Ireland: borders and borderlines

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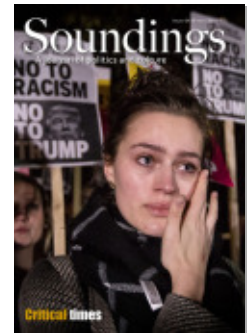
of commitments that it has already entered into. Examples include our share of the EU's climate change commitments entered into in Paris, and our share of multiannual aid commitments to developing countries - some of which are part of trade deals with those countries.

At this stage, there are many more questions than answers. And the number of questions grows by the day. We are some way from having a complete inventory of the matters that will need to be settled, let alone a government negotiating objective on each one, or a strategy.

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The troubled history of Derry-Londonderry is still visible in the city. A map on the riverside directs visitors to the Bloody Sunday Memorial and the H Block Monument, while the Peace Bridge, opened in 2011, physically and symbolically links the largely unionist 'Waterside' with the largely nationalist 'Cityside'. One of the outcomes of the peace process has been to dismantle many of the hard borders that used to divide communities both within the North and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the South. On an average weekend the city is filled with pedestrians from both sides of the border. The easy movement between these jurisdictions is now an everyday reality for these communities. The Peace Bridge became a focal point for events during the City of Culture Celebrations in 2013, the River Foyle thus becoming 'a route rather than barrier - a place where events occur rather than a liminal space between two sides of the city'.[1] On either side of the bridge there is a plaque recognising the support of European Regional Development Fund. It is one of many visible signs of EU involvement in the recent development of the city.

The political border between the North and the South represents the most obvious residual impact of Ireland's status as a post-colony; and even though the South has experienced considerable economic growth since the 1990s, the legacies of under-development are evident in a weak indigenous industry sector and comparatively poor (by European standards) public infrastructure and service provision. The economic policy developed by the Irish state over the last thirty years can be seen, in part, as a response to these limitations. The Irish state has positioned

itself as a strategic economic border between the US and Europe, seeking to attract US multinationals through a low corporate tax rate, an English-speaking workforce and the promise of access to European markets. In this capacity, it has also gained a reputation as a borderline tax haven.

With Brexit, there comes the possibility that these borders will be redrawn in a variety of ways. Firstly, the global political upheaval of Brexit may challenge the already fragile political-economic trajectory of the Irish state post-crisis. Secondly, new regional inequalities created by the crisis may be further exacerbated, particularly for communities in border regions. Thirdly, Brexit has potential implications for migrants who have moved between Ireland and Britain, and could radically revise the border between the North and South. Finally, Brexit threatens to undermine certain advances made by the Northern Ireland peace process.

Economic borders and the neoliberal state project

A range of possible outcomes involving the realignment of political and economic powers following Brexit could destabilise the South of Ireland's position within the European and global economy. While initial media and political discussion on Brexit myopically focused on how Ireland could capitalise by luring finance and technology companies from London to Dublin, more serious concerns soon emerged about the stability of Ireland's economic position in an EU without the UK. Towards the end of June 2016, the Irish government published a 'contingency plan' on the implications of Brexit for Ireland. Outlining political, economic and governance implications, the plan demonstrates the continued significance of the UK's relationship to Ireland.

Ireland's economy is highly dependent on retaining the current geopolitical status quo. Its (partial and uneven) economic recovery and its position within the global economy are highly dependent on a specific articulation of relational geographies comprising the UK, the US and Europe. This means that a change of the magnitude of Brexit has serious implications. The loss of the UK as a strong ally could weaken Ireland's position within the EU. Similarly, Britain leaving the EU common market could negatively impact on Ireland's economy, in that the UK remains the country's largest trading partner. A report published in November by the Irish Department of Finance suggested that Brexit could cause 'negative consequences for [Ireland's] employment, wages and the public finances lasting for at least 10 years', and shrink

the Irish economy by 4 per cent.[2]

Ireland's precarious position is not simply fiscal, however, but relates more fundamentally to the way the Irish state positions itself within the global economy. This can be seen in the recent controversy over the EU's ruling that Apple should pay Ireland €13 billion in uncollected tax revenue, and the decision by the Fine Gael-led minority government to appeal this ruling. Although anti-austerity parties have suggested that the government use the money to address homelessness and health-service crises, others have argued that the EU ruling signals an international challenge to Ireland's position as a strategic node intersecting the US and the Europe.

Uneven development and regional inequality

Since the crash, a new landscape of regional inequalities has emerged across the island of Ireland, and some of the areas most affected are those in the border regions.

As Dave Featherstone suggested in a recent article in *Soundings*, this kind of regional inequality is a 'product of political decisions and strategies', in this case resulting from the economic trajectory of the Celtic Tiger years, which created a landscape of uneven development in the South.[3] During the first phase of the Celtic Tiger expansion in the 1990s, growth was export-led, mainly due to the rapid influx of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country, primarily from US multinational companies. FDI was mainly clustered in urban areas, thus limiting the geographical spread of the benefits of the boom. Moreover, new high-tech sectors left a crucial employment gap for low-skilled workers. The property bubble took over as the main driver of economic growth during the 2000s, and temporarily staved off crisis on both of these fronts by spreading employment in construction. But since the bubble burst, the major drivers of economic recovery have been in the areas of FDI that were not so heavily hit by the crisis, namely the urban areas, while areas heavily reliant on the bubble economy of construction and consumer services have seen little in the way of economic rebound. Thus the crisis (and government responses to it) have created new regional inequalities.

Brexit threatens to further exacerbate the situation for communities on both sides of the border. According to the 2011 Census, 14,800 persons regularly commuted between the jurisdictions for either study or work, and the numbers travelling for consumption or leisure are presumably much higher. And Brexit may

also have implications for cross-border agreements around shared services, such as the memorandum of understanding between Newry and Dundalk created in 2010.[4] Moreover, EU funding has been of paramount importance for investment in economic and social infrastructures in border communities, through organisations like InterTradeIreland and the Centre for Cross-Border Studies.

In regions already suffering economically and socially from the crisis, the impact of Brexit could put further strain on already depressed communities.

Migration and citizenship

Brexit also has potential implications for the significant numbers of migrants who have moved between Ireland and Britain. In 2011 there were 112,259 UK nationals living in the Republic of Ireland: it was the second-largest immigrant group. In 2014 there were around 331,000 Irish nationals living in the UK: it was the third-largest immigrant group. Numbers are even higher if we consider country of birth. Approximately 230,000 Irish residents in 2011 were born in either England, Scotland or Wales, while around 383,000 UK residents in 2014 were born in Ireland. These figures indicate the long established free movement of people between Ireland and Britain. For people from Ireland in particular, Britain has long been a place of opportunity and escape.

This easy mobility between Ireland and Britain has been made possible by the Common Travel Area, which allows free movement of citizens between the two states. It predates the European Union, and has existed in some form since 1922, when the Irish Free State was established. Since 1949, Irish citizens have not been considered 'foreign' in the UK, and UK citizens are not considered 'non-nationals' in Ireland. This means that Irish people living in Britain and people from the UK living in Ireland have more political, social and economic rights than other immigrants.[5] But Brexit means that all of these rights, and the right to free movement, are now in question. Special measures will be needed to protect both the Common Travel Area and the privileged status of Irish and UK nationals. Yet, there has been limited discussion of this issue.

For UK voters, immigration was a key issue in the Brexit debate, and many saw the decision to leave the EU as a way of limiting future immigration and restricting the rights of immigrants. If this issue comes under scrutiny, will the special treatment

afforded to Irish immigrants in Britain become an easy target for anti-immigrant politicians and activists? And what of British immigrants in Ireland? Will there be the political will to protect their rights and privileges, or will these also be targeted? These questions have not been at the forefront of public statements about how Brexit will be negotiated, but they are causing ongoing anxiety for British citizens living in Ireland and Irish citizens living in Britain.

Brexit has also shown us how porous these categories of national identity can be. People from Northern Ireland, in most instances, continue to be entitled to Irish citizenship. And since the Brexit vote, there has been a significant increase in the number of British people applying for Irish citizenship, mostly on the basis of having an Irish ancestor. These new citizenship formations are evidence of the links and connections between Ireland and Britain that - post-Brexit - continue to stretch across space and time.

The peace process

The Good Friday Agreement signed on 10 April 1998 marked a major watershed in the long-running peace process in the North. Though it was not a panacea for a range of recalcitrant social and economic issues, it nevertheless improved life immeasurably for communities in the North. In less direct ways, the peace process has also been a key element of the political and economic trajectory of the South. Denis O'Hearn, for example, notes how the Celtic Tiger tag was 'half jokingly' assigned to Ireland in a Morgan Stanley report that coincided with the IRA cease-fire in 1994.[6] Ireland's economic fortunes during the 1990s and 2000s were, if not dependent on, certainly enabled by the cessation of conflict. Moreover, key political figures such as former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern were centrally involved in the negotiations around the peace process, and it is viewed as a key component of his political legacy. But, in quite practical ways, Brexit threatens some of the advances made by the peace process.

After Brexit, the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will become an EU external border; and the EU and some member states have recently been devoting considerable resources to securitising external borders. Frontex, the EU's external border agency established in 2004, has become more active in recent years in policing external land and sea borders. In addition,

individual states in the EU have been building hard borders, such as the razor wire fences along the Hungarian border. Given these trends, there would surely be pressure to securitise this new EU external border. However, there is considerable concern about the possibility of the re-establishment of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. One proposal floated by the Conservative government in the UK has been to push Britain's immigration controls back to Irish ports and airports, in lieu of re-establishing a hard border between the North and South. This would mean that individuals entering Ireland could be subject to British immigration controls. This elicited much public derision, but the response from the political class was not unfavourable. Enda Kenny, the Irish Taoiseach, has repeatedly insisted that there will not be a return to a hard border, because of fears for the peace process, and establishing British immigration controls at Irish borders was seen as one potential solution. This will need to be negotiated not just with the UK but also with the EU.

Conclusion

For a number of reasons, the island of Ireland is very vulnerable to the potential upheavals Brexit might cause. A renegotiation of the now soft border could have highly problematic outcomes for the communities living on either side, while the withdrawal of EU funding could also seriously undermine community and social infrastructures. The prospect of Brexit also focuses attention on the increasingly precarious political-economic conjuncture in the South, and is a challenge to its fragile economic recovery, based as it is on the continuation of global status. The potential transformations wrought by Brexit have the potential to make material conditions worse for many sections of the population across the island. Where these events will lead remains to be seen.

Notes

1. McDermott, Nic Craith and Strani, cited in P. Boland, B. Murtagh and P. Shirlow, 'Fashioning a City of Culture: "life and place changing" or "12 month party"?', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2016.

2. E. Burke-Kenedy, 'Brexit effect expected to shrink economy by nearly 4 per cent', *Irish Times*, 7.11. 16: http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/brexit-effect-expected-to-shrink-economy-by-nearly-4-1.2856850.

3. D. Featherstone, 'Contested spaces of hegemony: left alliances after the crisis', *Soundings*, 63, summer 2016.

4. http://www.newryandmourne.gov.uk/documents/Memorandumofunderstanding-finalVer8-24.9.10.pdf

5. C. Keena, 'Brexit may not impact common travel area, expert claims', *Irish Times*, 6.7.16.

6. D. O'Hearn, *Inside the Celtic Tiger: The Irish Economy and the Asian Model*, Pluto Press 1998, p1.

The Digital Divide: #PostRefRacism Versus #Gohome

Rooham Jamali

As more of us live more of our lives online, what happens there matters. Social media now constitute a major public space (although indeed one that is privately owned). This is a new digital commons, where the debate of the day is often thrashed out. All this was very apparent during the EU referendum campaign. Online as well as offline there was a very vibrant - and often quite nasty - political debate.

The past fifteen years had already seen immigration become a concern and an important political issue in the United Kingdom. In 2012, about 60 per cent of people living in the UK viewed the rate of immigrants settling in the UK with disapproval, and a large majority of them wanted immigration levels to be reduced.[1] 'Migration in the News', a report published in 2013 by the Oxford Migration Observatory, found that 'illegal' was the most common word used alongside the word 'immigrant' in mainstream print-based media.[2] However, many commentators have argued that the EU referendum marks a new departure, and was even more divisive than anyone had expected.

In this article, I take a look at some of the broad contours of the digital debate through looking on Twitter - which, for several reasons, is a good place to conduct such an analysis. Although it is by no means a representative sample of UK citizens,