The Material-Discursive Border & Territorial-Apparatuses
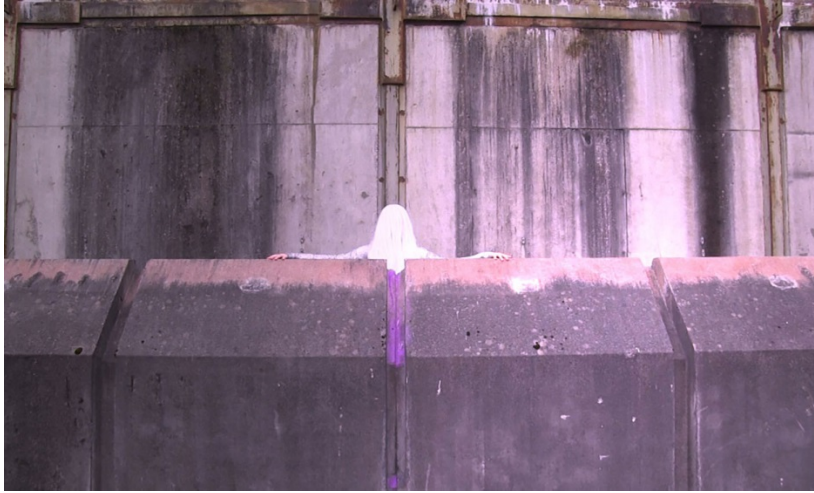*{The Eile Project}*

Figure 1: The Territories of Eile, audiovisual film, 2018, film still. [by a place of their own]

Abstract

Through our trans-disciplinary practice, a *place, of their own*[1], and one specific project based at the UK border with the Irish Republic, we discover, occupy and create (alternate) 'field conditions' of various kinds.   Our ongoing art and spatial research in The Eile Project draws together different bodies of knowledge, experience and practice; from art, architecture, urbanism, philosophy, and science, to create new imaginaries and cartographies of the border. This is a particularly apposite time for such an endeavour - as the UK's protracted and contentious manoeuvres to leave the EU create renewed tensions and uncertainties at the Irish Border, and borders and their most brutal and basic spatial manifestation of the wall are increasingly being built around the world, physically and in the collective imagination.

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[1]; a place, of their own. is the spatial art and research practice that we have run since 2010 in Sheffield, UK and Ballyshannon, the Irish Republic. We explore the potentials in the overlaps between art and spatial practice to interrogate and propose around questions of (anti-) capitalism, environment, and geo-politics.

We firstly establish the borderlands through a particular reading as material-discursive, to pay attention to its construction through spatial, material and embodied processes, as well as through the concrete work of various discourses. We then explore aspects of our spatial art practice as *territorial-apparatuses.*[2] We will illustrate how this opens up important complex questions about disciplines, knowledge, ethics, aesthetics, territoriality and the potential of the confluence of art and spatial practice.

Introduction

The Eile Project is an ongoing multifaceted investigation of the UK border with the Irish Republic using spatial interventions to create site-specific performances and sculptures, soundscapes and films which serve to offer a form of 'border-fictioning' as a resistant practice. The origins of this work are found in Paula McCloskey's history, as a child of a border. Born in Ireland, Paula is from Ballyshannon, County Donegal, a small border town in the Irish Republic. Her mother was brought up in an Irish Protestant family and her father as Catholic. Paula was born in 1975 at the height of the so-called 'Troubles' and during her childhood lived in England, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, regularly traversing the border.

The Eile Project involves the enactment of numerous site-specific spatial interventions and performances across varied borderland sites, and a subsequent digital audio-visual storytelling; a process we have named border fictioning. We created the character of 'Eile' as a creature of the border - a transmuter, a gorgon - that interacts with the border to create (and insist on) aesthetics and stories which are entwined tales of humans and more than humans. 'Eile' (Irish for 'other') was 'summoned' following the result of the UK referendum in 2016 to leave the EU; at a time that

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[2] Apparatus is a term that has been used by writers such as Foucault. Agamben and Barad in related but different ways to refer to the system of procedures, processes, objects, rules, decisions and so on which determine the way a social or technical system is articulated.

marked the beginning of yet another great change for this border, which, since the Belfast or

Good Friday Agreement of 1998 had largely dropped out of political and popular discourse in

Britain.

Eile's spatial and embodied performance enactments and their virtual retellings in short

films are a partial, situated and fragile reconstitution of the border. The practice is concerned with

the specific historic and contemporary conditions of the border in Ireland, and with resisting

nation-state borders as sites of power relations most unequal along racial and ethnic lines, and of

surveillance, control and exclusion[3].

Eile in (and of) the Border

> Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A
> border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and
> undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant
> state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.[4]

Visual artists, geographers, activists, architects have joined many others in engaging with contested

and highly charged nation-state borders, making important interventions into the conditions and

characteristics of borders addressing various dimensions of cross-border exchange, from mass

migration to the dynamics of, for example, translation, occupation, border-control, and in doing

so, offering new ways of conceptualising them.[5]   As well as the specific political spatial condition of

the UK's border with Ireland, the Eile Project engages with the broader notion of borders and the

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[3] Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (Oakland, CA : Washington, D.C: AK Press, 2014).

[4] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, Fourth Edition*, 4th ed. edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 25.

[5] Although there is not the space here for a comprehensive exploration of the many and varied artist engagement with nation-state borders,
such work can be seen in the performance and object work of Barthélémy Toguo's *Transit* (2006), Ana Teresa Fernández's *Erasing the Border*
(2016), Zach Blas' (2011) *Facial Weaponization Suite*; Broomberg and Chanarin's *Mini Israel* (2006) and the ongoing work of *Performing borders*
(https://performingborders.live/project_about/).The UK/Irish border has long inspired rich work across Irish literature, but has also garnered
the attention of visual artists, as seen in 2018 Suzanne Lacy Across and In-between. In work that pre-dates the recent border episode, the
Northern Irish born artist John Byrne performance work *A Border Worrier*, 1997 and the production of the *Border Interpretative Centre*, (2000)
a fictional visitor centre and souvenir shop temporarily set-up on the border. We also direct readers to the important work of Teddy Cruz
and Fona Forman (e.g. http://dimensionsofcitizenship.org/participants/estudio-teddy-cruz-plus-fonna-forman/index.html) and the antiAtlas of
borders www.antiatlas.net/antiatlas-of-borders/

various discourses around them, including border struggles, critical border studies (such as those by Balibar[6] and Brambilla[7]), political theory[8] and the work of Gloria Anzaldúa.[9] Across these lines of inquiry, borders are re-articulated, beyond the fortress, towards a view of borders as practices that are continually and differently produced. As Harsha Walia suggests, "[i]nterrogating such discursive and embodied borders – their social construction and structures of affect – reveals how we are not just spatially segregated but also hierarchically stratified."[10] Equally, for Balibar, borders are "polysemic", in that they present themselves differently to different people[11], hence disturbing the strict binaries of inside and outside of a border, or the idea that borders only define the space around territories.

For the Eile Project we take up these calls to attend to the border as an affective and ongoing practice that is dynamic spatially, culturally and politically[12]. Political theorists Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson position borders in this way as *method,* and as epistemological 'viewpoint':

> [F]or us the question of border as method is something more than methodological. It is above all a question of politics, about the kinds of social worlds and subjectivities produced at the border and the ways that thought and knowledge can intervene in these processes of production. Border as method involves negotiating the boundaries between the different kinds of knowledge that come to bear on the border and, in so doing, aims to throw light on the subjectivities that come into being through such conflicts…the border is for us not so much a research object as an epistemological viewpoint that allows an acute critical analysis not only of how relations of domination, dispossession, and exploitation are being redefined presently but also of the struggles that take shape around these changing relations. The border can be a method precisely insofar as it is conceived of as a site of struggle. [13]

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[6] Etienne Balibar and Erin M. Williams, "World Borders, Political Borders," *PMLA* 117, no. 1 (2002): 71–78.

[7] Chiara Brambilla, "Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept," *Geopolitics* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 14–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2014.884561.

[8] Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

[9] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

[10] Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, 9.

[11] Balibar and Williams, "World Borders, Political Borders."

[12] We do emphatically acknowledge that this work does not address the everyday struggles of living on contested border sites and the ongoing challenges for those living with or inside border regimes and of course, those whose lives are subjected to great misery and hardship because caused by the conditions of what Harsha Walia names Border Imperialsim.

[13] Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, 17–18. This quote is also cited by Alessandra Cianetti on the online European curatorial platform Performing Borders, see https://performingborders.live/project_about/

We draw two primary things from this, in addition to the accepted notion of the border as a site of struggle; firstly that the border is not a discrete object to be studied in itself, but a positon in which to locate analysis of various contemporary conflicts, and secondly, that the border and its complexly interrelated issues (relations of domination, dispossession, and exploitation) are productive of particular subjectivities.   As we will show, the Eile Project locates us precisely in the border, and demands that we explicate this position, while analysing our own subjectivities, as well as attempting to draw forth emergent ones.   The Chicana feminist and queer theorist and writer Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) crucially explored the subjective border space through time, culture and identity as she poetically weaves the subjective, spatial, social and political:

> We don't cross borders, borders cross us….The struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian--our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads.

Eile's border becomings reclaim ancient knowledges and folklore to create a myth for our time, as a counter border-narrative to discourses of sovereignty, colonialism, partition, the 'Troubles', terrorism and Brexit (with its mooted subsidiaries such as 'backstop', 'soft-border', 'hard-border' and 'alternative arrangements'). The idea was to develop a counter narrative around Eile, conjuring another mythical world in homage to a time in Ireland before colonization when "magical transformation would have still been deemed as possible".[14]

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[14] Donna L. Potts, *Contemporary Irish Writing and Environmentalism: The Wearing of the Deep Green* (Springer, 2018), 176.

Apparatuses and Material-Discursive Phenomena

Our art and spatial practice is nourished by the work of feminist physicist and philosopher Karen

Barad, whose work has allowed us to consider how to both observe the border and how to act with

it and as part of it. Through the notion of agential-realism, Barad adds a materialist angle to the

performative idea of the inseparability of the processes and practices of knowledge making.

Established ideas of agency and causality are questioned and reworked through the notion of *intra*-

rather than *inter*- action, in order to "queer the familiar sense of causality",[15] where one or more

causal agents precede and produce. In doing so, she proposes that it is through material intra-

actions that "matter comes to matter" and, as such, the boundaries between matter and meaning are

disturbed and refigured.

> Barad states that *phenomena* are produced through agential[16] intra-actions or

entanglements:

> To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities,
> but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals
> do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled
> intra-relating.[17]

The border as material-discursive phenomena (as also explored by Savi[18]) allows for differences

(understandings, relations, experiences, aesthetics, affects) to be made through different

entanglements. Importantly, entanglements can be differentiated (through material configurations)

and interweave in an ongoing process of intra-action. As such, this opens the possibility of the

[15] Karen Barad, "Intra-actions" (Interview of Karen Barad by Adam Kleinmann), 2012.

[16] Barad uses the term *agential* 'to connote the complexity and contingency of an agency that emerges from the interplay of relations between loosely bounded entities' see Jane Prophet and Helen Pritchard, "Performative Apparatus and Diffractive Practices: An Account of Artificial Life Art," *Artificial Life* 21, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 334.

[17] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2007), ix.

[18] Melina Pereira Savi, "How Borders Come to Matter? The 'Physicality' of the Border in Gloria Anzaldúa's 'Borderlands/La Frontera,'" *Anuário de Literatura* 20, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 181–91.

introduction of new intra-actions with the border as resulting in the production of new entities, understandings, affects and so on, that, in turn, entangle with others. How particular phenomena are cut together or apart is through agential cuts: "Agential cuts do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together/apart – "holding together" of the disparate itself."[19] For borders, how we have come to understand them as phenomena is through the existing agential cuts. Thus, understanding the conditions of agential cuts is integral to understanding borders and the consequences of that particular cut, which we explore with specific examples from the UK/Irish border below.

Barad refers to the *apparatuses through* which knowledge is produced; not only the practices, tools and processes at play, but the nonhuman (e.g. space, objects, time) and human material-discursive forces through which particular concepts defined and through which particular physical properties are produced. Rather than being only human activities, Barad brings in non-humans as apparatuses are *material-discursive* in a wider sense, as "specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted."[20] Working with and through the ideas of Donna Haraway, Niels Bohr and Michel Foucault (among others) Barad's theory considers the mutually constitutive relations between the discursive[21] and material through intra-action between bodies, discourses, objects, places and other non-human material things in the production of knowledge and meaning, through the identification and articulation of material-discursive phenomena.

[19] Barad, "Intra-actions" (Interview of Karen Barad by Adam Kleinmann), 46.

[20] Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003): 29, https://doi.org/10.1086/345321.

[21] Barad reminds us that "Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements." in Barad, 819.

> The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other.[22]

Agential realism allows us to approach our research practice in the Eile Project in a way that sees our observations and readings not as reflecting the world but *diffracting it*, as we make active interventions that produce difference (or are a different kind of boundary-making though agential cuts) in ethical ways.   In order to elucidate this point, what follows are two related parts, the first of which shows through the brief consideration of farming, abortion, and the waterways, how the border between Ireland and the UK can be understood through this material-discursive lens.   The second emerges from this positioning to consider the ways that our practice in the Eile Project plays out in and as such a material-discursive phenomena and bordering practice.

The Irish/UK Border as Material-Discursive Phenomena

To read the border as a material-discursive phenomena emphasises the entangled inseparability of discourses and materialities of the border, which is to say that borders do not exist prior to the discursive and material practices that bring them into being (what Barad refers to as "open-ended becoming").[23]   The becoming-border is therefore continually produced and re-produced through its many entanglements, a multitude of entangled performances of the border "bordering" itself.

The Eile Project investigates the complex intra-relations between human and non-humans within the continual entanglements of matter and discourse at the border between Ireland and the

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[22] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 152.

[23] Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 821.

UK, a particular apparatus which we consider next in intra-action with other historically and culturally specific apparatuses.

Border Farming

With its rich soil, relatively mild temperatures and an abundance of rain, farming is central to Ireland's economy and communities; farms are key employers in rural communities and essential to sustaining local economies. The border is an agricultural area, with some farms straddling the international boundary. For more than forty years farmers in the UK have operated under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which has provided income support to farmers to help them sustain their businesses in a difficult market place.[24] Since the end of customs checks following the Good Friday Agreement with the establishment of an all-island economy, as highlighted by a recent study by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), there is a considerable level of supply chain interconnectedness across the Irish Republic and in Northern Ireland, which the potential imminent UK exit from the EU threatens to disrupt.[25] Since the UK EU referendum on the 23 June 2016, growing uncertainty is felt by border communities. Farmer David Crocket, whose farm traverses the border, said "I have been told I will have to move my entire business out there and buy new machinery. I will eventually have to split the farm and hand over the Irish side to my son."[26]

The border and farming are a complex material-discursive phenomenon. This particular formulation of farming is around the discourses of farmers and the community practices alone which displaces questions of the conditions of the border beyond the farmers' control. There is much excluded from this apparatus, such as the experiences of the farmed non-human animals

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[24] https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-library/Brexit-UK-agriculture-policy-CBP-8218.pdf
[25] https://www.esri.ie/system/files?file=media/file-uploads/2018-03/BKMNEXT352.pdf
[26] https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/03/farmer-straddling-both-sides-irish-border-people-dont- want-return-violence

that do not make the cut, or the issues relating to the intra-action of farming and climate change, as the accounts of the plight of farming across the border are human-centric. One of the ways that local farmers and communities have been able to resist and re-work the material-discursive apparatuses of border-farming has been the practice of smuggling. Smuggling might be said to be in the business of an ongoing agential engagement in the many border-farming practices since the partition of 1922.[27] Paula's mother and grandmother recall goods such as butter and 'knickers' being smuggled across the border to Ballyshannon where they lived up until the 1970s. Unsurprisingly, as well as being part of the everyday lives, smuggling across the border has historic entanglements with paramilitaries and organised crime. At the time of writing this the UK's departure from the EU remains in limbo as the last two "Brexit" deadlines have come and gone as the UK finds itself facing a snap general election. The outcome of the referendum, and thus the border, is still uncertain as the embittered Brexit saga drags on. But, the UK leaving the EU in the foreseeable remains the most likely outcome, and is one that will result in a different customs arrangement to that which currently exists and which, in turn may see a resurgence of smuggling practices. In a recent interview, Pat Treanor, a Sinn Féin councillor in the border county of Monaghan was reported as saying: "You can have a house with a front door and a back door, and the border goes through the middle. Of course, people will find a bit of ingenuity to get around it...The black market will thrive." [28]

Smuggling then, is an example of an embodied engagement in or with the border and farming (as a material-discursive phenomena), and exploring the conditions of which illuminates

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[27] "The division of the country of Ireland into two separate regions took place in May 1921, through an act of British Parliament in 1920. Although the original intention was for both regions to remain within the United Kingdom, following the Irish War of Independence the southern part split from what we know as the UK today, in 1922, and would become the independent state known now as the Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland was created with a devolved administration and remains part of the UK." Paul Murray, "Partition and the Irish Boundary Commission: A Northern Nationalist Perspective," *Clogher Record* 18, no. 2 (2004): 181–217.

[28] https://www.politico.eu/article/brexit-means-good-news-for-irish-smugglers/

something of the consequences, possibilities, and responsibilities of different intra-actions with the border.

Border Abortion

Historically, women's bodies have been in complex intra-action with discourses of Irish nationalism tied to the history of British colonialism, the state, the church, partition and the so-called 'Troubles' among other things. In 1983, the years of encroachment of the Irish state on women's bodies became ratified with the abortion ban in the Irish Republic becoming part of the Irish constitution.[29] For years tens of thousands of women from the Irish Republic crossed the border to undergo an operation that, for the most part, was illegal in their own country.[30] Though this was an option for some, socio-economic factors would stop others from being able to make this trip. More recently, new technology was added into the complex intra-action of borders and abortion with the alternative option: at-home medical termination of pregnancy provided through online telemedicine.[31] This allowed women to not cross the border, but to still access abortion, although face the possibility of criminalization.[32]

In 2018 another referendum, in the Irish Republic, took place. After many years of fierce campaigning to change the discourse and unhitch women's bodies being seen as representing Irish identity policed by the State, the Church, as well as communities, the country voted to Repeal the 8th Amendment of the Irish constitution, effectively ending the abortion ban and opening up legal abortion for women in Ireland. As the border-abortion material-discursive arrangements changed for the Irish Republic, the border with Northern Ireland was recast as a boundary where women

[29] Conrad, K, 2004 Locked in the Family Cell: Gender, Sexuality and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse. Madison: Wisconsin University Press

[30] Abigail R. A. Aiken et al., "Self Reported Outcomes and Adverse Events after Medical Abortion through Online Telemedicine: Population Based Study in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland," *BMJ* 357 (May 16, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.j2011.

[31] Aiken et al.

[32] Aiken et al.

from either side had inequitable access to legal abortion. In Northern Ireland when abortion

became legalised in the rest of the UK in 1967, Stormont did not follow suit. Abortion law in

Northern Ireland dated back to the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which made abortion

illegal in almost all circumstances. Fegan and Rebouche 2003 wrote that what was missing from

the Northern Irish abortion discourse is women's rights: 'In Northern Ireland the debate on

abortion is constructed as a profoundly moral issue, invoking deeply held religious views on both

sides of the traditional divide.'[33] However, change has come to Northern Ireland following a

Commons debate aimed at keeping Northern Ireland running in the absence of devolved

government. From midnight on 21 October 2019, abortion in Northern Ireland was

decriminalised so that women and girls can terminate a pregnancy without fear of being

prosecuted. Barad states that "even the smallest cut matters", [34] and the specific iterative changes to

abortion law, and then subsequent change in behaviours, practices, institutions, attitudes and so on

reconstitutes UK border condition across the island of Ireland.

Border Rivers and Waterways

Much of the border between the Irish Republic and the Northern Ireland is connected to water, as

it flows through or nearby rivers, marshlands and lochs. The natural and human-made water

infrastructure of this region plays important social, economic and ecological roles. The border

runs through the centre of the river in many places, where historical geopolitical forces are

entangled with organic and non-human conditions.

The aquatic landscape of the border has offered spaces and conditions for cross-border

practices including the smuggling discussed above, such as along the Ulster canal, a now-disused

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[33] Eileen V. Fegan and Rachel Rebouche, "Northern Ireland's Abortion Law: The Morality of Silence and the Censure of Agency," Feminist Legal Studies 11, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 222.
[34] Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 387.

infrastructure project built in the 19ᵗʰ century but abandoned in the 1930s.   The canal, on its route

from Loch Erne almost to Belfast, crosses the border many times, passing by many towns, such as

Clones, that have been "teetering on the brink of ruin by partition." [35] The canal offered a place for

leisure and ritual, as MacDonald recalls of his childhood:

> At Halloween, the overgrown channels provided a handy source of bullrushes. We harvested these
> and soaked their pillowy, dark brown bulbs in paraffin, setting them afire for torchlight Samhain
> rituals on the steps of the Protestant church that dominated the Diamond in the middle of our
> town.[36]

As well as the rivers themselves, the bogs and marshlands around the border created autonomous

zones that, as well as operating as smuggling routes, have provided sanctuary for centuries.

Campbell suggests that the bogs around Castlederg and Killeter "was regarded (by the British) as

somewhere the native Irish went to, they were demonised, it was where civilisation ended... [but]

we are talking about the idea of being in-between places and it is no accident that we are near

Lough Derg (the Catholic pilgrimage site)...This actually was not the end of the world, it was the

centre of the world in many ways." [37]

Bridges over the rivers became critical points of encounter and contestation.   During the

1970s the British would block the bridge border crossings, or 'spike' them (through embedded

steel girders) to prevent the movement of paramilitaries from south of the border entering

Northern Ireland, as part of the army's attempt to close or monitor all border crossings through a

military landscape of watchtowers and checkpoints.

> The spikes [at the Aquaduct Bridge] circumscribed my childhood world in a ring of steel. They were
> unnatural barriers between neighbours, friends, family. Like Uncle Eugene, we always found ways

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[35] Darach MacDonald, *Hard Border: Walking through a Century of Partition* (Stillorgan, County Dublin, Republic of Ireland: New Island Books, 2018), 3.

[36] MacDonald, *Hard Border*.

[37] www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/ex-smuggling-route-in-far-flung-area-of-irish-border-influenced-dantes-inferno-870990.html

around them, but they were constant reminders that our freedom of movement was curtailed by a line we couldn't see.[38]

The bridge spikes thus generated a political field of control, an oppressive territorialisation that could only partially be resisted. Both adults and children were forced to find ways around these violent material interventions. For Uncle Eugene, this meant "building a small link road through a corner of a field to provide a circuitous escape route to town."[39] The river bridges were also the site of many protests over the years, including in the 70s through to the 90s and to the more recent Brexit situation. The bridges were transformed in different spatial, material and temporal ways, through signs, sounds, gatherings, blockades and actions.

The border as material-discursive

The term *territorial-apparatus* is used to approach this material-discursive condition of the border, to capture the interplay between the complex layers of political spatiality (through the expanded notion of territory) and the various material and social forces that work to determine borders and their implications. Farming, abortion and the waterways are each examples of territorial-apparatuses that intra-act with one another in making the border; and this is a continual process of constituting and re-constituting.

We suggest that the territorial-apparatus lens allows us to pay close attention to the spatial, material and socio-political nature of the border in continual flux, and to open up within this view, opportunities to observe and critique interventions (agential cuts) in the border that are more or less ethical, with divergent implications for the people, animals, plants and earth.

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[38] MacDonald, *Hard Border*, 9.
[39] MacDonald, 8–9.

The next section of the paper moves on to consider how we also use the term *territorial-apparatus* to refer to the interventions that we make in and as part of this material-discursive border.

Territorial-Apparatuses in the Eile Project

The artworks, as spatial interventions, events, films and so on, that we produce take place in (and with) the border as a material-discursive phenomena. We suggest that framing our spatial practice and its interventions as territorial-apparatus offers an approach to trans-disciplinary spatial practice, and to spatio-political theory, that asks questions about how to produce spatial transformations and actions that are relevant to the environmental and political crises of the contemporary moment.

The notion of apparatuses developed by Barad is productive for us in investigating the potentials and characteristics of border-fictioning as spatial practice as it uses the insights of Bohr to move beyond the anthropocentric versions of Butler (in terms of the body) and Foucault (in terms of agency). Barad's articulation of the apparatus provides some tools with which to consider the spatial-apparatuses that play out in the Eile Project.

Apparatuses for Barad include modes of thought, discourses and embodied practices, and in the Eile Project, apparatuses are determined by personal histories; embodied encounters with creatures and specific places and territories; theories from art, Irish folklore, philosophy and psychoanalysis, as well as architecture, urbanism and contemporary spatial practice. Rather than *inter*-acting disciplinary theories towards a recognised outcome, here these different discourses and their respective material-discursive histories, ontologies and practices are *intra*-acting, towards a

spatial practice that is in the process of becoming, a xeno-architecture of the border.[40] Next, we

consider how this intra-action plays out in the Eile Project, across three aspects of the practice -

material spatialities, enacted territories and intra-active spatial intervention.

Material Spatialities

Space is an important concept for agential realism, from which a particular conception of spatiality

informs our approach to place/site, space, territory and the constitutive relations between places,

human and non-human life, matter and discursive systems. This is a theory of space that builds on

the Lefebvrian shift from privileging Cartesian space as a static container, towards a notion that

acknowledges the performative production of space through social practices. Along with Doreen

Massey's work[41], agential-realism and apparatuses consider a material-spatiality, in which spatiality is

not merely acknowledged as either the product of social (human) forces, nor merely informing

them, but that these phenomena, plus many others, are mutually constitutive. Thus, this approach

serves to

> dislocate the Euclidean geometric frame of reference by reconceptualising the notions of space, time,
> and matter using an alternative framework that shakes loose the foundational character of notions
> such as location and opens up a space in which indeterminacies, contingencies, and ambiguities
> coexist with causality.[42]

Basing our enactments and interventions as apparatuses that intra-act with the border as a material-

discursive phenomenon therefore permits us to rethink the nature of the border space through

terms such as location, site, or place, and, through the border-fictions that we create, explore

alternative relations between the spatial, the material and the agency of both human and non-

[40] The term xeno-architecture was recently introduced by Avanessian and Meissen et al, in Armen Avanessian et al., *Perhaps It Is High Time For A Xeno-Architecture To Match* (Sternberg Press, 2018).

[41] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Sage Publications Ltd, 2005).

[42] Karen Barad, "Re(Con)Figuring Space, Time, and Matter," in *Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice* (Rutgers University Press, 2001), 76.

human actors. Barad uses the notion of scale to convey the implications of this position for understanding the possibilities for agency that spatiality can afford, citing Neil Smith who says that 'it is precisely the active social connectedness of scales that is vital'.[43] However, Barad clarifies that the connectedness that Smith points to does not concern links between "pre-existing discrete nested scales"[44] but rather the "agential enfolding of different scales through one another."

In the performances, interventions and films of the Eile Project, we move across and between these scales, paying attention, as we go, to that which is within our view and that which we choose to omit (in other words, considering the *agential cuts* that we make). Figs 2 and 3 show Experiment #2, one of a series through which the project was developed, in which we travelled some of the 330km of the borderlands with our children. At particular points along the border, we all produced our own border-fictions in, and for, that place. Adult stories of childhood border-crossings were shared, as new stories and myths were imagined and discussed. New materials were also introduced, including a reflective 'space blanket', a cardboard tube, and a roll of black plastic, which contributed to the narrative unfoldings.

[43] Neil Smith, "Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale," *Social Text*, no. 33 (1992): 62 cited by ; Barad, "Re(Con)Figuring Space, Time, and Matter," 102.

[44] Barad, "Re(Con)Figuring Space, Time, and Matter," 76.

Figure 2: Experiment #2, The Eile Project, 2017 [by a place of their own]

Figure 3: Experiment #2, The Eile Project, 2017 [by a place of their own]

The subsequent Experiment #3, included a site-based performance / spatial intervention on the River Erne and in a disused former RUC barracks. Out of this performance / intervention emerged a film, The Territories of Eile, in which the central character of Eile is captured

performing a ritual with grains of brightly coloured granular material, pouring it in various ways across different objects (what seem to the viewer to be discarded building components - including ventilation ducts and re-bar, but all now in unusual configurations and encroached by plants and moss). The material-discursive forces of both the existent, traumatised border and that which is fictionalised in the film, are harnessed and explored by moving through different scales; the border as global phenomena and the specificity of the Irish/UK border through falling grains of dust. Other scalar entanglements are between the site and the body, and, via the sonic aspect of the film, the cosmic and the planetary, as it folds in recordings from NASA of the planet Saturn.

Figure 4: The Territories of Eile, audiovisual film, 2018, film still. [by a place of their own]

Figure 5: The Territories of Eile, audiovisual film, 2018, film still. [by a place of their own]

Enacted Territories

At a moment of growing British border imperialism, Eile's embodied, material interactions with the borderlands are concerned with acts of deep listening and physical interactions, transformations and becomings with buildings, rocks, water, mountains, caves, bogs, and the many creatures and critters of the border, across varied territories. Examples of these multiple sites are explored below - barracks, bog, cave - articulating what Anzaldúa calls 'borderlands'[45], and where the character of Eile is taken through the practice to intra-act with them as part of the site-specific performances.[46]

Elsewhere[47], we have discussed our desire in The Eile Project to reject and move beyond what Agnew called the "territorial trap"[48] - to only be able to think of territory as that defined by sovereign nation states, as spatial demarcations of power, control and ownership. The notion of

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[45] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

[46] In her research on performing with weather, Annette Arlander explores how Barad's material-discursive thinking is particularly interesting to performance studies see Annette Arlander, "Performing with the Weather," *Global Performance Studies* 1, no. 2 (2018), https://gps.psi-web.org/issue-1-2/gps-1-2-5/.

[47] Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy, "Fragile Cartographies of Border-Fictioning," in *Urbanism at Borders - A Discourse Analysis*, Springer Urban Book Series (Springer Verlag, 2020).

[48] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 53–80.

border that we are trying to disturb here is a complicit part of this understanding of territory, which we also reclaim for new imaginaries and practices.
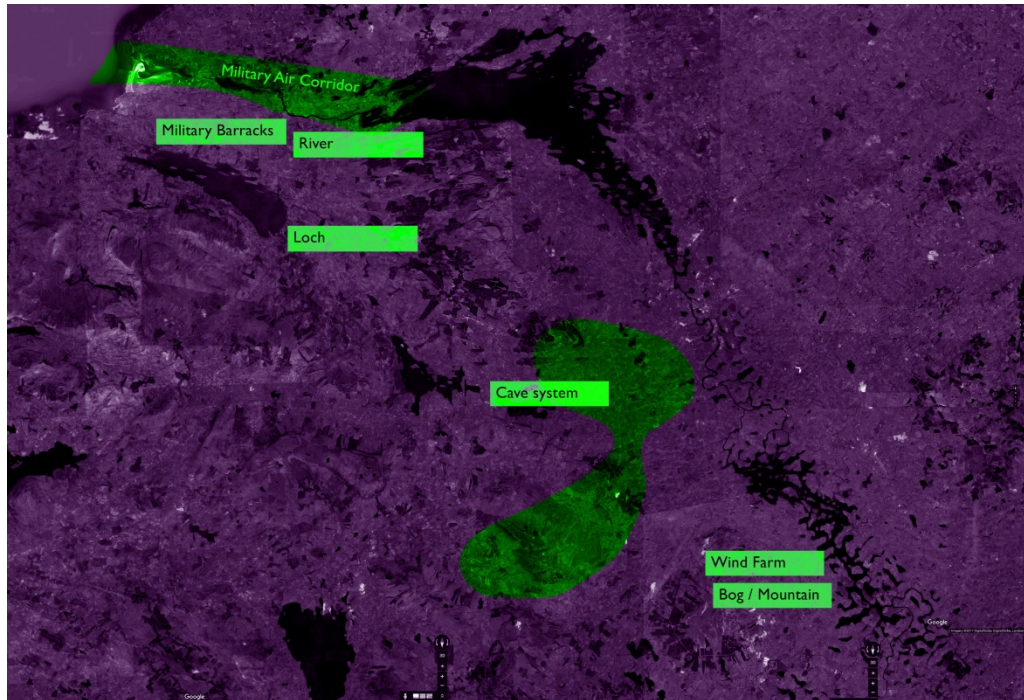

Figure 6: Territories of the Eile Project across the border

Barracks

In Territories of Eile #3: Barracks the footage is of Eile in a village which is dissected by the border. The building is an abandoned Royal Ulster Constabulary barracks, which was the site of much conflict over the years situated just 100 yards from the border line. In this village, the border cuts through the community, weaving through river and during the "Troubles" and like many border villages it was the site of many violent incidents. Across the borderlands, much of the control infrastructure was torn down following The Good Friday Agreement. The dismantling of security measures such as army border control checkpoints and watch towers, which were

frequently the subject of shooting and bombing attacks, became a "tangible symbol of the Peace Process."[49] When we came to perform and film in this village, the long abandoned Barracks was still intact, and had been for sale for some time. The barbed wire, huge gates and walls, and the many lifeless CCTV cameras which stared down at us, acted as reminders of the site's history of state surveillance and control. Many of the doors were boarded up and there was all manner of rusted metal, stone and old electrical debris strewn across the site. The walled and gated areas had become a shell that was haunted by a not-too-distant past of bloody violence.

Figure 7: The Territories of Eile, audiovisual film, 2018, film still. [by a place of their own]

Bog

Bogs are dense and mucky wetlands that used to cover one fifth of Ireland and are an iconic feature of the Irish landscape. Bogs are ancient time capsules consisting of dead vegetation that are constantly evolving. It is no wonder that Irish bogs have featured heavily in literature, theatre, and

[49] Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, May 2017, HM Government, Northern Ireland and Ireland, 16 August 2017

visual arts. Bog peatland are among the most valuable ecosystems on Earth: they have a critical role for preserving biodiversity, provide safe drinking water, minimise flood risk and help address climate change. However, in Ireland, as elsewhere, they have been drained and neglected over the years, threatened by water extraction, agricultural use, peat extraction, private forestry, industrial uses and house building. Ireland is a signatory to the international Ramsar Convention (1971) and supports the three main aims of the convention (the wise use of wetlands, ensuring conservation and vigilance in planning; to designate suitable wetlands and, third, to cooperate internationally). As such, the bog, as borderland, is an incredibly rich and evocative site of material-discursive entanglement.

Figure 8: The Territories of Eile #4 Bog, audiovisual film, forthcoming 2020, film still. [by a place of their own]

<u>Cave</u>

Since the 1920s, before the Good Friday Agreement, the border in Ireland, was largely designated by a cartographic line, tracing the surface of the borderlands, across which was littered built structures of border control. The border during these years was a physical and seen presence on the land. The infrastructure has since largely disappeared, but the line on the map remains, and as the Brexit process has shown, the border is still a phenomenon which did not vanish along with the watch towers. Throughout all the material and discursive changes of the border, much like the bog lands, the border caves are a particular apparatuses through which particular knowledge is produced with ongoing entanglement of human and the nonhuman (e.g. with ancient geological rocks formed in the era of Caledonian Orogeny some 490–390 million years ago, glacial deposits, fossils). Eile's border-cave experimental encounter performance thus re(configures) the current border issue with the local determinations, as well as deep time, pulling it under the surface and visible, to the subterranean and the invisible and with it, different meanings are differentially enacted.

The territories introduced above show something of the diversity and difference in the borderlands chosen for the Eile project. At each site Eile 'performs'; that is she enacts and intra-acts with these already complex material-discursive sites and re-makes them. This process is different at each place because of the differences of the sites and because these are site-specific performances that are designed to become entanglements or ongoing reconfigurations with the borderlands. The performance encounters are concerned with exploring how the discursive practices of these sites relate to the materiality of the actual site. Performance studies research has long since explored

how knowledge is a practice[50]; what Barad contributes is a form of knowing which is not only reserved for humans, but also for the more than human physical world ("all bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world's iterative intra-activity, its performativity")[51]. It follows here, that our performance practice is an enactment of iterative changes to the border phenomena to materialise a multiplicity of different border phenomena as an active intervention in the world's becoming, "to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering."[52]

Intra-active Spatial Interventions

To what extent might such a xeno-architecture of the border suggest an alternative conception of the nature of spatial intervention, asking how to operate in geo-political, ethical ways despite capitalism, and what political potentials might the spatial specifically enable or unlock in this process? In considering the capacities and potentials of spatial art practices of the borderlands, we investigate the implications of the creation of new territorial-apparatuses as an engaged material-discursive process of metamorphosing the border.

We have suggested that the spatial apparatuses that we enact are "constituted and dynamically reconstituted as part of the ongoing intra-activity of the world".[53] Barad distinguishes this vibrant condition from "static structures... located in the world, nor as merely unfold[ing] or evolv[ing] in space and time". Rather than distinct from the context into which they emerge, the territorial-apparatuses that we generate in the Eile Project hold specific characteristics in terms of site, materiality, practices, actors and discourses.

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[50] Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

[51] Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 69.

[52] Barad, 827.

[53] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway.*

In the Territories of Eile Experiment #5 - Bog, this has multiple components. One is *event/performance,* as the character of Eile is performed with the border site, in this case with peat bog on Slieve Rusheen mountain (see fig 8). Within the performance, particular *enactments* or *practices* unfold, as Eile finds, moves, manipulates and reconfigures the bog and various things within it. The ritualistic actions involve spatial and material interventions, rearranging found materials (e.g. timber) and constructing simple structures, which wires are then threaded around, and with which Eile is then "plugged in" to the bog. In another scene, Eile slowly ties a bright string around a tree, creating new material and spatial configurations.

Working within and across these events, practices, spatial and material interventions, are multiple discourses (including those from art, architecture, philosophy, urbanism, performance studies, history, visual culture) and the collapsing of historical, personal, and fictional narratives. Cultural and local knowledges contaminate disciplinary thoughts so that fictioning, as Simon O'Sullivan acknowledges, might impact transformatively on the real.[54] This is therefore suggestive of a xeno-architecture beyond static structures towards performative, dynamic, processes. These processes must be conceived as a new part of the ongoing entanglements with the material-discursive border, and thus that are "formative of matter and meaning, productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced."[55]

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[54] David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

[55] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 146.

Spatial Art Practices on the Material-Discursive Border

> This Terrapolis is not the home world for the human as homo, that ever parabolic, re- and detumescing self-image of the same, but for the human that is transmogrified in etymological IndoEuropean sleight of tongue into guman, that worker of and in the soil.[56]

The spatial art practice of Eile in, and with, the material-discursive border as framed here, seek to find new ways to comprehend, coexist with, and act within both the (equally) contested specific embodied spaces and planetary discourses of the border. The cumulative effect of the performances across different territories, and the (un)folding collages of the films, develop the myth of Eile as counter-narrative; as counter-imaginary of the border. For Eile, the border is what Haraway calls "terrapolis" - a view of the earth as connections, relays, relations, cycles, compost and "critters".[57] Through her various practices, spatial and material reconfigurations and designs, the border is questioned, and continually re-made. Positing spatial interventions as territorial-apparatus allows us to consider the agency of human and non-human actors, without denying or relinquishing our agency, nor privileging our position within the entanglement (yet also more, as Barad argues, than simply situating oneself).[58]

In common forms, architecture, urbanism and the geo-politics and of the border often create multiple, powerful, and often oppressive inclusions and exclusions and, as the antiAtlas of borders[59] and Cruz and Forman[60] have shown, these are often tied to the very border imperialism that we seek to disrupt. Once the border is seen as material-discursive, we can consider ways to intra-act in and with it differently, which demands making agential decisions about actors,

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[56] Donna J. Haraway, "SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far," *Ada New Media* (blog), November 3, 2013, https://adanewmedia.org/2013/11/issue3-haraway/.

[57] Haraway.

[58] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

[59] http://www.antiatlas.net/antiatlas-of-borders/

[60] https://www.metropolismag.com/cities/teddy-cruz-fonna-forman-manifesto/

discourses and materials that are included or ignored.   In the Eile Project, we consider the agential cuts through each stage of the practice, in performance/event, spatial interventions, film production, and the creation of images.

The Eile Project is an experiment exploring what a resistant spatial art practice can offer in the contested material-discursive spaces of the borderlands. The notion of intra-action is central to the practice and its interventions. Barad suggests that,

> Intra-actions have the potential to do more than participate in the constitution of the geometries of power, they open up possibilities for changes in its topology, and as such, interventions in the manifold possibilities made available reconfigure both what will be and what will be possible.[61]

Through the various enactments of the Eile Project, we suggest that spatial art practice of intra-actions with the material-discursive borderlands offer potentials for such reconfigurations and changes to these topologies of power; to challenge the geo-politics of border imperialism with radical, alternative border-imaginaries.

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[61] Barad, "Re(Con)Figuring Space, Time, and Matter," 103.