

LOCATING BRITAIN: MIGRATION AND SHIFTING BOUNDARIES ON TV NEWS

BERNHARD GROSS

Television News and Plural Boundary Demarcation

Collective identities projected in the content of national television news can be less stable and coherent than is often suggested. Working within a tension between an inclusive and an exclusive national identity discourse, television news, I would argue, is involved in what Ulrich Beck (2005: 47) calls a ‘transnational meta-power politics of plural boundary demarcations’. Based on an analysis of boundary positions within the coverage of immigration and migration issues on British television news, I will demonstrate how news programmes construct shifting boundaries and thus plural identities. The ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983) proposed by individual news pieces can vary, even appear contradictory. Before proceeding with a detailed analysis of three pieces from the BBC news programme *News at Ten*, I will conceptualise the relationship between collective, national identities, the process of boundary formation, the role of television news in this process and the particular relevance of migration in this context.

As the terms “formation” and “process” suggest, I start from an understanding that collective, in this case national identity is continually constructed rather than permanently fixed (cf. Hall 1992, Giesen 1998). Because this construction involves questions of power related to the level of influence individuals or groups have on the process, identity is not merely a neutral construct but a discourse (Foucault 1995). A Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse also implies that no one is ultimately in charge (1995: 27): the discursive formation positions and at the same time is perpetuated, challenged, reinforced and possibly even shifted by all

those within its reach. However, even without ultimate control some wield more influence and power than others. The mass media is among those with some degree of influence.

In *Nationalism and Social Communication* Karl W. Deutsch (1966: 181) identified mass communication as one of the key areas that advance a process of forming a collective, national unit. Deutsch's analysis of the relationship between mass communication and national identity formation has been developed by many scholars since then (cf. Schlesinger 2000). By highlighting the constructedness of its outcome, Benedict Anderson's term "imagined communities" (1983) captures the main aspects of this relationship rather appropriately.

It has to be said, though, that in terms of news media Anderson focuses on the importance of the printed word, i.e. newspapers. I, however, am using it in the context of television news—a justifiable step, I believe. Anderson's interest is historic. His concern is with the initial emergence of the nation-state in the 18th and 19th century. My concern is with the maintenance of already existing imagined communities in the contemporary world. Television plays an important role in this process (cf. Fiske and Hartley 2003, Dayan and Katz 1992, Silverstone 1994, Scannell 1996, Morley 2000, Chouliaraki 2006), even if new types of media as well as transnational and on-demand forms of distribution challenge its position (cf. Schlesinger 2000, Ellis 2002). Various aspects, such as genre, the content of individual programmes, scheduling and the ritual of watching of television contribute to an overall structural function the medium.

National broadcasting can thus create a sense of unity—and of corresponding boundaries around the nation; it can link the peripheral to the centre; turn previously exclusive social events into mass experiences; and, above all, it penetrates the domestic sphere, linking the national public into the private lives of its citizens, through the creation of both sacred and quotidian moments of national communion. Not that this process is always smooth and without tension or resistance (Morley 2000: 107).

This quotation from David Morley's *Home Territories* is of particular relevance here. His use of the term "communion" picks up on a key aspect of Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community' and thus highlights the structural function of the medium. The term implies the idea of a community established through individual, yet similar and hence shared experience rather than direct encounter. Similar to the consumption of the Eucharist during Mass, certain in the knowledge that others are watching,

too, the ritual of consuming "[n]ational broadcasting" allows an individual to imagine to be part of a community without necessarily knowing all of its other members. Morley also raises two further, important aspects here that I will turn to next: the issue of boundaries and the issue of "tension or resistance" to the unity projected by broadcasting and in this case television. The former I will address by adding to my initial points about discursive identity formation, the latter by discussing the potential effects television news may have on their audiences.

In his introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* Fredrik Barth (1998) called attention to the importance of boundaries in the process of group formation. He suggested anthropologists should shift their emphasis and analyse "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1998: 15, emphasis in the original). It is the boundaries that are more clearly and homogeneously defined and thus define a community, which may be far more heterogeneous in its internal composition (Barth 1998, see also Morley 2000: 165). Boundaries are thus the prime location for tracing a collective, national identity, because, as Bernhard Giesen suggests:

They mark the difference between inside and outside, strange and familiar, relatives and non-relatives, friends and enemies, culture and nature, enlightenment and barbarism. Precisely because these borders are contingent social constructions, because they could be drawn differently, they require social reinforcement and symbolic manifestation (Giesen 1998: 13)

It is the 'social reinforcement and symbolic manifestation' (ibid: 13) of boundaries on and through television news that I am interested in. But, as has been suggested above this is a process not 'without tension and resistance' (Morley 2000: 107). The relationship between the content of television news, the media text, and its audience needs to be addressed here. It is a relationship that has been and continues to be widely discussed and debated (cf. Madianou 2005 for a summary of this debate). How do audiences read media texts, in this case news programmes? What in fact is the 'correct' interpretation of what is offered to them?

In his research with audiences on the coverage of fighting in the Middle East and of the miner's strikes of the 1980s in the UK, Justin Lewis (1991) analysed how difficult it is to predict a preferred reading of news texts. He also suggested that due to their lack of a clear narrative structure news stories at times fail to communicate any specific meaning

(1991: 134). Despite this failure, however, what Lewis also found was that:

Meaning is being constructed and solidified. For most viewers, regardless of what this item may actually say, what it *does* is to feed a residual racism, a world where foreigners fight one another for no particular reason (Lewis 1991: 134, emphasis in the original).

For Lewis the impact of television news lies in its power to establish associations (1991: 144), which an audience may find difficult not to accept: “The ability to resist these associative logics depends upon the existence of an alternative ideological framework.” (1991: 146). Thus even if the content of television news can be interpreted in various ways, these interpretations are limited by ideological frameworks of which the media can be a source in the first place. Thus, without denying the capacity of the audience to interpret news in various ways, Greg Philo makes a convincing case for analysing the content of news:

If we are to understand the role of the media in the reproduction or development of these systems [of belief], then a detailed analysis of media content is an initial priority (Philo 1990: 7).

In terms of content I have chosen to focus on immigration, because the movement of migrants across borders emphasises the process of boundary formation. Most migrants are outsiders; they are part of the *Other* through which collective, national identities are constructed (cf. Giesen 1998, Cottle 2000). When these outsiders cross administrative boundaries, they also cross the symbolic boundaries erected by the modern nation-state (Giesen 1998: 21). In an age of increased global migration, more and more people cross these boundaries and challenge them in the process (cf. Appadurai 1996: 33-34). In fact Zygmunt Bauman (2007: 80) has argued that these borders become increasingly fragile and are bound to fail as the nation-state continues to lose power in what he calls the era of liquid modernity (2000). This loss of real power, however, Bauman suggests, has led to an increase in a show of power by the nation-state towards migrants:

The latent function of the barriers at the border, ostensibly erected against ‘false asylum seekers’ and ‘merely economic’ migrants, is to fortify the shaky, erratic and unpredictable existence of the insiders. But liquid modern life is bound to stay erratic and capricious whatever the treatment given and whatever plight is visited on ‘undesirable aliens’—and so the relief tends to be short-lived, and the hopes attached to ‘tough and decisive measures’ are dashed as soon as they are raised (Bauman 2007: 85).

Others have remarked on the challenge migration poses to the nation state in the context of globalisation (cf. Bhabha 2004 [1994]) and that the focus on immigration can be a more or less intentional tactic by the state to divert from its failings in other areas (cf. Huysmans 2001: 203). However, Ulrich Beck in refining his concept of a 'second modernity' has challenged the notion that national boundaries are necessarily bound to fail completely. Their instability may instead lead to 'a greater temptation, and greater opportunity, to 're-ethnicize' and renationalize both society and politics' (Beck 2005: 32). What is emerging are 'context-specific (variable, plural) boundary constructions' out of a 'transnational meta-power politics of plural boundary demarcations' (2005: 47). This politics represents a struggle between a cosmopolitanisation and renationalisation of the nation-state (2005: 50). It is this politics that is played out on television news, as I will try to demonstrate in the following section.

“Illegal Immigration” and the Location of Boundary

The three pieces, I will analyse here, were broadcast on the BBC 1 programme *News at Ten*. All cover 'illegal immigration' and were broadcast in the spring/summer of 2006, on 17 May, 15 September, and 18 September respectively. They were collected as part of a research project (Gross *et al* 2007) on the representation of refugees and asylum seekers on British television news between April and October 2006. The sample for this project included all news items mentioning asylum or refugee issues in a UK context from the main evening news programmes on Channel 4, ITV 1 and BBC 1. Analysis of this wider sample showed a strong discursive connection between issues related to refugees and asylum seekers and 'illegal immigration'. This discourse entailed a focus on domestic power politics (see below for more details). What also became apparent was that this focus contrasted in various aspects with coverage of 'illegal immigration' in non-UK contexts. The three pieces analysed here are illustrative of some of these aspects. Despite featuring on the same news programme over a relatively short time span, their individual representations of 'illegal immigration' differ quite substantially. Alongside a short description of the stories, I will summarise these representations and suggest a number of parameters that may have influence on the portrayal of 'illegal immigration'. In a second analytical step I will trace the positioning of the imagined community, the British *Us* in relation to a migrant *Them* across the three pieces. Any changes to these positions also entail a shift in the boundary between them.

The first story, from 17 May, represents ‘illegal immigration’ in a highly politicised context. It is part of two connected, ongoing narratives that dominated the news at the time for several weeks and which is alluded to at several points in the piece: the troubles at the Home Office and the future of Prime Minister Tony Blair (Gross *et al* 2007). A number of administrative scandals relating to the field of immigration and crime had led to the replacement of Charles Clarke as Home Secretary with John Reid during a cabinet reshuffle 12 days earlier. This narrative in itself was set in the context of the approaching but as yet unscheduled departure of Tony Blair as Prime Minister. Journalists expected the departure to be imminent and interpreted each new problem Blair’s government faced as the final nail in the coffin—in fact it would be another year before Blair stepped down and Gordon Brown assumed the premiership. It was in this atmosphere that Dave Roberts, the Immigration Service’s head of removals, acknowledged during a parliamentary committee hearing on 16 May that he did not have the ‘faintest idea’ about the numbers of illegal immigrants in the UK. The next day in a House of Commons debate David Cameron, the Conservative leader of the opposition challenged the Prime Minister on the issue, combined it with several others, among them further issues relating to the Home Office in general and immigration in particular, and concluded: ‘This is a government in paralysis!’ A comment through which he raised the stakes of the debate from being about ‘illegal immigration’, beyond the issues at the Home Office, to one being about Tony Blair’s future as Prime Minister.

When the debate featured as the top story on the news, the coverage echoed the three levels suggested by Cameron. It dealt with ‘illegal immigration’, i.e. the issue at hand, and also the troubles at the Home Office more generally. The overall focus, I would argue however, was on Tony Blair. The coverage consisted of several pieces: an opening trailer before the title sequence, followed by a package presented by Nick Robinson, the political editor of BBC News, then a short presentation by Mark Easton, the home affairs editor, a short return to Nick Robinson live at Westminster, and finally a headline recap at the end of the programme. The trailer and the recap as well as the introductions to the other pieces were presented by Huw Edwards, the programmes anchor. The Easton segment exclusively deals with issue of ‘illegal immigration’ and the difficulty to know any numbers. This piece, however, is framed on either side by segments that focus on the political dimension and mention ‘illegal immigration’ almost in an incidental manner, incidental to the ongoing troubles at the Home Office and to the back-and-forth, the political points-scoring in the House of Commons.

This focus can be seen, for instance in the transition between the segment by Mark Easton to the second Nick Robinson piece. After mentioning the introduction of electronic borders and identity cards in the coming years, Mark Easton concludes by saying:

We may be getting closer to assessing how many illegal immigrants there are in Britain, but knowing that my simply pose some uncomfortable new questions. Huw.

What exactly these ‘uncomfortable new questions’ are is no quite clear. They possibly relate to the pressures ‘illegal immigrants’ may put on public services, a concern Easton mentioned. Huw Edwards then segues to Nick Robinson:

Mark, thank you very much indeed. Now let’s pick up on some of those points and talk to Nick Robinson at Westminster. Nick, first of all what do you make of the exchanges today and where does it leave Tony Blair?

The question suggests that Edwards is less interested in picking up on some of the Easton’s points. Instead the anchor refocuses the coverage on the politics of power and asks Robinson for an overall assessment of the situation. Robinson responds:

Well it leaves Tony Blair with a problem. He is saying to the country: ‘Look!’ Privately in effect he’s saying, ‘I know that we didn’t recognize the scale of this problem early enough, but we are now faced with real difficulties.

Yes, Robinson does pick up on the issue of ‘illegal immigration’ here. He even continues to talk about various difficulties Blair faces to deal with it. But, I would argue, he only employs ‘illegal immigration’ as an example in the context of Blair’s slipping hold on his premiership. Returning to this underlying concern, Robinson concludes his assessment by saying:

At the knob of it, Huw, it is step by grinding step to make the difference, and some people are accusing Tony Blair of taking those steps too late.

The ‘too late’ comment is somewhat ambiguous: ‘Too late’ for what and for whom exactly? Is Robinson suggesting that it is ‘too late’ for Tony Blair as he may be about to lose power? Or is it ‘too late’ for Britain as the country may soon be overwhelmed by ‘illegal immigrants’ because of Blair’s failings? Considering all that has come before it in the programme,

I would suggest it is the former lateness Robinson implies. The ambiguity remains unresolved, however, and leads me to consider more closely the explicit elements of the representation of 'illegal immigration' in this story.

So far I have developed the dominant theme which frames 'illegal immigration' in the coverage—party politics: 'illegal immigration' may be the reason why the story is carried on this particular evening, but it is almost incidental to the top-level issue of Blair's hold on his premiership. What is it that makes immigration, in this case "illegal immigration", to the UK such a good example? Its quality comes from the value it generally signifies, derived from the discursive network, the logic of association it is positioned within. Some of these connections are made within the news programme by the journalists and their sources. Immigration is associated with illegality, crime, pressure on public services, loss of tax revenue, a black labour market, the asylum system, and loss of control of *our* borders. The latter signals a wider administrative and political incompetence, even impotence as human rights legislation is deemed to tie the hands of civil servants and politicians to deal with the issue properly by means of deportations. Visual elements reinforce the verbal discourse. The images selected to illustrate 'illegal immigration' are dominated by archival footage of men running along train tracks, climbing over fences and out of containers. Some of the footage is blurry, possibly even from CCTV. They only reflect one aspect of 'illegal immigration' and have no specific relevance to the issue of the day, yet they appear to serve as an image of 'illegal immigration' as such. Relying on archival footage and the lines of association mentioned above, the verbal and the visual level establish a fairly abstract, negative notion of 'illegal immigration': 'Illegal immigration' is a threat to the safety of the British public; a threat exacerbated by the inability of the government to deal with it.

Now, I have just mentioned 'the British public' without yet showing its existence within the coverage. It is indeed present beyond the generic ramifications of a national news programme. Before developing this point further, I will analyse the representation of 'illegal immigration' in the other two pieces, next a piece by BBC correspondent Richard Bilton on 'illegal immigration' to the Spanish Canary Islands from Africa. It featured on the *News at Ten* on 15 September 2006. Again, the piece was the top story and consisted of several segments: an opening trailer before the title sequence, followed by a package and, at the end of the programme, a headline recap. BBC News anchor Fiona Bruce presented the trailer, a comparatively lengthy introduction to the package and the headline recap.

The tone of the coverage and the representation of 'illegal immigration' can be demonstrated by taking a closer look at the trailer segment. The sequence starts with Bruce in the studio starting her commentary: 'The frontline in the battle to stem the illegal flow immigrants into Europe: the Canary Islands'. The camera then cuts away to a harbour scene at night. Low quality images show people apparently too weak to walk being carried off a ship, while Bruce continues: 'Coming from Africa and now Asia, many die trying to reach the Canaries'. The picture then fades to a shot of young, black men sitting in a tent. Bruce: 'But still they come. 24 thousand have arrived so far this year'. Finally, the camera returns to the studio. The anchor concludes the trailer by saying:

The authorities there criticise Europe for standing by while the islands are overwhelmed. We have a special report.

As befits a trailer, it contains key elements of and sets the interpretive frame for the package—the main piece of the coverage. The main theme indicated here is 'illegal immigration' into 'Europe', split into two sub-themes: a) the danger to the 'illegal immigrants' who decide to take this route by boat from the African mainland, b) the failure of 'Europe' to help the Canaries. It is important to note here that Bruce exclusively uses the term 'Europe', whereas correspondent Richard Bilton also uses the term 'European Union'. A difference in usage I will come back to later on, when analysing geographical terms and the representation of geographical spaces. What I want to discuss right now is the tension arising out of the two sub-themes. On the one hand the emphasis on the level of danger the migrants experience on this journey could be construed as an almost sympathetic representation of them. This, however, is balanced—I would argue outweighed—by the rhetoric around the threat these "illegal immigrants" pose to the Canary Islands and 'Europe'. According to Bruce the threat is existential as 'Europe' appears to be at war with the immigrants. After all, in her terms the Canary Islands have become 'the frontline in the battle' which could 'overwhelm' these European islands. The tension between the two themes is maintained throughout the coverage on the verbal as well as the visual level. In his package Bilton witnesses a rescue of a boatload of 'illegal immigrants'. 'The Coastguard bring the young and the ill to shore', he says over the same images of the harbour at night time shown in the trailer. On the other hand, he also uses terms such as 'frontline'. And footage of young, black men, who are being processed by Red Cross workers under the watchful eyes of security personnel—images reminiscent of prisoner of war camps—underscore the state of war theme. The level of sympathy towards the migrants is thus

outweighed but not obliterated by a representation of 'illegal immigration' as an uncontrollable flow of mostly young, male, African or Asian people who would do anything to get into 'Europe'/the European Union. Again, the threat level 'illegal immigration' poses appears to be high, but the degree of sympathy present in the coverage already hints at some differences to the previous piece. The 'British public' and its boundaries are positioned somewhat differently here. To make these changes clearer, I will now consider the final piece, and then develop the shifting positions across all three pieces.

The third piece, broadcast on 18 September 2006, covers 'illegal immigration' from North Korea into Thailand. The coverage consists of a comparatively lengthy introduction presented by Huw Edwards and a package by Jonathan Head, the BBC Southeast Asia correspondent. It is positioned as the penultimate story within the main part of the news programme. Head tells the story of seven women, who left North Korea to immigrate 'illegally' into Thailand. The package picks up the day before they plan to cross the Mekong River from Laos into Thailand and concludes the following day with the women reporting themselves to the Thai. The representation of 'illegal immigration' focuses on quite different aspects than in the previous two pieces: Reasons why the woman left North Korea are cited. In fact their leaving is described as an 'escape' and the fact that they have to illegally immigrate is described as a 'must'; the women are shown living an everyday life in hiding; also, at several points in the coverage the women's Christian faith is highlighted: they are shown praying; the people helping them on their journey are described as a 'network of Christian activists'. One woman even gets to tell her own, personal story in an interview sequence, where she is shown crying over the young son she left behind in North Korea. These 'illegal immigrants' are not an anonymous, threatening mass of people. They are portrayed as individuals with feelings, fears and hopes. A notion reinforced by the concluding remarks of the correspondent. Over pictures of the women praying, he says: 'And then all they can do is wait and hope that the new life, that they've struggled so hard for, is not too far away. Jonathan Head. BBC News. Northeastern Thailand'. Those words suggest a high level of sympathy for the women and their migration experience. Absent are any notions that these 'illegal immigrants' could pose a threat to their new host nation Thailand or to the 'British public'. Again the boundaries drawn here are positioned rather differently from the previous two pieces. Below I will draw on concepts such as 'witnessing' (Ellis 2002) and the 'spectatorship suffering' (Chouliaraki 2006), to discuss the stark contrast in the portrayal of 'illegal immigration' in this piece. These concepts entail

the idea of an implied audience for the news, in this case the, or rather *a* 'British public'.

Having mentioned the 'British public' several times already, I will now turn my attention to locating this British collective, imagined community. I will do so by tracing the boundaries the three pieces draw. The 'British public', a British collective community is (re)constituted by an emphasis on borders and boundaries, an inside and an outside as well as the relationship suggested between the migrant *Other* and the British *Self* in the coverage. Building on the analysis of the representation of 'illegal immigration', I will highlight two elements in particular: the links the journalists establish between themselves and their audience, and the representations of borders and geographical spaces.

One of the simplest and yet subtle ways for a journalist to connote a national frame of reference is through deictic expressions (Billig 1996: 106-108). Among them, personal pronouns are a particularly prominent tool and an easy way to establish a link with an audience. In the first two examples Mark Easton and Richard Bilton do exactly that. Talking about the introduction of an electronic border around the UK, Easton says: 'So, for the first time we will be able to identify the over-stayers'. Who is this 'we', since Easton is unlikely to be the one who will do the counting himself? The 'we' encompasses more than the border official who will do the job, for Easton cannot count himself as part of such an exclusive 'we'. In this case, I would argue, the 'we' refers to the wider British society, or at least to that segment of British society that is watching the news that evening. A high level of perceived crisis leads to strong deictic references to the nation (Mihelj *et al* forthcoming 2009). By virtue of being British they all have the right to point at the over-stayers, the non-British *Others* who have remained illegally among them.

Besides establishing a clear link between the journalist, the government and the British public, Easton's segment on 'illegal immigration' into Britain features a particularly interesting representation of borders as well as geographic space. Easton talks about the planned introduction of an electronic border, while a map of the United Kingdom is shown behind him on a screen. The coastline of Northern Ireland and its border with the Republic of Ireland, which is absent from the map, the coastline of England, Scotland and Wales, as well as the borders in-between them are flashing, while Easton says: 'From 2008 there'll be an electronic border around Britain'. Through his comment Easton places the emphasis on the external borders, i.e. the coastline and the border to the Republic of Ireland, and defines the boundary of the inside space, Britain. The fact that no other geographic elements are shown on the map, e.g. the

Republic of Ireland or northern France, strengthens a sense of British insularity, even singularity. It is this space the ‘illegal immigrants’ want to enter. To do so they have to cross the border. It is this act that turns them from migrants into immigrants. To become an *im*-migrant one has to cross a boundary from one space into another. In fact it is important to note that the dominant images described above, focus on this very point in the migrant experience. Climbing over fences and out of containers, immigrants are metaphorically captured and remain frozen in this act. Without representing any other space, they are seemingly coming from nowhere and everywhere. Their journey is thus reduced to crossing the boundary. As this entry from the outside to the inside is made without permission and thus deemed “illegal” and threatening. This is not a neutral crossing but represents a violation of this clearly demarcated boundary.

Tracing a British boundary in the second piece is more complex, as it is projected more subtly. To begin with the link the journalist, Richard Bilton, establishes with the audience is less emphatically connoting Britain. He opens his package with the words: ‘Well for most of us these islands are all about holidays, but increasingly in the dock areas they are seeing a different kind of arrival. The Canary Islands have become a frontline for illegal immigrants getting into the European Union’. Yes, the expression ‘for most us’ establishes a fairly straightforward link with the audience and an oppositional position between an *Us* that comes to the Canary Islands on holiday and an ‘illegal immigrant’ *Them* that comes here for rather different reasons. However, the Britishness of this audience is far less marked than in Easton’s ‘we’. It is there in the generic ramifications of the piece: Bilton is after all a correspondent for the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (cf. Hannerz 2004 for the role of the foreign correspondent), and the package is on a national news programme; but Britain is not explicitly referenced within the narrative of the piece itself.

In further difference to the coverage of ‘illegal immigration’ to the UK, the piece actually establishes a relational geographic space. During Bruce’s introduction a map (physical representation only, without political borders) quickly zooms in on the Canary Islands on a screen behind her. The zoom starts with a frame showing mainland Europe (with the southern part of the UK just visible for a split second) and northern Africa. It finishes centred on the Canary Islands, with a section of the west African coast still showing. The boundary between an *Us* and a *Them* appears to be a weaker one. Not only does the map establish a relational geographical space, it also highlights the proximity of the Canaries to mainland Africa in comparison to mainland Europe. Other visual elements, however, the representation of the ‘illegal immigrants’, as well as the verbal level frame

the Canaries as unquestionably European and re-establish a boundary between these European islands and migrants from Africa and Asia. I have addressed some of these other, visual and verbal elements above. One aspect, the usage of the terms 'Europe' and 'European Union', I will expand on here briefly. In her introductions Bruce uses the less precise but culturally more emotive and evocative term 'Europe' (Guibernau 2001: 2). Bilton for most of the time uses the term 'European Union', referencing a more administrative rather than culturally defined space. Still, he uses the term to differentiate and separate it from the spaces the migrants come from, Africa and Asia. To him, too, the Canary Islands are 'Europe's southern border' as he describes them in the piece.

But where is Britain located in all this? So far the boundary seems to run between Europe and the migrants. Also, compared to the first piece the boundary established is weaker less clearly demarcated. The 'illegal immigrants' are represented less threateningly—relatively speaking; the verbal and visual construction of spaces and boundaries is also less absolute and more relational. I would argue that this has to do with a weaker identification of Britain with the EU (cf. Ash 2001 for an analysis of Britain and the issue of European identity; Grundy and Jamieson 2005 for a recent study on attitudes towards the EU in the UK). The UK is in the EU, but the union is still kept at arms length. These migrants may be 'illegal', they may cross 'Europe's southern border', but they pose less of an immediate threat. The UK unlike most other EU as well as 3 non-EU countries has not signed the Schengen agreement. These migrants will have to cross another border check-point before they can get into the UK. So this is not a violation of the closest boundary around the British Us, but of a more distant borderland region. Still, ultimately, Britain and the borderland of the Canary Islands are part of the same space, they are enclosed by the same symbolic boundaries of Europe. The 'illegal immigrant' is represented as the *Other* that crosses the boundaries against whom the boundaries need to be defended.

The final piece, the story of the North Korean women, does not feature boundaries that need to be defended. Nor does the journalist establish a direct link with the audience beyond the generic aspects mentioned previously. In stark contrast to the previous pieces, crossing boundaries 'illegally' and thus questioning their validity seems to be the right thing to do, as the very different representation of the 'illegal immigrants' suggests. The emphasis on the struggle of their journey in Jonathan Head's package is repeated in the introduction by Huw Edwards. Again, a map features prominently here. Here it is a map of eastern Asia. This time the different countries are demarcated. The emphasis is not on the boundaries

between countries, though, but on the space they occupy. Each country the woman had to travel through has been filled in with a different colour, the adjoining countries are shown in standard physical map-style. A dotted line retraces the journey of the seven women, as Edwards mentions their 'escape' and the threat of deportation they still face while moving through these spaces. Space is divided into unsafe areas (North Korea, China, Laos) and at least potentially safe areas (a safe house in Laos, Thailand). The border between Thailand and Laos, the Mekong River, is reduced to a physical and administrative boundary. The illegal crossing appears to be perfectly justified to get from an unsafe to a safe place.

The representation of these boundaries suggests two possible locations for a British *Us*. One, they are at home—watching the news from a safe place and a safe distance. Despite crossing several borders in the process of their journey, the women never violate a boundary—symbolic or physical—that brings them closer to the British *Us*. The audience can witness (Ellis 2002) the women's experience without necessarily being required or being put in a position to act. The story provides the audience with a 'powerless knowledge' (2002: 1) of events far way and a connection to other members of the audience through their shared complicity (2002: 72-75). It is an explanation similar to the idea of a 'spectatorship of suffering', which can ultimately lead to 'denial and fatigue' (Chouliaraki 2006: 150). However, this spectatorship of suffering can also generate a degree of identification with those who suffer. As the level of *othering* is reduced the sufferer, in this case the North Korean women may remain outsiders, but they are 'now closer to the spectator's own experiential world and within reach' (2006: 125). The audience is still at home watching, but the boundary drawn around it includes the women in a cosmopolitan embrace.

Conclusion

In the previous section I have demonstrated differences in the representation of 'illegal immigration' and boundary formation. These representations involve diverging, even contradictory sets of attitudes towards migrants. Distance appears to be one parameter that has an influence on the framing. The further away from home the more empathy is allowed into the coverage. The connection of the 'illegal immigration' to other issues, some of them heavily politicised, also seems to play an important part. I have explored this aspect in the first example regarding the future of Tony Blair, but I could have also analysed this in the other examples, for instance, by following up on the wider discursive

frameworks around the European Union in the piece on the Canary Island. I would also suggest that an element of fear and crisis about an *Us* under threat by a *Them* has an impact. This point leads me to return to the question of whether television news is a space that is involved in the meta-power politics of plural boundary demarcations. By tracing the different positions of the *Us* and *Them* and the shifting symbolic boundaries between them, I hope to have shown how the imagined community projected by television news are far from stable and coherent across the news output. I would argue that this is an indication that television news is indeed involved in this politics, a politics that represents a struggle between re-nationalisation and cosmopolitanism in a globalising world.

Works cited:

- Anderson, Benedict R. (1983). *Imagined communities*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai, Arjun. (1996). *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ash, Timothy. G. (2001). Is Britain European? *International Affairs* 77 (1):1-+.
- Barth, Fredrik. (1998 [1969]a). Introduction. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the social organization of cultural difference*, edited by F. Barth. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- . (1998 [1969]b). Pathan Identity and Its Maintenance. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the social organization of cultural difference*, edited by F. Barth. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Bauman, Zigmunt. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press.
- . (2007). *Liquid Times: living in an age of ununcertainty*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity.
- Beck, Ulrich. (2005). *Power in the Global Age: a new global political economy*. Translated by K. Cross. Cambridge and Malden: Polity.
- Bhabha, Homi K. (2004 [1994]). *The Location of Culture*. 2004 Routledge Classics edition with a new preface by the author ed. London and New York: Routledge.
- Billig, Michael. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage.
- Chouliaraki, Lilie. (2006). *The Spectatorship of Suffering*. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: Sage.
- Cottle, Simon. (2000). Media Research and Ethnic Minorities: mapping the field. In *Ethnic Minorities and the Media: changing cultural*

- boundaries*, edited by S. Cottle. Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Dayan, Daniel, and Elihu Katz. (1992). *Media Events: the live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Deutsch, Karl W. (1966 [1953]). *Nationalism and Social Communication: an inquiry into the foundations of nationality*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press.
- Ellis, John. (2002). *Seeing Things: television in the age of uncertainty*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Fiske, John, and John Hartley. (2003 [1978]). *Reading Television*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. (1995 [1977]). *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*. Translated by A. Sheridan. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books. Original edition, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* Editions Gallimard Paris, 1975.
- Giesen, Bernhard (1998). *Intellectuals and the German Nation: collective identity in an axial age*. Translated by N. Levis and A. Weisz. Edited by J. C. Alexander and S. Seidman, *Cambridge Cultural Social Studies*. Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Gross, Bernhard, Kerry Moore, and Terry Threadgold. (2007). Broadcast News Coverage of Asylum April to October 2006: caught between human rights and public safety. Cardiff: Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University.
- Grundy, Sue, and Lynn Jamieson. (2005). Are we all Europeans now? Local, national and supranational identities of young adults. *Sociological Research Online* 10 (3).
- Guibernau, Montserrat. (2001). Introduction: Unity and diversity in Europe. In *Governing European Diversity*, edited by G. Montserrat. London, Thousand Oaks and New Dehli: Sage.
- Hall, Stuart. (1992). The question of cultural identity. In *Modernity and its futures*, edited by S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hannerz, Ulf. (2004). *Foreign News: exploring the world of foreign correspondents*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Huysmans, Jef. (2001). European Identity and Migration Policies. In *Constructing Europe's identity: the external dimension*, edited by L.-E. Cederman. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Lewis, Justin. (1991). *The Ideological Octopus: an exploration of television and its audience*. Edited by J. Fiske, *Studies in Culture and Communication*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Madianou, Mirca. (2005). *Mediating the Nation: news, audiences and the politics of identity*. London: UCL Press.
- Mihelj, Sabina, Veronika Bajt, and Miloš Pankov. (forthcoming in 2009). Television News, Narrative Conventions and National Imagination. *Discourse and Communication* 4 (1).
- Morley, David. (2000). *Home Territories: media, mobility and identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Philo, Greg. (1990). *Seeing and Believing: the influence of television*. Edited by J. Curran, *Communication and Society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Scannell, Paddy. (1996). *Radio, Television and Modern Life*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Schlesinger, Philip. (2000). The Nation and Communicative Space. In *Media Power, Professionals and Policies*, edited by H. Tumber. London and New York: Routledge.
- Silverstone, Roger. (1994). *Television and Everyday Life*. London and New York: Routledge.

Note:

This paper builds on a research project conducted on the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in British television news (Gross *et al* 2007). Analysing the coverage of four national television news programmes over a six months period, from April to October 2006, this project also investigated the production process of these programmes through interviews with journalists and was funded by a grant from the Oxfam UK Poverty Programme.