwork, however, was variance in levels of trust dependent on NGO-worker identity:

- Perceived Age

Exemplified in their reported tendency to group together in solidarity, trust is often low within AMTs, especially towards adults. Situated in the perspective of an eighteen year old, fieldnotes reflected this - noting a perceived greater relaxation in young people's demeanour with whom report had not already been established, during primary interactions with younger-presenting volunteers as opposed to those who were older-presenting. Whilst literature on the topic was not particularly extensive, drawing from the conclusions of adjacent studies²⁴, such interactions hold lower power cues, whilst age alignment can contribute to relatability, perceived empathetic support, and the construction of a 'credible messenger'. However, this could undermine childhood-affirming efforts through demonstrating the assumption of significant responsibilities and care-giving roles amongst young people.

- Perceived Gender

Literature on the topic broadly focuses on the influence of gender in the reception of medical aid, most especially the relationship and trust between female recipients and practitioners. However, research within adjacent fields, exploring the relationship between female figures of authority and young people, highlights the influence of dominant stereotypes of women in facilitating the building of trust and presentation of female actors as less intimidating²⁵.

²³ "NEITHER SAFE nor SOUND Unaccompanied Children on the Coastline of the English Channel and the North Sea." *UNICEF UK*, UNICEF UK, June 2016, www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Unicef_NeitherSafeNorSound.pdf.

²⁴ Tumwesige, Edward, et al. "'She Held My Hand and Advised Me': Young Migrants' Experiences of Individual Peer Support to Access Health and Social Services in Two Small Towns in Southwestern Uganda." *PLOS Global Public Health*, vol. 4, no. 11, Public Library of Science, Nov. 2024, pp. e0003713–13, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0003713>.

²⁵ L. DeWitt, Amy, and Janay M. Gasparini. "'We're Always Handed the Children': Women Finding Belonging in Policing." *Discover Global Society*, vol. 2, Feb. 2024, link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44282-024-00033-z.

However, as evident in interviewee, fieldwork notes, and the vast majority of literature on the topic, this variance is underpinned by broader trends of distrust, undermining the extent to which individual dispositions to be trusted erodes trust levels as a relational barrier. As emphasised by Weisner et al. in their research into perceptions of humanitarian borderwork: ‘Trust in organisations may be shaped by interactions with individual aid workers, but there is an institutional dimension that cannot be reduced to such interactions... analysis of institutional trust is central to understanding migrants’ choices to access aid organisations during transit journeys’²⁶

Generalised Distrust

The continuous affective pressures - expanding upon later - and exposure to the extreme levels of pressure and violence which characterise migratory journeys, especially those of AMTs, suspends them in a constant state of precarity and insecurity. This in many cases amplifies dispositions to habits of distrust deriving from pre-migratory and migratory experiences²⁷, due to the increased aversion to risk taking situational fragility engenders. Interviewees highlighted the great difficulty and risk associated with trusting someone ‘even just to have a small chat’. Interviewees told us repeatedly ‘trust is very difficult’.

Distrust towards Authority Figures

Negative experiences with state and alternative authority figures, ranging from aggressive policing, to exploitation by smuggling leaders, invariably compound issues surrounding their general trust of authority figures. For AMTs specifically, this can be exacerbated by an experientially justified distrust that authority figures in general will recognise and provide for their minority age, or more generally believe in them - subsequently deterring their engagement with provisions²⁸.

Suspicion of State Manipulation

Mistrust directed specifically towards humanitarian organisations, grounded in direct and transposed learnings from migratory and pre-migratory experiences, has been evidenced and reasoned to in part stem from the following fears:

- **NGO-State Collusion:**

The aforementioned research by Weisner et al, highlights manifestations of mistrust towards humanitarian organisations by migrants in active transit, due to suspicion over their perceived potential affiliation with the state. Whilst based on analysis of the Sahel region, these conclusions can be drawn and applied to French and general irregular transitory contexts - most especially given the proportional population dominance of migrants originating from the Sahel region in Northern France at the time of writing. Grounded in interviews with migrants, they report fears of being ‘discouraged or even manipulated’, ‘facilitation of detention and deportation’ and ‘having one’s time wasted’ due to a suspicion of collusion with the EU and state mechanisms in efforts to deter and prevent migration. Despite field notes and interviews confirming the non-practising of ‘turning in minors to child authorities’, and there exists no legal obligation mandating it, this could be exacerbated amongst AMTs who fear their reporting to child services and subsequent loss of agency.

In the context of Calais, these suspicions could be ‘validated’ by police presence at aid distributions. Moreover, field notes reported a mixed understanding amongst *some* migrants surrounding the relationship between NGOs and the

²⁶ Weisner, Zina, et al. “Trust in Transit: External Migration Control and Migrants’ Perceptions of Humanitarian Borderwork in the Sahel.” *International Migration Review*, SAGE Publishing, June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183241261365>.

²⁷ Mollerup, NG, and M. Sandberg. “Fast Trusting.” *The Migration Mobile*, vol. 18, no. 143, July 2022, pp. 143–62.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, 2018, “*Like a Lottery*” *Arbitrary Treatment of Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Paris*, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/07/04/lottery/arbitrary-treatment-unaccompanied-migrant-children-paris>.

state. This confusion is likely more common within semi-permanent encampment settings where NGOs take on increasingly parastatal roles.

- State manipulation:

Police posing as NGO workers to enforce pushbacks, are reported to both exist and impact the capacity of NGOs to deliver their services. This is mentioned with frequency especially within medical-aid contexts throughout the eastern Europe migration corridors²⁹. Whilst less commonly recorded in France, these earlier experiences invariably construct habits of distrust.

However, it should equally be noted that interviewees from specialised NGOs noted the increased trust in AMTs who had taken routes which exposed them to a number of responsible and trustworthy NGOs, building their awareness, trust and positive association. They claimed this greatly aided the process of building trust between themselves and service users.

Disbelief in offers of support

Past experiences of exploitation, deceit, and systemic abandonment, to which AMTs are particularly vulnerable, also has the impact of imbuing scepticism limiting propensity to trust actors who claim to *offer* support - particularly that which is recurring. This can be seen in the UNHCR report reporting the mixed levels of trust immigrant populations place in referrals and information on provision from NGOs³⁰. This constrains NGOs ability to implement longitudinal support strategies and serve as a gateway to the broader aid networks. This is underscored by the emphasis placed by ECPAT's previously discussed case study³¹ of their Calais programme on establishing trust to build relational continuity and the provision of further aid. This is not only harder to achieve with AMTs but crucial to be able to build the nuanced relationships with NGOs that they require.

One interviewee told us they initially did not understand 'the point of help for migrants' that NGOs offered - contributing to uncertainty and distrust. They characterised this concern as felt more broadly with many people 'not knowing what is an NGO... what they stand for... what point the help is for migrants'. A core concern stemming from this uncertainty was the question of 'what do they ask for in return'.

Limited Appeal of Available Services

Misalignment with maturity levels

As established, NGOs collectively do not *actively* fulfil their roles, and oftentimes fail to accurately characterise the developmental status of AMTs. The subsequent lack of accommodation for AMT perspectives and need within services, aside from limiting their constructiveness, decrease their perceived relevance and attractiveness. One such manifestation of this is within the context of services wherein NGOs assume somewhat of an advisory role. Interviewees highlighted especially that the labouring of instructions or 'micromanaging' almost always lent to the alienation of AMTs, who perceived services to be inappropriately overbearing. This was echoed by ECPAT's case

²⁹ "Greece: Elections on Both Sides of the Border as Pushbacks and Push for Returns Continue, Border Guards Arrested in Evros – More Deaths in the Aegean | European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)." *Ecre.org*, 2023, ecre.org/greece-elections-on-both-sides-of-the-border-as-pushbacks-and-push-for-returns-continue-border-guards-arrested-in-evros-more-deaths-in-the-aegean/.

³⁰ "Increasing Two-Way Communication with Refugees on the Move in Europe." *UNHCR Innovation*, UNHCR, 1 Sept. 2017, www.unhcr.org/innovation/increasing-two-way-communication-with-refugees-on-the-move-in-europe/.

³¹ ECPAT International, 2024, *Case Study: ECPAT France in Calais, France*, https://ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Boy_Case_Study_FRANCE_2024Sep_ENG_v4-1.pdf.

study on their operations in Calais, which emphasised the importance of neutrality and non-judgement in the discussion of options.³²

It should be noted, however, that whilst certainly a realised issue, services were reported to more commonly lean to the adultification rather than infantilisation of AMTs, with NGO workers acutely aware of respecting agency. Infantilisation and hyper-vulnerabilisation largely seem to be a practise to which younger children are predominantly subjected³³. The rejection of legal support - for example - broadly did not come from 'overbearing' practises, but was described as commonly indicative of AMT perceptions that 'it is better to try their chances'. Similarly, the rejection of NGO support in accessing short term shelter, was observed to be derivative primarily from the strategic prioritisation of mobility, which was best facilitated by remaining in close proximity to the border.

Cultural Incongruence

Cultural incongruence can lead to the resistance especially of physiological aid. This especially impacts AMT-NGO relationships as this is a key way in which NGOs exercise their protective role and most overtly have an opportunity to provide age-tailored and nuanced support, actively engaging to meet developmental needs. Moreover, typically holding a lower status and influence within the community, and positioned at the intersection of dependency and emerging autonomy, adolescents occupy a structurally weaker role within community life and hierarchies. It could be argued that this constrains their authority and confidence to resist entrenched customs and leaves them more susceptible to their influence, however, the fragmentation of migratory communities within Northern France, and alternative highly mobile contexts, mitigates this to an extent.

However, it should be noted that field notes reported high levels of cultural sensitivity both institutionally and individually within the NGO ecosystem, with strong awareness evidenced through training materials, organisational policies, field practises, and the attitudes of individuals. ECPAT's case study into their programme for AMTs who have survived or at risk of sexual abuse, highlights strategies which are and can be deployed to effectively overcome this challenge. These include methods of unobtrusive conversational styles, observing community dynamics to understand the character of appropriate interaction, and the sensitive framing of their services within migrant communities³⁴.

Summary

AMT resistance or rejection of NGO services deriving from low levels of trust in the best cases limit the extent to which the AMT-NGO relationship can fully realise its constructive capacities due the challenges this presents NGOs in engaging them and developing a nuanced understanding of AMT need or AMTs full exploitation of support. In extremes, this can lead to partial or complete non-engagement from AMTs due to perceived denial of age-contingent services or fear of harm more generally - preventing the realisation of a truly active relationship.

The difficulty of developing appropriately tailored services creates a negative feedback loop wherein AMTs are deterred from soliciting support, limiting both the extent to which relationships are reciprocally active, and the extent to which engagement can lead to improved characterisations and thus service design. However, this broadly does not appear to operate as an active deterrent, rather a lack of adequate provision offering little incentive to actively or wholly engage.

³² Ibid

³³ Christinaki, Artemis. "Age assessment and migration control: 'child as method.'" *Global Studies of Childhood*, 19 Feb. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106251319471>.

³⁴ ECPAT International, 2024, *Case Study: ECPAT France in Calais, France*, https://ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Boy_Case_Study_FRANCE_2024Sep_ENG_v4-1.pdf.

Whilst a potential challenge, high levels of cultural literacy and active mitigation appear to limit the impact of this on relationships.

State Constructed Barriers to Aid Provision

State constructed barriers present challenges to realising intentions of active participation within the AMT-NGO relationship from both AMT and NGO perspectives. Moreover, they can challenge the development of a constructive relationship through the constraints placed on the depth and relational continuity of encounters.

Diminishing the Efficacy of Distribution

Interviewees highlighted the impact of punitive policies enacted by the local state actors, which impose practical restrictions on the dissemination of aid, driven by the broader goal of creating a 'hostile environment' to dissuade migration. These ranged from road restructuring to 'basically make it as inconvenient as possible for us [NGOs] to deliver our services'³⁵, to forms of hostile architecture that block or disrupt common transit routes between informal living sites and distribution points. Such interventions intensify issues deriving from the spatial fragmentation of migrant communities, having the following logistical effects:

- Decreasing the number of migrants reached per intervention:

The deliberate restructuring of landscape eliminates geographical points of convergence between communities, which NGOs could previously leverage to provide aid to multiple recipients. Whilst fieldwork initially identified 3 larger living sites persisting with some consistency, one of them ('BMX') was dispersed during the recording period. The remaining two faced increasing dispersionary pressures and were beginning to fragment - 'City Center' being progressively compacted through the installation of large rocks within the space, while 'Orange Squat' (also commonly referred to amongst migrant communities as 'Hanger') saw the removal of the warehouse roof around which it centered, and at the time of writing, faces imminent permanent eviction.

This dispersion decreases the number of migrants reached per intervention, straining resources through necessitating greater numbers of distributions to deliver the same amount of aid. This can lead to and navigate trade-offs between decreased quantities of aid distributed, the shortened distribution rounds, and decisions to stop visiting certain peripheral communities. This invariably affects NGO relationships with AMTs especially, as shortened distribution rounds restrict the capacity of NGOs to build trust and identify their more nuanced needs and status. Moreover, decisions to stop visiting peripheral communities isolating them and increasing vulnerability to exploitation.

Ethnographic fieldwork reflected this dynamic. On one observed day, such state interventions compelled volunteers to visit multiple sites for distribution under significant time constraints, curtailing their ability to engage meaningfully with suspected AMTs, with whom conversations had been initiated. Despite the various sites' geographical proximity, the aforementioned hostile urban interventions had severed pedestrian shortcuts. This transformed a previously manageable journey to a point of central convergence into a logistically burdensome one, with foot travel times effectively quadrupled and vehicle access also slowed by indirect routing and roadblocks. This exemplified the impact of these disruptions in reducing the number of migrants who could be reached per intervention, forcing NGOs to constrain the temporal scope of their outreach in order to sustain provision, but in this, undermining the depth and relational continuity of their encounters.

³⁵ Quote from an interview with a broad-mandate NGO volunteer in Calais

- Increasing resource demand per intervention:

The increased difficulty reaching migrant communities - compounded by their forced mobility - necessitates greater resource expenditure (time, personnel, material resources such as fuel) as NGOs navigate firstly locating communities, and secondly delivering aid in an accessible manner. This creates pressures to decrease interventions. This once again disproportionately impacts NGOs capacity to fulfil their protective role towards AMTs, through perpetuating their isolation and therefore susceptibility to exploitation, as diminished services and protective oversight increases their dependence and vulnerability to informal actors exerting coercive control.

This was a dynamic observed in multiple iterations during fieldwork. One such instance was after the eviction of a large living site (Hypogriffe) led to the movement of migrant communities into spaces inaccessible to NGO workers - partially through the fault of recently imposed road laws posited to be intentionally disruptive. The following aid distribution lasting the duration of the morning was only able to establish contact with 3 people, none of whom were interested in the WASH service. This led to the internal dilemma over whether to dedicate and reserve resources for distributions where contact couldn't be assured or focus on serving areas where there was guaranteed need and contact.

Presenting Legal Obstacles

Specific legal restrictions have been intermittently imposed, and excessive use of discretionary policing and administrative powers routinely exercised, to hinder NGO operations³⁶. This has ranged from bans on food distributions³⁷ in the city centre, to the closure of community spaces³⁸, arbitrary parking fines, and vehicle and identity checks³⁹. This again increases temporal and material resource strain, compounding the above issues through limiting the extent of aid which can be given and time which can be invested in communities - especially necessary for actively building nuanced relationships with AMTs.

Though fieldwork did not observe any direct instances of police stops over the three-month period, interviewees across a number of different organisations cited concerns or specific occurrences. The issue was formally acknowledged in the associated volunteer training, where participants were briefed on its likelihood and given guidance on how best to respond - further evidencing its recognised prevalence within NGOs' operations. Moreover, fieldwork did observe the retraction of services as a direct result of state legal intervention. The state-mandated closure of the community WASH centre, previously run by Collective Aid, came after continued bureaucratic and legal attacks, and precluded the organisation's later ceasing of operations in the region.

Intimidation of Migrants

The increasing militarisation of the border exposes AMTs to frequent experiences of intimidation and violence from police - with the testimonies of over a third of young people received by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in 2023

³⁶ ANSA. "NGOs Helping Migrants Say Calais Police Harass Volunteers." *InfoMigrants*, Infomigrants, 9 Aug. 2018, www.infomigrants.net/en/post/11184/ngos-helping-migrants-say-calais-police-harass-volunteers.

³⁷ "France: Ban on Food Distribution in Calais City Centre Appealed to Council of State, Police Dismantles Makeshift Camp | European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)." *Ecre.org*, 2020, ecre.org/france-ban-on-food-distribution-in-calais-city-centre-appealed-to-council-of-state-police-dismantles-makeshift-camp/.

³⁸ collective aid. "Collective Aid." *Collective Aid*, 19 Apr. 2024, www.collectiveaidngo.org/blog/2024/4/19/the-closure-of-the-calais-wash-centre.

³⁹ Chrisafis, Angelique. "French Police Accused of Harassing Aid Workers at Calais." *The Guardian*, The Guardian, 8 Aug. 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/08/french-police-accused-of-harassing-aid-workers-at-calais.

referring to personal experiences of physical violence from police in France⁴⁰ alone. Similarly, every single child participating in the 2022 Save the Children research had personally experienced violence from police⁴¹. When considered within the full scope of migratory experiences prior to arrival in France, police actions appear as part of a far broader pattern; prior exposure to violence often renders their mere presence deeply unsettling.

The presence of several policing forces in Calais, such as the French riot police (CRS), Frontex, municipal police, and Police aux Frontieres (PAF), are felt acutely, contributing to a pervasive atmosphere of securitization. Fieldwork vividly revealed how migrant communities are subjected to continuous affective pressure, characterised by persistent surveillance, looming threat, and anticipated disruption.

Whilst interactions with the police permeate the mental and physical migrant experiences of northern France, they manifest with consistency in violent evictions⁴² and police presence at distributions⁴³. These manifestations are recorded in fieldwork, and quantified by the monthly reports of NGO Human Rights Observers (HRO) who follow police evictions to deter and record rights abuses⁴⁴. Subsequently heightened feelings of insecurity deter the seeking of aid, through both decreasing trust and heightening risk aversion. For many migrants - especially those facing intersectional vulnerabilities such as AMTs - journeys to aid distribution sites are calculated risks, weighed against exertion, potential exposure to police presence, physical strain, and the possibility of eviction. Therefore these aggressive policies have the cumulative effect of increasing the balance of costs - be this through militarised borders leading to greater police presence, or the requirement of navigating longer routes. This consequently dissuades the realisation of a relationship with NGO actors. AMTs are again acutely impacted by this, through its exacerbation of already disproportionate feelings of vulnerability. Whilst some literature concludes minority status to carry connotations of protection⁴⁵ due to associated perceptual vulnerability, and thus suggests minors feeling *comparatively* protected during interactions with authorities due to their minority status, other studies and fieldnotes reflect far greater feelings of insecurity amongst AMTs, partially coloured by fears of internment if identified as minors⁴⁶. Further than this, however, the reception of aid can be actively prevented by police intimidation - with fieldwork highlighting migrant reports that police stops and questioning had led to their missing of aid distributions.

Summary

Hostile urban planning, and the manufacture and excessive deployment of legal obstacles, reduce the extent to which NGOs can actively engage with AMTs, uniquely isolating AMTs from support, and hindering NGOs capacity to accomplish meaningful interactions conducive to building and realising truly constructive relationships. The

⁴⁰ Yousef, Heba. "Unaccompanied Minors in Calais: Violence as a Horizon." *MSF UK*, 12 July 2024, prezly.msf.org.uk/unaccompanied-minors-in-calais-violence-as-a-horizon.

⁴¹ Burgund Isakov, Anita, et al. Save The Children International, 2022, *Wherever We Go, Someone Does Us Harm: Violence against Refugee and Migrant Children Arriving in Europe through the Balkans*, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/wherever-we-go-someone-does-us-harm-violence-against-refugee-and-migrant-children-arriving-in-europe-through-the-balkans>.

⁴² InfoMigrants. "France: Violence Flares during Calais Migrant Camp Eviction." *InfoMigrants*, Infomigrants, 4 Jan. 2022, www.infomigrants.net/en/post/37616/france-violence-flares-during-calais-migrant-camp-eviction.

⁴³ "France: Police Attacking Migrants in Calais." *Human Rights Watch*, 26 July 2017, www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/26/france-police-attacking-migrants-calais.

⁴⁴ "HRO: Human Rights Observers – Monthly Observations." *HRO: Human Rights Observers*, 5 Sept. 2025, humanrightsobservers.org/monthly-observations/.

⁴⁵ admin. "Devenir Bénévole à Paris." *Utopia 56*, 27 Nov. 2025, utopia56.org/paris/.

⁴⁶ Migration Data Portal. "Child and Young Migrants." *Migration Data Portal*, 22 Feb. 2024, www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/child-and-young-migrants.

intimidation they experience both directly and indirectly prevents AMTs from engaging with NGOs, decreasing the extent to which the AMT-NGO relationship remains live.

Conclusion

From challenging its active inception, to the extent of its constructive function, barriers to the development of an active and constructive AMT-NGO relationship manifest across their associational lifecycle. Such barriers compound one another, converging to lead to NGO-side non-identification or misidentification of AMTs, alongside AMT-side bounded or non-participation - compromising AMT relationships with broad-mandate, and even - to an extent - specialist, NGOs.

Non-identification and Misidentification

Challenges

NGO active participation in the relationship is hindered by their non-identification of AMTs. This occurs on a collective level, wherein their liminality intersects with social paradigms to cause their conceptual erasure as a group with which NGOs ought to engage, and on an individual level, where the state-driven reduction of service reach, and AMTs embodied invisibility, prevents the realisation of active relationships, even where partners hold theoretical intention. It is similarly hindered by NGOs' misidentification of need, wherein the mischaracterisation of AMTs prevents the realisation of a unique need to be addressed - precluding their categoric erasure and thus non-active address.

The building of a constructive relationship is hindered by NGOs' misidentification of AMTs. Such misidentification of need is driven by mischaracterisations of the AMTs population, and the reduced exposure and bounded trust, which compromise efforts to build an understanding of individual need and establish the relational continuity imperative to design and deliver truly constructive services.

Specialist and broad mandate NGOs experience such hindrances to varying extents, as the strategic and organisational focus of specialist NGOs necessitates AMTs' recognition and supports their appropriate characterisation and identification.

Bounded or Non-Participation

Challenges

AMT active engagement in the relationship is hindered by their bounded participation. This primarily occurs due to AMT reluctance to trust, state obstruction, lack of awareness and, at times, the limited appeal of services, decreasing the extent to which AMTs wholly actively engage with NGOs. AMT non-participation intuitively presents challenges to active reciprocal engagement and occurs during the acute exacerbation of the above challenges.

Bounded participation from AMTs similarly affects the building of constructive relationships. Precipitated by the above challenges, bounded participation limits the value extracted from services and interactions by AMTs. Moreover, it limits the extent to which NGOs can develop nuanced understanding of individual needs, and achieve relational continuity - discussed above as essential to establishing constructive relationships. This occurs acutely with non-participation.

Challenges contributing to bounded or non-participation from AMTs' especially impacts the extent to which relationship with social, psychological and legal NGOs is active and constructive. Most notably within the context of barriers that dissuade engagement such as trust and intimidation leading to less risk taking, 'non-essential' aid such as social, psychological and legal support is often the first to be discarded.

Recommendations

Whilst sharing challenges, there exist no standard configuration of these challenges between respective NGOs - let alone entire migratory ecosystems. Similarly, operating contexts and constraints vary greatly. Built from the recommendations of those with lived experience, and the above challenge analysis, the following recommendations therefore serve as initial ideas to begin the consideration of how NGOs can more actively and constructively engage in their relationship with AMTs.

1. Reassessing and reconceptualising the categorisation of young people

- Collaboration between both broad-mandates and specialist NGOs to actively interrogate the question of how 'child', 'minor', 'adolescent', etc is defined, grounded in developmental and needs-based considerations as opposed to arbitrary legal and social definitions applicable to general populations.

2. Increasing collaboration on meeting adolescent need between broad-mandate and specialist NGOs

- Increasing networks of referral between NGO types to collectively meet need
- Knowledge sharing between specialist adolescent and broad mandate NGOs to support appropriate and constructive interactions.
- Systems to support the sharing of information on vulnerable young people identified in the field and thus support the building of understanding of need

3. Increasing efforts to foster productive awareness, through ensuring young people not only have awareness of NGOs but methods of contact and trust.

- Presentation as a united front to, albeit largely only on an organisational level, to mitigate difficulties surrounding relational continuity and requirements to trust several distinct and specialised actors to meet needs.
-
- Where possible and productive (i.e. service can be provided online) establish methods of remote contact to support relational continuity as transit continues, for example with psychological support or legal advice.
- Identifying trusted community leaders or large groups of young people and leveraging networks to disseminate trusted information
- Invest time in non-active community presence to establish familiarity and trust, ahead of raising the need for actions which require trust.
- Vigilance should be exercised to ensure old advertisements of contact methods are removed or remain monitored to ensure people do not slip through the cracks and become discouraged.

- Clear communication about the NGOs origin, aims and motivations should be given and openly discussed.
- Where possible, links should be made by NGOs across common transit routes to help raise awareness surrounding where further trusted help can be accessed.

4. Collaborating with young people

- Facilitating forums for young people to feedback on services, share their experiences and articulate their needs to empower agency, improve characterisations and understandings of adolescents, and increase the appeal of services
- Establishing guiding principles, as opposed to prescriptive practices, which respect the great variety in need and independence between adolescents, enabling young people to lead on interactions.
- Knowledge sharing between specialist and broad-mandate NGOs to support the above.

Conclusion

Whilst there are a number of challenges constraining both stakeholders, there also exist solutions. Broad-mandate organisations do not need to become specialists, simply more intentional with their interventions and thus constructive in their interactions. Moreover, through their ability to collaborate with one another, NGOs do not need to meet each AMT need, rather work collectively to do so.

The AMT-NGO relationship is anchored in the modern migratory experience, and central in mitigating its harms. Both actors hold vested personal and organisational interests in developing constructive relationships, meaning potential solutions need only to activate this interest, as opposed to additionally advocate for it.

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