

**Title: British media framing, space and the migrant 'jungles' of Calais**

**Presenters:** Yasmin Ibrahim and Anita Howarth

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### **Introduction**

In September 2009 French riot police in the full gaze of the media demolished an illegal migrant camp in Calais known locally as 'the Jungle' and dispersed its occupants who in two years had grown from a handful to over 800 (Garnham 2009). This paper explores how British newspapers' use of the jungle metaphor constructed a particular social imaginary of illegal migration and migrant camps at a time when shelters were a focus of policy and public concern. The jungle signified a barbaric space characterised by environmental degradation and lawlessness that encroached on white ordered civility. This was used to justify the demolition of the camp and the dispersal of its occupants. However, mini-camps sprung up almost immediately all along the French coastline (Allen 2009c) and newspapers expressed local fears that these could grow into mini-jungles (Allen 2009a) – a fear realized a year later with the emergence and demolition of the 'new jungle' in a small village near Dunkirk (Finan and Allen 2010). We argue that the perniciousness of the jungle metaphor rendered the migrants' need for shelter illegitimate by consigning them as the uncouth and uncivilized sub-human violating fortress Europe.

### **Approach: space, context and analysis**

Our analysis of the metaphor of the jungle draws on conceptions of spatialization as a social imaginary (Shields 1999) that emerges out of a politics of territoriality centred on discursive and material practices of 'us and them', inclusion and exclusion (Trudeau 2006) in which the media play a key role in enacting and reiterating boundaries (Anderson 2006). We argue that these discursive media practices took a particular form with the migrant camps on the French coastline and was shaped by 'Fortress Europe', the EU's militarized external borders; the Schengen Agreement's relaxation of internal borders to facilitate movement across its space; and the congregation of migrants on the sea border where Britain, having opted out of the Agreement, retained border checks (Barthes 2013). The convergence of these characteristics is most acute at Calais, a multi-modal transport hub depicting a particular politics of territoriality centred on migrant spaces and shelters. The closure of the Sangatte Red Cross Centre in 2002 focused British newspaper attention on Calais as a major conduit for cross-channel illegal migration (Boswell 2012) and marked the beginning of a 10-year policy to close, ban or demolish migrant shelters while allowing charities to meet other basic human needs for food, hot showers and basic medical care (Howarth, Anita and Ibrahim 2012). This fragmentation of legitimate and illegitimate needs forced migrants to erect their own makeshift shelters some of which were termed as jungles between 2007 and 2011. The paper analyses the metaphor of the Jungle in 121 articles in Britain's two mid-market newspapers; The Daily

Mail and the Express. Since the 1990s the mid-market has become one of most politically significant in Britain and the Daily Mail in particular emerged as one of the most powerful newspapers as a result of its demographic, readership and industry changes (Greenslade 2004). Furthermore the British government was a major source of pressure on their French counter-parts to act against illegal migration generally and the migrant camps in particular (Howarth, Anita and Ibrahim 2012). We analysed the articles at three levels of spatialization: the functional (shelter); the environmental (internal and external conditions); and the barbaric (violent criminality and lawlessness). We also sought to capture this through spatial and temporal continuities and shifts from the Calais Jungle, to the mini-camps dispersed all along the coastline and to the New Jungle near Dunkirk.

### **The Jungle as the uncouth, unordered space**

The meaning of The Jungle as a barbaric space did not emerge with the first mentions of the term in newspapers. At first it referred to some 'makeshift' tents on 'inhospitable scrubland' on the main road to the port of Calais, a base from where migrants could leap onto passing vehicles headed across the Channel (Tristem 2007). By 2009, however, the Jungle had become highly visible and semi-permanent, a 'sprawling shantytown' of shelters and a wood-and-tarpaulin mosque (Rawstorne 2009). That is, a town within a town that had grown organically, unordered and into a barbaric space of the Jungle. The metaphor captured environmental degradation in discourses of 'inhumane squalor' (Allen 2009b) 'akin to the trenches of World War 1' (Bracchi 2009) and where the 'smell of human excrement and acrid smoke was almost overwhelming' (Reid 2009). It was also referred an uncouth space in which violence and lawlessness had taken over; a 'hiding place' for rapists, gang masters and people traffickers; a 'no go area for the police' (Allen 2008); and a uncontained space where inter-ethnic 'turf wars' 'spilled onto the streets of Calais' (Rawstorne 2009). The 'the law of the jungle', newspapers claimed, had extended 'beyond the boundaries of this god-forsaken "community"' disrupting local business and threatening local residents with their desperation and determination to reach Britain (see Bracchi 2009).

### **Practices to eradicate space**

Local residents talked about 'setting up vigilante groups to forcibly clear migrants' (Rawstorne 2009) and an arson attack on a migrant processing centre was attributed to local residents 'angry at the presence of migrants' (Allen 2009b). French minister Eric Besson pledged that the "'the law of the jungle will reign no longer'" and that the "'base camp for human traffickers'" (Bracchi 2009) would be demolished to which his British counterpart added that the demolition of the camp would "'disrupt illegal immigration and people trafficking routes'" and deter migrants from seeking to come to Britain (Garnham 2009). Thus the discourses of lawless barbarism were used to justify the violent demolishing of the camp and the dispersal or detention of its occupants. A similar discourse justified subsequent demolitions of new camps.

### **The Jungle as an open-ended space**

The falsity of the political promise that the demolition of the Jungle would end the barbarism or deter migrants was quickly exposed. New camps ‘popped up’ in Calais hours after the Jungle is razed’ (Allen 2009a); ‘at least 20 new mini-camps’ sprung up around the town over the next few weeks (Allen 2009c) and others sprouted ‘all along the northern French coast’ (Sparks 2009). These were ‘makeshift’ shelters ‘strategically located’ (Giannangeli 2009) on main transit routes but unlike the Jungle many were ‘well hidden from main roads’ (Giannangeli 2009) or ‘secret homes’ created after ‘forcing open the doorways’ of the wartime blockhouses (Allen 2009a). The specter of what could happen was evoked in discourses about “squalid conditions ... almost identical [to] ... the so called Jungle” and the ‘danger’ of mini-camps ‘mushrooming into a new “Jungle”’ (Allen 2009a). Within a year there were reports that a ‘New Jungle’ had sprung up in the village of Teteghem, near Dunkirk (Finan & Allen 2010). Newspapers were less interested in barbarism as environmental squalor and more interested in barbarism as encroachment, violence and threat. The village of 7500 residents had been ‘invaded’ by 50 new migrants a week and ‘over-run’ by a camp of 200 (Finan and Allen 2010). The local mayor attributed the sprouting of the New Jungle to the ‘changed situation’ following the demolition of its Calais predecessor and where migrants were now ‘trying’ to get to Britain from ‘Dunkirk and the Belgian ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend’ (Finan and Allen 2010). People traffickers had targeted Teteghem because of its strategic location near the port of Dunkirk then charged migrants to camp in the village (Finan and Allen 2010). There were reports of recent stabbings and shootings and local residents felt threatened by ‘dangerous and very violent’ people traffickers and by ‘hardened’ migrants with ‘nothing to lose and will stop at nothing to get what they need’ (Finan and Allen 2010). The police ‘swoop[ed] on 200 British-bound migrants’, demolished the camp and dispersed its occupants (Reporter 2010). Thereafter discourses of the jungle subsides into postscript reminders of what had happened in the past and could again in the future (Finan 2013). A powerful memory was thus embedded in the social imaginary that linked illegal migration and migrant camps on French-British sea border to barbarism.

## **Conclusion**

This paper set out to explore how mid-market British newspapers constructed a social imaginary of illegal migration and migrant camps. The meaning of these camps needs to be understood in a particular context of territorial politics of space on the French coastline centred on migrant shelters and which fractured basic human needs, juxtaposing the need for shelter as illegitimate against other basic needs as legitimate. It was in this context that the jungle metaphor came to ascribe particular meanings to migrant camps that extended beyond functional spaces of shelters and opportunities to incorporate the barbaric. These were spaces of the uncouth and unordered. The barbarism was captured in accounts of the environmental degradation of spaces that evolved organically (or through orchestration by criminals) and that encroached on surrounding environs as well as of spaces of violent lawlessness. Both were seen as warranting violent demolition. However this failed to end the barbarism but dispersed it along the coast in mini-camps that created a new meaning of the jungle as an open-ended space. It also entrenched a powerful social imaginary in which many migrants already deemed illegal under changes to EU asylum law on asylum were seen as sub-human through their occupation of spaces of barbarism.

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