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"IT'S ONLY DIVISIVE WHEN YOU PHYSICALIZE IT"
The visibility of the border in Ireland during the Brexit negotiation period

ABSTRACT

After the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union on June 23, 2016, one of the most pressing concerns has been over Northern Ireland, and the land border that divides the island of Ireland between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. After the 1998 Peace Agreement, which ended the period of time known as 'Troubles', the border disappeared from view, which scholarly has considered to be one of the major successes of the Agreement. If the border in Ireland becomes "EU's Western Wall", it seems unlikely that the border could remain the same.

Because the fate of the border remains unclear, this research focuses on the Brexit negotiation period of June 23, 2016–January 31, 2020, and seeks to understand how the border in Ireland has become more visible during that time period. The analysis of the border's visibility has been divided into three sections, which look at the visibility of the border as a physical divider, a connective space and something that is performed.

The research concludes that the border has become visible in all three ways, but the most visible aspect of the border has been the everyday dimension of it, which consists of the reality of the border to those who live near it, and whose lives have always been shaped by the presence of the border, and having to navigate it as a part of their daily lives. There is then a major drift between the idea of Brexit, which aims to control the borders of the UK, and the lives of local communities who have always had the right to belong to the border and shared it as a space, and wish to also do in the future.

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

When I was waiting to hear whether I was accepted to this Master's programme in the early spring of 2018, my father called me every day to ask if I had gotten my results yet. In March 2018 I was finally able to give him the good news.

I would like to dedicate this Thesis to my father, who unfortunately passed away in April 2018, and never got to see me begin my studies.

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1. Introduction and research aims

On June 23rd 2016 a majority of 51.9 to 48.1 percent voted for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, an action referred to as 'Brexit'. The following March the British prime minister of the time Theresa May triggered Article 50 of the Lisbon treaty, which is the formal step required for a country to start the exit process required by EU law. A major concern for the Brexit process has been the land border on the island of Ireland, which divides the island into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which is a part of the United Kingdom (see: Hayward 2018; Teague 2019). Many consider the European Union to be an important influence in the reconfiguration of the border economically and politically, especially by supporting the institutions provided by the 1998 Peace Agreement (see e.g.: McCall 2011). Because of this, the border has proven to be a central element in the Brexit process.

After Brexit, the border between Ireland and the UK, could become "Europe's new west wall" (Lavin 2019). In a report that was published in 2018 by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) of the Republic of Ireland and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) of Northern Ireland, 208 agreed public border crossings were identified on the border. The report identifies four kinds of border crossings, out of which only the border crossings where the borderline crosses a public road on both sides of the border were counted. (DTTaS & DfI 2018.) There is no official statistics on the number of unofficial border crossings, but a report by the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee states that the number of '"informal crossing points" might make the number of crossing points twice as high, with farming lands and villages straddling the border with houses on both sides, making the border largely invisible (House of Commons 2018, 6). There are then more border crossings on the border in Ireland alone than there are on the eastern border of the European Union.[1]

According to the Schengen Borders Code (2016), when the European Union external borders are crossed, nationals of non-EU countries who do not benefit from the freedom of movement, are subject to checks in accordance with the condition of entry into the country. During the

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[1] There is no official published number of the EU eastern border crossing points, but based on the list of borders in EU states, a BBC fact check article in 2017 calculated that the amount of eastern EU border crossing points is 137 (BBC 2017). A calculation provided by the BBC probably cannot be treated as an absolute fact, but as it is based on the official EU list, it could most likely be said that the claim of "more crossing points than on the eastern EU border" is a true. However, I have not done the calculation myself.

writing of this research in March 2020 the UK government introduced the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, which would end the EU's rules of free movement, making citizens from EU and EEA countries subject to UK immigration controls (Gov.uk 2020a.) The Bill makes specific provisions for Irish citizens under the Common Travel Agreement, which allows British and Irish citizens to move freely between Ireland and the UK (Gov.uk 2020b).[2] With the amount of total crossing points over the border in Ireland undetermined, and with no clear answer to the question of how exactly will Brexit affect the border, it is clear that there are still major concerns over the border, as Brexit looms closer.

A lot has been written about Brexit and the possible security concerns it would bring to Northern Ireland. The conflict potential of possible changes to the border have been noted in research (see: e.g.: Hayward 2018) as well as by law enforcement in Northern Ireland, who fear violence from dissident republican and loyalist groups if there are to be any physical security structures on the border (McDonald 2018). The vote in the Brexit Referendum in Northern Ireland was largely divided on unionist and nationalist lines. It has also been said to have deepened the divide (e.g. Hayward and Murphy 2018) in Northern Ireland which all comes back to the fact that Brexit has already been and has the possibility to even further be a threat to peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

Even 20 years after the Peace Agreement of 1998, the issue of the border has not gone away. In 2017, Taillon wrote:

"The Border itself is most certainly one of those core conflict issues that has not gone away, and the legacy of which continues to resonate, not just in the political sphere, but across the social, economic, and cultural life on the whole island; felt most acutely in Northern Ireland and the adjacent border counties of the Republic" (Taillon 2017, 8).

This study focuses on the issue of the border in Ireland after the Brexit Referendum in the summer of 2016. Rather than focusing on the aftermath of Brexit, this research focuses on the time between the Brexit Referendum and the official exit of the UK in January 2020, and how the impact of Brexit has been seen on the border in Ireland during that time period. Like the

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[2] I ask the reader to take notice that as this paragraph was written at the very last stages of my Thesis writing process, and as of 29.10.2020 the bill is before the Parliament of the UK, and its fate not yet clear. I have not been able to include details about the bill after 29.10.2020.

second chapter of this study will establish, much of scholarly has credited the disappearance of the border from view as one of the major elements which have made the peace process in Northern Ireland possible. This research focuses on the issue of the visibility of the border, and asks the question of in what different ways has the border become more visible during the studied time period. The time frame this research looks into will be called the Brexit negotiation period, since it covers the time after the 2016 Brexit Referendum, but before an official exit in January 2020.

The main research question is: *How has the border in Ireland become more visible during the Brexit negotiation period?*

The research can be further divided into three additional research questions:

- *In what ways has the border become more visible as a physical divider?*
- *In what ways has the border become more visible as a connective space?*
- *In what ways have the performative aspects of the border become more visible?*

The research surrounding the questions of the border in Ireland and Brexit so far has heavily focused on the questions of what *might* or *will* happen after the UK leaves EU, making the border in Ireland an EU outside border. Researchers have also asked the question of how the people living in Northern Ireland, or on the border region feel about the issue. Both paths of research will be further explored in the second chapter of this research.

However, not many seem to have asked the question of what has already happened to the border. This research is aiming to show, that the border and the border region were already affected by Brexit between 2016 and 2020, even though the UK did not exit the European Union before January 31, 2020. The research gap this study aims to fill is not asking what will happen, but what has already happened. My study aims to look at the change in border visibility physically but it acknowledges the fact that no actual administrative changes have been made. This research has been conducted before the UK's transition period of 11 months has run out, so I have had no way of knowing what changes the year 2021 actually brings to the border, if any.

I begin the discussion of the topic in Chapter 2, in which I will first introduce the history of the border in Ireland, as well as the timeline of the Brexit negotiation process, after which I

introduce literature concerning Brexit and the border in Ireland in order to shine light on why the relationship between these two is problematic. In Chapter 3 I will continue by introducing the theoretical framework of this research, border studies, which will provide context on the different ways the concept of the border will be explored in following Chapters. Chapter 4 outlines the process of data collection and the different types of data that will be used. It also explains the methodology, ethics, bias and limitations of the study. Chapter 5 analyses the empirical data in the light of the theoretical background provided by Chapter 3. In Chapter 6 the study is summarised.

2. "The Irish border issue" and Brexit

To offer a better understanding to the problematic relationship between the border in Ireland and United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, this chapter introduces a brief history of the different phases the border in Ireland has gone through since the Government of Ireland act on 1920, as well as the different stages of the Brexit negotiation process since the Brexit Referendum up until the official exit date of January 31, 2020. This chapter then goes further to introduce a look into the existing literature on the issue, to highlight possible problems Brexit might spell out for the border and those living on it.

2.1. History of the border in Ireland

The land border between the UK and Ireland is almost 500km long and runs across the northern part of the island of Ireland, which it divides into the Republic of Ireland, and the six counties that are Northern Ireland, a region of the UK. In this research the border will be referred to as 'the border in Ireland' instead of the Irish border for a more neutral stance.

The island of Ireland was formally divided in the Government of Ireland act of 1920. Rather than geography, the division was based on politics, as it assured a Protestant and Unionist majority in Ulster. Opposition to the act led to the Irish Civil War, which was settled with the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. (Tonge 2002, 16–17.) Under the Treaty, twenty six counties of Ireland created the Irish Free State within the British Empire. A Boundary Commission was also set to determine the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of the island. (McEvoy 2008, 28.) With the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the Common Travel Area (CTA) was created to reflect both governments' mutual understanding of the importance of allowing free movement of people between the UK and Ireland (Komarova & Hayward 2018, 551).

People have always been able to cross the border at places where it runs through fields, open country or forests, and because of the CTA, there have never been immigration controls in place, but there has always been some restrictions to mobility present at the border (Nash & Reid 2010, 271). From the 1920 onwards, all the way until the beginning of the Troubles in

the late 1960, the border acted first and foremost as an economic barrier, as it was dominated by the dynamic of government efforts to control the movement of goods over the border, local householders trying to avoid government restrictions, and smugglers' attempts to make gains (Nash, Dennis & Graham 2010, 430).

Even though the Commission only finalised the demarcation of the border in 1925, the border was made into a customs barrier already in 1923, paralleling the wider trend of intensification of state control at borders which was seen after World War I. The border became an international frontier, as the British and Irish states were fiscally separated, which meant that imports and exports across the border became dutiable. (Nash, Dennis & Graham 2010, 421–424.) This resulted in a system where carrying goods across the border was only to be done via "approved" roads and border crossings, which in turn produced a widespread system of smuggling, where 'unapproved' roads with no customs officials were exploited (Patterson 2013b, 495).

As the border began materialising on the ground and in the lives of those living on its borderlands, the existing cross-border networks and mobilities had to adjust to the approved crossing points and routes. The customs points that had been set on approved roads became permanent structures, and many unapproved roads were blocked by customs officials, which made the lives of local residents difficult in many ways. (Nash, Dennis & Graham 2010, 425–429.)

Between 1956 and 1962 the IRA carried out a campaign against the Northern Irish state, where most of the attacks occurred on the border (Patterson 2013a, 1). As the Troubles later began, public cooperation between the North and South of the island decreased, and the border was reinforced as a security barrier instead of just an economic barrier (McCall 2011, 202 ; Nash, Dennis & Graham 2010, 430). The continuous theme in Anglo-Irish relations over the 30 years of Troubles was the challenges the security forces in Northern Ireland faced because of the border. Throughout the Troubles, London argued on the importance of the border to the IRA and wished for more effective cooperation between the security forces of North and South. Because of conflicting political perspectives, the British argument was not accepted by the Irish. (Patterson 2013b, 493–494.)

Even though the CTA in principle guaranteed the freedom of movement of British and Irish citizens without being subjected to passport checks, movement over the border was regulated with checks and monitoring due to the security situation created by the Troubles (Komarova & Hayward 2018, 552). Before the 1970s, most border roads had remained passable despite the customs checks that were put into place. However, because of the escalation of the Troubles, security structures were installed on the border, which significantly affected travel across the border and the everyday lives of those who lived near the border. (Nash & Reid 2010, 272–273.)

Over time there have been multiple different types of symbols present on the border. Because of ambiguities about the border's future have existed, the different parties on the borderlands have competed with each other for symbolic visibility and dominance. During the troubles, the most prominent symbols on the border were those of the state, especially of the British Army and Northern Ireland police. The roads which led to the border crossings had multiple military check points and warning signs, which made travellers aware of the state and the dangers of terrorism. There were also security towers placed on hilltops and police and soldiers who stopped drivers, and twelve watchtowers which became the visual landmarks of the conflict. The most prominent symbols on the border were those of the state, but the people on the borderlands were also marking the borderlands with graffiti and other markers of sectarian affiliation and political resistance. (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 81–84.)

Initiatives to establish cross-border cooperation during the Troubles were often lacking because of the ongoing paramilitary campaigns. A power-sharing executive with unionist and nationalist representatives, as well as a shared Council of Ireland was proposed in the 1973 Sunningdale Agreement, but it ended up falling through (Tonge 2000, 42,46). As the peace process slowly evolved after the late 1980s, more opportunities to increase cross-border action opened (Coakley & O'Dowd 2007, 879). The UK and Ireland both entered a common border regime with the EEC in 1973, and the European Union in 1993, which improved the bilateral relations between the two governments. When the UK chose not to join the Schengen Agreement in 1985, Ireland did the same in order to avoid the imposition of passport checks over the border (Komarova & Hayward 2018, 552).

The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 institutionalised British–Irish political cooperation in relation to Northern Ireland, by creating the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, which

acted as a mechanism for formal meetings. It did not challenge the British sovereignty, but it changed the significance of the border, as it allowed the Irish government to have a role on the northern side of the island. (Coakley & O'Dowd 2007, 879.) The border began its reconfiguration from a barrier to a bridge in December of 1992, as border customs posts were removed after the introduction of the European Singe Market (McCall 2011, 210). The IRA ceasefire in August of 1994, followed by a loyalist ceasefire was a significant event which allowed for the redefinition of the border in terms of its legitimacy, legality and practical significance (Coakley & O'Dowd 2007, 879). After the ceasefires, and with the tangible beginning of the peace process, the border region began to develop as a cultural space (McCall 2011, 202).

A key infrastructural element providing cross-border institutions was the Peace Agreement of 1998[3] (McCall, 2011). The Agreement introduced three major types of cross-border cooperation, referred as the three strands. Strand One covers the cooperation of parties within Northern Ireland, the cooperation between government of Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is covered under Strand Two, while Strand Three provides for regular meetings between the UK and Irish governments. (Taillon 2017, 3–5).

In addition to the cross-border institutions, the agreement had other important implications for the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. Even when the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 had fallen through, the British and Irish governments had been willing to make steps into each other's position, opening up the possibility for a change in the status of Northern Ireland, if the people of Northern Ireland desired so. This was returned to in the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, under which the two governments committed themselves to establishing a united Ireland, if there would in the future be consent from a majority of the people in Northern Ireland. Irish unity was finally made a subject to referendum in the Peace Agreement of 1998, which provided the frameworks that would make a referendum possible, and confirmed that everyone in Northern Ireland could choose British or Irish citizenship, or both. (Coakley & O'Dowd 2007, 880.)

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[3] This is known as the Good Friday Agreement or The Belfast Agreement, but to again established a neutral stand, I am simply referring to it as the 1998 Peace Agreement.

The symbols of the conflict that had cluttered the border were largely displaced by symbols of cross-border cooperation, which was stimulated by the European Union in order to provide a road map for a new future for the island. A new neutral and 'shared' space was created through new policies, which stripped the threatening symbols such as flags and signs of paramilitary support, which had helped to sustain the conflict. Even though the borderlands did not become completely free of these symbols, the symbols that stayed present were less loaded politically. (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 84–85.) However, even with the most violent manifestations of the conflict removed, many core issues that have been at the core of the conflict have been contested on the political arena, and remain somewhat unsolved (Taillon 2017, 8).

There is also an everyday level to the border in Ireland. The people who lived near the border had to deal with the effect of it on their everyday lives. When the border was drawn, it cut across existing frameworks and community relations, and in some cases also families. When the border was made a customs barrier, the regulations affected people's ability to travel to school, to family, to church and to work across the border. Accounts of lives of the people near the border during the Troubles are dominated by stories of the road closures making everyday life more difficult. People on the border were gradually able to visit towns and villages on the other side of the border less and less, which interrupted everyday encounters between people, which led to situations where people had not seen family and friends in years before the border opened in the 1990s. (Nash & Reid 2010, 270–275.)

The European Union, though it's Peace programmes, has been able to help create frameworks of communication and cooperation at local community level. An important tool of conflict transformation on the cultural space of the border region has been the way grassroots level projects have challenged stereotypes and encouraged discussion on history and diversity amongst the different groups. (McCall 2011, 211–212.) The debates surrounding the border since the Brexit Referendum have largely focused on the physical border, changes to the visibility of the border and what the possible measures to execute border control will be like. A strong consensus among most people from all across the political scale seems to be that there should be no return to the "border of the past". (Taillon 2017, 5.) These debates surrounding the border and the problematic nature of it concerning Brexit will be explored later in this chapter.

2.2. Overview of the Brexit negotiation period

This section will provide an overview of the Brexit negotiation period between June 2016 and January 2020.

After the Brexit Referendum, British prime minister David Cameron resigned, causing Theresa May to become the Prime Minister. May was warned by the ministers of the pro-Brexit Unionist Party and the anti-Brexit Sinn Féin, who said the border in Ireland must not become a way for those undermining the peace process to create an incentive, or a catalyst for illegal activity. (Carswell & McGreevy 2020.) The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), as its name suggests, is a Northern Irish party who wishes to preserve the unity of the UK, preserving the link between Northern Ireland and Britain. It has supported Brexit, but opposed suggestions of a "special status" for Northern Ireland, as creating differences between Northern Ireland and Great Britain could threaten the unity of the UK. (McCormack 2019.) Sinn Féin, on the other hand, is a nationalist Irish party who opposes Brexit, but has been absent from the Brexit debates in Westminster, because for them taking part in Westminster symbolises an acceptance of what they see as an illegitimate British rule over Northern Ireland (O'Loughlin 2019).

At the start of 2017 May triggered article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty for the UK to leave the European Union. The original date set for the departure was March 29, 2019. A general election was called on by May on June 8, which resulted in Labour majority, forcing May to seek support from the Democratic Unionist Party. The formal Brexit negotiations between the EU and the UK begun on June 19, 2017. December that year, EU and the UK managed to agree on a protocol on Northern Ireland, stating that there would be solutions to address the unique circumstances of the Island so that a hard border could be avoided. The idea of the backstop was born in these negotiations. (Carswell & McGreevy 2020.)

The backstop was written into the withdrawal agreement, based on the idea that the hard border could be avoided if Northern Ireland remained aligned with the EU's customs union and the single market after Brexit. It would mean the custom rules between the north and south of the border would match. The agreement reached in December also aimed to protect co-operation between North and South and safeguard the Peace Agreement of 1998. London did not agree to the backstop agreement, arguing that if the backstop only applied to Northern Ireland, it would create a customs border at the Irish Sea. The possible sea border was also opposed by

the DUP, who had been keeping May's minority Conservative government in power. The backstop was one of the reasons why the House of Commons voted to reject the withdrawal agreement on January 15, 2019. The date of the UK's withdrawal was postponed to October 31, 2019. (Carswell 2019.)

Failing to secure the support of the House of Commons, May announced her resignation on May 24, 2019. Boris Johnson was elected as the new Prime Minister, and he declared that the UK would be leaving the EU on October 31, no matter what happened. He also swore to open the withdrawal agreement and "bin the backstop". Concerned by the possibility of a no-deal plan, MPs passed a new law that stated Johnson must ask the European Council for an another extension if no agreement was reached on a deal between EU and the UK. After an another failed attempt to get a Brexit deal through the House of Commons, Johnson requested an extension to January 31, 2020. A general election was also held by Johnson, in which he won a majority of seats. The new Withdrawal Act laying out a 11 month transition period till the end of 2020 passed the parliamentary stages and was given royal assent on January 23. In line with the Brexit Bill, which the European Parliament approved on January 29, the UK left the European Union on January 31, 2020 at 11pm. (Carswell & McGreevy 2020.)

Much of Johnson's Brexit bill is actually the same as was in May's withdrawal agreement in 2018. An analysis by The Guardian concluded that less than 5% of the original deal had actually been negotiated again, even though the parliament rejected it three times. The Irish backstop was renegotiated, and the backstop was replaced by an agreement that Northern Ireland would remain a part of the EU customs union after Brexit. Despite 'renegotiating', much of the protocol made for Northern Ireland was directly taken from May's original agreement. (Holder 2019.) Despite his willingness to 'bin the backstop', he essentially renegotiated the same backstop again.

After leaving, the UK entered a transition period that is currently supposed to last 11 months, during which the parties can negotiate a trade deal as well as the details on their agreement on Northern Ireland. The UK and EU have agreed that Brexit should not lead to checks or controls on the border that divides the island of Ireland. Under the current plan Northern Ireland will continue to enforce EU customs code at its ports, while the UK leaves the EU customs union. This means that there will be processes for goods moving between Northern Ireland and the other parts of the UK. The nature of those checks will have to be negotiated between the UK

and EU. While the withdrawal agreement guarantees there will be no hard land border, in a situation where the UK and EU do not reach an agreement on a trade-deal by the end of 2020, there would be significant barriers between the rest of the UK and Northern Ireland. (Campbell 2020.)

Like previously stated, as this research is being written, there still is no firm guarantee of what exactly the border in Ireland will look like after the transition period runs out, as the UK has not managed to negotiate a deal. Despite what the withdrawal agreement stated in January 2020, Johnson has since come out with legislation that would override the agreement on Northern Ireland, and announced he is prepared to walk out without a deal (Elgot, O'Carrol & Rankin 2020). A Northern Ireland Secretary even said the government was going to re-write parts of the deal, which would break international law in a "specific way", in order to revoke its commitment to keep Northern Ireland within the EU customs union (Ross 2020). As no deal has been made[4], security officials are once again voicing their concern over possible rise of terrorism in Northern Ireland (Sabbagh 2020).

2.3. Significance of the border in Ireland

In literature concerning the border in Ireland, a there is a strong consensus amongst researchers of the importance of the border in Ireland.

Hayward and Murphy (2018) call Northern Ireland a divided society, "where political capital still rests on emphasising adherence to a particular view of the Irish border" (Hayward & Murphy 2018, 288). Questions of identity on the border have been complex. The experiences of pain and grief over what happened during the Troubles has been felt differently by Protestants and Catholics, with especially the Protestants of the border area worrying that their experiences are not being heard (Donnan 2005), and research has shown that even if Northern Ireland has become more stable politically, a common Northern Irish identity has failed to develop. Because of this, Tonge and Gomez (2015) see Northern Ireland remaining a bi-communal entity, with a deep political and cultural divide. However Nash and Reid (2010) have

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[4] I again ask the reader to take notion, that this study has not been able to consider events that have unfolded after 29.10.2020.

noticed a lack of attention towards the social, economic and cultural dimensions of the border, especially the everyday dimension of the border for those who have been affected by its existence most directly; apart from the identity categories of religion or political affiliation which continue to divide the country in politics, there is also a sense of a new identity and commonality for those who have lived near the border.

The concept of the open border after the Peace Agreement of 1998 has been seen as positive due to its stabilising effect in the area. The influence of the European Union is often highlighted, as the cross-border measures of the EU Peace programmes were able to develop the border region in Ireland into a cultural space, where cross-border and cross-community contact for those involved has allowed the border to be negotiated through communication instead of violence (McCall 2011). Hayward (2018) has emphasised the significance of European integration, which has been critical for the border in Ireland, as it has normalised and 'detoxified' cross-border cooperation by framing it as pragmatic rather than politically charged. Hayward also points out that there is a paradox of British unionists and Irish nationalists being able to enjoy close cross-border cooperation separated from their competing views of the border itself, which has been possible in the context of European integration. The cooperation, however, is only normalised within the European integration context. Outside the context, such cooperation becomes difficult in practical terms, as well as symbolically and politically more sensitive (Hayward & Murphy 2018).

The present day openness of the border in Ireland is a result of the different border regimes that have historically existed. Especially the CTA has been important as a tool of conflict management, as it created a degree of openness on the border, allowing nationalists in Northern Ireland to enjoy the rights of a British citizen without having to claim British citizenship. On top the CTA border regime, and those created by the mutual joining of the Schengen Agreement in 1985 and the common EU border regime, the Peace Agreement of 1998 created an all-island border regime, which ended security checks at the border and thus made the border 'disappear from view'. (Komarova & Hayward 2018.)

The overall impact of the Agreement outside from the EU context has been looked at from the points of view of both, its successes and failures. Because of the first strand of the Agreement that focuses on the power sharing institutions of Northern Ireland, the nationalist and unionists have existed in a balance that ensured the political stability of the area (Teague 2019). However,

Taillon (2017) argues that even when the cross-border cooperation facilitated by the Agreement had many practical and tangible benefits for citizens across the border, the lack of political consensus has ensured that there is no overwhelming support to it. But even if the north-south cooperation triggered by the Agreement was not that significant, it promoted a new era of trust and reconciliation across the island by creating an open border (Teague 2019). Hayward and Murphy (2018) add to this point of view by emphasising that the Agreement had more significance than just making the border less visible, it also defused the border as a cause for conflict and violence. Especially Strand Two of the Agreement has been seen as reflection of the centrality of the border to the conflict (Taillon 2017).

Teague (2019), too, sees the shortcomings of the Agreement when it comes to creating far reaching cross-border initiatives. From an economical point of view the Agreement has not managed to build an integrated all-island economy apart from some successes such as the improved labour market position and economic activity of Catholics. For Teague this implies that the Catholic community has become more committed to Northern Ireland. Instead of an all island-economy, then, the Agreement has contributed to creating an 'Irish dimension', by moderating the competing views of the border, which has contributed to political stability. Whereas Hayward (2018) noted a similar development and credited it more towards overall European integration, for Teague (2019) this is a success of the Agreement.

As has been established above, despite some differing views, research still contributes a lot of Northern Ireland's development and political stability to the Peace Agreement of 1998 and European integration, which together have contributed to a less visible border and thus a lessening divide between the competing communities. Because of this, a general consensus among scholarly seems to be that Brexit as a whole imposes a very real risk for the security and stability in Northern Ireland.

Ireland's borders are central to the negotiations over Brexit, as they have the possibility to act as both, an obstacle to a possible settlement and a potential leverage for achieving one (Anderson 2018). The debates that have risen prior and since the Brexit Referendum also demonstrate the return of the conflict potential of the border in Ireland (Komarova & Hayward 2018). Hayward (2018) points out that any changes in the status of the border in Ireland will not only have negative consequences for Northern Ireland, but for the peace process as a whole. Teague (2019) notes that post-agreement Northern Ireland's political developments were

heading towards a relatively high level of political stability and a new democratic Northern Ireland, but Brexit has already generated mistrust between the unionists and nationalists, heightening suspicions towards the other community.

Braniff and Whiting (2017) also draw attention to the symbolic nature of the border. The peace process allowed for the development of a more fluid notion of identity and sovereignty, as the people born in Northern Ireland have the right to an Irish citizenship. If the common EU membership is removed, it has a potential to act as a destabilizer to the nationalist psyche. Brexit also has the potential to destabilize the settlement that emerged from the Peace Agreement of 1998, because it can affect the local power sharing institutions. If the institutions cannot be restored from the possibly deteriorating effects of Brexit, it could be possible, there might be calls to invoke the border poll provisions of the peace Agreement, which will further deepened the divide in Northern Ireland. (Teague 2019.) This ties to what Gromley-Heenan and Aughey (2017) refer to as the 'border in the mind', which the Brexit process has brought back. The potential impact of Brexit for Northern Ireland can have identity effects, political effects and constitutional effects, which all have impacts on political stability. The Brexit process has also cast a shadow over the north-south cooperation through the open border which has promoted trust and reconciliation between the two parts of the island (Teague 2019).

Hayward (2020) has recently explored the 'Brexitian conception of the British state', which according to her, the very existence of the border in Ireland disrupts. The realities of competing national identities in Northern Ireland make it necessary to have a more nuanced understanding of sovereignty, which is something both the British and the Irish governments have to acknowledge as a part of the Peace Agreement. This requires the understanding that sovereignty can be not only shared, but that sovereignty can change, as the potential shift in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland has been built into the agreement. Moreover, there is the fact that British and Irish identities are at least in theory equal in validity. Thus: "the simplistic understanding of territorial sovereignty behind the Brexitian quest has served to expose the fundamental incompatibility of conflicting identities and sovereign claims over Northern Ireland" (Hayward 2020, 276).

When it comes to the future, research has emphasised the need for continued North-South cooperation. Taillon (2017) argues that respecting this side of the 1998 Peace Agreement should remain a priority for both countries. Also the "soft infrastructure", in the form of things such as

civil society networks and projects, needs to be protected, as in the face of upcoming challenges resulting from uncertainty, the challenges need to be addressed through continued cross-border cooperation. After all, according to Komarova and Hayward, "advances in peacebuilding notwithstanding, at the macro-political level ethno-national conflict in Northern Ireland can still be described as conflict over the very existence and legitimacy of the border" (Komarova & Hayward 2018, 558).

Since the Brexit Referendum, some research has focused on the people of Northern Ireland and their experience of oncoming Brexit. Garry et al (2018) have compiled a research report on people's attitudes towards Brexit and the border issue in particular. They found that there is substantial opposition to any border checks, and a worry of increasing violence in a case where any border checks would be put into place. Hayward (2017) has compiled a similar research, but with a heavier focus on the border communities on both sides of the border, in order to hear the local voices and their stance on Brexit. What she found in 2017 and in a follow up reports in 2018 and 2019, was that not only did the border region feel particularly exposed to the impact of Brexit, the impact of Brexit was already felt at the border region.

As a conclusion, Northern Ireland is clearly in an especially vulnerable position when it comes to the possible effects of Brexit. Much of the existing research has focused on the border, especially on the possible destabilising effect any changes to the border might have on the political stability in Northern Ireland, as well as the North-South cooperation on the island of Ireland. The research gap for this research thus is not what might happen to the border after Brexit, but what has already happened. Some research has claimed that Brexit has already destabilised the Northern Irish politics, but a gap exists in the effects on the border, especially against the claim of the importance of the invisibility of the border. Deriving from Hayward's (2017) finding, that the local border communities are already feeling the impact of Brexit, this research focuses on the border in order to find out how the border has already changed during the Brexit negotiation period.

3. Theoretical framework: how do borders work?

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework which the empirical data on this research will be analysed through. There is no one coherent theory of "border studies", but this chapter offers a look into the different ways in which borders have been conceptualised though time, from the traditional geographical theories which look borders a strictly physical separators to the performativity of borders and bordering. This chapter will begin by looking at borders as physical and visible barriers. It will then look at borders as connective spaces and how those spaces can affect the formation of the identity of those living in the border regions. It will then look at borders as more of a practice, and explore how borders are actualised through their performativity. Each section also connects the theory specifically onto the border in Ireland.

3.1. Physical and visible borders

Geographers have traditionally viewed borders and boundaries as physical and visible lines that separate political, social and economic spaces (Newman 2006, 144). Scholars and policy makers have recognized that many things of national importance can often be found in borderlands, which is why border studies have become more significant (Wilson & Donnan 2012, 1). Until the 1980, border studies were dominated by this classical perception of borders as physical separators. In the context of increased globalisation, the permeability of EU borders has brought about a shift in the conceptualisation of borders. The relevance of borders, however, has not decreased and the world has not become less bordered. Instead, borders between and within states have even strengthened in some cases as relations between borders and territory have become more complex. This complexity has also called for new alternative ways for scholars to capture the new realities of borders. (Özdemir & Ayata 2018, 181.) Instead of one coherent theory that would dominate border studies, there now is a search for new conceptualisations of borders, that also include the politics of representation and identity (Paasi 2011, 62).

After the disappearance of the Iron Curtain, the construction of borders in Europe changed. EU and its structures have contributed to the re-bordering of a common European economy, as economic borders became more permeable. The change in state and economic borders and the questioning of the concept of a nation state changed the perception of borders and contributed

to the re-interpretation of borders. What was created was an image of a seemingly borderless space in Europe, and borders were no longer separators, but bridges. However, the protective function of borders did not disappear but moved from the borders of nation states to the outside borders of the integrated Europe and European Union. (Drost 2017, 22–23.)

Borders create lines of separation not only between states or other geographical spaces, but also between 'us' and 'them' (Newman 2006, 148). Borders are often seen as signs of inclusion and exclusion that create orders of difference (Rytövuori-Apunen 2017, 176). The perception of these differences can be strengthened by the physical manifestations of the borders, as elements such as walls do not only act as a symbol for the barrier function of a border, but also physically prevent visibility to the other side, making it invisible and unknown (Newman 2003, 20). Demarcation of borders is a part of the border process, as it is not just the drawing of a line on a map or the construction of a physical barrier, but the process through which the criteria of inclusion and exclusion are determined (Newman 2006, 148).

For Van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer (2005) it is not the material manifestations of borders, such as fences or lines on maps that are crucial to an understanding of borders, but rather the various forms of interpretation and representation that they embody. They argue that borders are actually normative ideas that become concrete and real through everyday social practices which make them into a social reality. Different types of borders are not given, but rather reproduced, which makes them dynamic instead of natural or static (Vaughhan-Williams 2009. 1 ; van Houtum 2012, 407). Framing border problems simply from the perspective of sovereignty and territorial integrity can limit our understanding of the variety of border-related processes, which is why a more comprehensive approach is achieved by viewing borders as practices (Rytövuori-Apunen 2017, 178). This idea will be further explored later in this chapter.

Traditionally states attempt to keep borders visible, as it highlights their territorial sovereignty. This can be done by marking the border with material symbols such as pillars, flags, fences and signs, after all "a border that is not visible for all is a border that has failed its purpose" (van Schendel 2005, 41). However, not everyone looks at the visibility of borders in this manner. Rumford (2011, 68) for example, notes that borders are sometimes designed to not look like borders, or located and projected at different places, making borders not visible to all. Borders are also not always "at the border" anymore, as they might be found dispersed through society

and remote from the territory they are protecting, instead of being solely located at the perimeter of nation states (Cooper and Rumford 2017, 110).

The symbolic dimensions to borders can be visible or invisible. It is possible that the boundaries between the communities who habit a border are invisible to those who are outsiders. The boundary can be a symbolic construction and the symbols are a part of a cross-border culture that has formed between those habiting the borders. (Donnan & Wilson 1999, 74.) There are examples of such borders where the symbols are not visible to all the same way, like the border between England and Scotland, where the markers of the border do not have that much meaning to international tourists, but represent the discriminatory effects of the border to the residents (Rumford 2008, 9).

On the case of the border in Ireland, the symbols and signs around it are how its embodied every day to those who routinely cross it or live near it. On one hand the visibility and prominence of the symbols that get witnessed every day can make them 'invisible' due to becoming overlooked and unseen, but they are still present and have an impact as physical reminders of the border when it is crossed (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 76). The visibility of the border is not the same for everyone either: "The visibility or invisibility of the Irish border, like borders everywhere is as much a matter of local communities' national and ethnic identities as it is a result of the structures of the state" (Donnan & Wilson 1999, 75). For researchers such as Hayward (2018), the border in Ireland provides an example of a border where the discursive, symbolic and identity aspects of borders are conjoined with its functional aspects.

The conversation around visibility and invisibility can also be connected to the flow of people or goods, especially around the discourse of illegality. Opposite to borders, van Schendel (2005) points out, that for illegal flows the act of being invisible is a thriving factor, as that gives them a lesser risk of interference and punishment. The ways that are used to visualise illegal flows can also create more visibility to what is essentially invisible, for example in cases when arrows are used on maps to mark illegal flows (van Schendel 2005, 41). Presenting flows as arrows makes the map active and constructive, as it constructs knowledge and visually excludes what it does not wish to represent. "The telling of the story is therefore more important than the mere visibility of the border" (van Houtum 2012, 412).

Border monuments can also produce a visibility as they define borders as its markers. However, monumentalising borders can produce a visibility, that reconfigures borders as connective as they make borders seem welcoming. For example, the border between Scotland and England was previously indicated with only road signs, but became more visible as the Star of Caledonia statue was placed upon it. Its function, instead of being a marker of the border in a security sense, was to welcome the people coming to Scotland. When borders are drawn into the landscape more clearly with monuments, it can make borders more visible and permanent, but also enhance connectivity across the border. (Cooper & Rumford 2013, 115-117,120.) The potential of borders as connectives instead of dividers will be further discussed in the next section.

Because the visibility of border as physical creators of difference is heavily tied to different symbols at the border, a hypothesis can be made that during the Brexit negotiation period the symbols at the border have once again become more present and visible. Because of this, it is possible that the dividing functions of the border have become more visible. As a result, it can be hypothesised that the physical location of the border has become visible as well, because the visible symbols of the borders are located at the border.

3.2. Bridges and borderlands

Some argue that borders need to be viewed as not just markers of division, but also mechanisms of connection and encounter, as borders have a role in making connectivity (Cooper & Rumford 2013, 109). Rovisco (2010) argues that hybridity, transnational identities and cosmopolitan affiliations can challenge established cultural and political borders and work towards establishing new imaginations for the "European space". The European Union has promoted the implementation of regions of transboundary activity, which has allowed the strengthening of mutual social and cultural awareness within cross-border regions (Newman 2006, 146).

Because of this, analysis should focus on the process of border crossings as cultural encounters (Rovisco 2010, 1028). When a border is crossed, it opens an opportunity for differences to be reconciled, forming a more diverse and multi-cultural landscape (Newman 2003, 19). Beyond political boundaries or lines on maps, crossing borders has become a routine part of daily experience, especially in Europe where the importance of individual borders has reduced

(Rumford 2006, 156). Borders can actively facilitate mobility instead of limiting it, and the border can be reconfigured as a portal as "people can construct the scale of the border for themselves" (Rumford 2011, 67).

As much as borders have traditionally been constituted as barriers, they should also be seen for their potential to constitute bridges, by the ways they can provide a point of contact with the 'other'. (Newman 2006, 143,150). The border gets reconfigured as a bridge when there is a significant amount of cross-border contact, communication and cooperation across public, private and community sectors, which will then result in development and mutually beneficial outcomes for communities on both sides of the border (McCall 2011, 202).

In the case of the border in Ireland, the border was transformed into a political bridge though the North/South cooperation which was brought on by the institutions established in the 1998 Peace Agreement. With this, the border space was able to develop into a cultural space, a process which was heavily influenced by the European Union and its support to the Peace Agreement institutions. (McCall 2011, 202–203.) In order for the border to continue to carry out its functions as a bridge, it is important that both the UK and Irish governments keep prioritising the cross-border cooperation of the 1998 Peace Agreement (Taillon 2017, 5).

Flows of people and material across borders can be signs of the importance of borders diminishing, but they also create new borders by bringing forward transboundary spaces, which are created when one state has spaces of operation on a territory that belongs to another state. The space can sometimes entail historical spaces, that have a role to play in construction of identities, and they can connect communities inside one state to an another state. (Rytövuori-Apunen 2017, 178–179.) Plenty of research has focused on these spaces that exist across a border, referred to as a borderland. Borderlands can be "described as a zone or region within which lies an international border, and a borderland society as a social and cultural system straddling that border" (Van Schendel 2005, 44). The idea of a borderland is important in relation to theorizing borders, as it signals that borders are not just lines on a map, but have their own space (Rumford 2006, 61).

Newman (2006) further explores the concept of a borderland and a transboundary space, by exploring how borderlands can take the characteristics of a transition zone, within which cultural and social hybridity can emerge. This is especially the case in the EU borderlands,

where transboundary border regions have emerged, encouraged by the Union in order to break down emotional barriers between peoples on each side of a border (Newman 2006, 151). The difference between a borderland and a transition zone is the impact of the border; a transition zone assumes the opening or removal of the border, so that the barrier impact of the border is replaced by an interface where contact can take place (Newman 2003, 19). The cultural negotiation of borders that are contested allows a possibility of the cultural border zones to develop into sites of dialogue, crossing and hybridity (Schimanski & Wolfe 2010, 43).

Apart from just a transboundary space, two states might also share transboundary communities that do not have a strong borderline between them (Rytövuori-Apunen 2017, 176). Borders rarely constitute a divide between clearly distinguishable groups, but division along borders is often a consequence of the drawing of the border through already existing communities (Laven & Baycroft 2008, 256). This is also the case of the border in Ireland, as the creation of a border distorted or even destroyed networks and connections that had previously existed at the place of the border (Nash & Reid 2010, 274). The region of the border in Ireland, referred to as the Central Border Region consists of eight Councils, and in 2011 the population of it was approximately 850,000. Most people on the area live in settlements of less than 1500 people or in open countryside. (Hayward 2017, 9). Many people cross the border daily, because there is an estimate of up to 30,000 cross border workers, and some villages on the border even straddle it on both sides of the border line (House of Commons 2018, 7).

On one hand these transboundary communities might highlight that borders are 'leaking', but they also show how open confrontation to borders and the rules and regulation associated with them can even lead to the borderline becoming artificial in relation to the life practices of locals. (Rytövuori-Apunen 2017, 176.) Borders can even become 'corridors of opportunity', in cases where border residents can maintain the ability to move freely across and around the border, and learn to manipulate and negotiate the border in their mutual advantage (Flynn 1997, 313,327). On the other hand borderlands vary in their intensity, and they can affect the people on both sides of the border to different extents (Newman 2006, 150). National, ethnic and state boundaries can be subverted at borders, and sometimes the meanings given to symbols might even differ between communities that live on the border (Donnan & Wilson 1999, 75).

Even though the existence of a borderland has so far been discussed through the connectivity of a border, living on a border also makes one experience the dividing functions of the border.

When borders create a difference between cultural societies in two separate territories, the awareness of the difference between self and other creates awareness of borders of identities (Drost 2017, 16). Because borders are not merely instruments of state policy found at physical borderlines, they can also be found at cultural and social processes and institutions (Prokkola 2009, 22). Boundaries are an important part of the practices and discourses that create and maintain distinctions between social groupings, which makes boundaries part of the narratives that construct social groups and their identities, leading to boundaries being understood as exclusive constituents of identity (Paasi 2005 20, Prokkola 2009, 24). Separate identities are created by creating 'otherness' through the maintenance of a border (Newman 2003, 15).

At the same time, there are specific characteristics that separate borderland identities from other identities that might be influenced by the feeling of 'otherness'. Studying identity and borders using state borders as the markers is problematic, because it assumes the people within the same state lines have a homogenous identity, and fails to take into account how different meanings to the border can be given by even the people living on the same border region (Prokkola 2009, 24). Instead of just an area that exists around an international border, a borderland can be seen as a "zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject" (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 18).

National and ethic identities can be configured at borders in ways that can differ from how these identities are configures elsewhere in the state. At borders identities can be shifting and multiple. (Donnan & Wilson 1999, 64.) People make sense of and communicate their ideas of borders through narratives, and continuously narrativize and perform their borderland identity through available social and cultural discourses (Prokkola 2009, 22). Borderland identity, then can be understood as "both narrative outcome and performed and bodily lived through everyday practices and activities" (Prokkola 2009, 25). Even in cases where debordering processes have made a border less present, it can remain a central concept in local consciousness or border imaginaries of those living in the borderlands (Cassidy et al 2018, 172).

Those who live on the border areas can have experiences that differ from the lives of the others living in the state. Donnan and Wilson (1999, 4) make the notion that almost all aspects of everyday lives of people also occurs on a nation's borderlands, but there are also some things that only occur at the borders. Borderlands can have characteristics that separate them from other areas in states, and the people inhabiting borders are part of different political and social

systems than most others in their states are not (Donnan & Wilson 1999, 4). In Ireland, even though the divide between the Catholic and Protestant identities often gets highlighted, the creation of the border also cut through strong regional identities that were in place alongside the religious or political identities (Nash & Reid 2010, 275).

In the borderlands surrounding the border in Ireland, the experience of the border and its everyday dimensions has shaped identities of those who have been most directly affected by its existence. Like stated previously in this chapter, living on the borderland can affect people to different extents (see: Newman 2006). On one hand, when the border in Ireland was marked by violent paramilitary attacks during the troubles, it still acted as a reassurance to the northern Protestant identity, because their lifestyle and culture were secured by the heavily military presence (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 84). Simultaneously, there has also been a sense of shared experience of the impact of the border, which has shown signs of becoming a basis for a new shared identity that crosses the borders of the old categories such as religion and political affiliation (Nash & Reid 2010, 267).

Like explored above, the experience of having to cross the border has created a shared sense of identity, which can be connected to the everyday dimension of the border. For Dorfman (2014) the everyday is "the background against which any significant activity occurs", and the "basis upon which life constantly takes place" (Dorfman 2014, 1–2). The everyday can be considered an important category of political analysis, and it is a meeting place, where higher and lower activities meet (Summa 2020, 56). The ideas of lower and higher activities can be tied to power relations, and the idea in feminist theory that the personal is political, as power structures perpetuated by the state can affect the everyday realities of especially those who are facing a power imbalance (Enloe 2011). However, the everyday can be about more than just the reproduction of power relations, as it can also be a site for creativity and contestation (Summa 2020, 79). When the border interrupted the everyday lives of those living on it in Ireland, people resulted to acts of contestations, such as smuggling goods over the border in the hopes to escape paying duties (Nash, Dennis & Graham 2010, 429).

Smuggling as a state challenging practice which can often be seen at borderlands, is one way in which the everyday cross-border activities can be ambivalent (Miggelbrink 2016, 141). Similarly, people who lived at the border in Ireland during the times the border was an economic

barrier, have described how the border turned everyone into 'petty criminals', as they were forced to adopt smuggling as the part of the everyday (Duffy 2002, 22). Borderlands can then contain activity that is happening at different scales, as there are the states attempting to secure control of the areas, as well as the necessary claims and desires of the locals associated with the everyday. (Miggelbrink 2016, 142.) The claims and desires can be a part of the everyday, which is reproduced "in more ordinary places such as churches, mosques, schools, workplaces, backyards, living rooms and bedrooms" (Summa 2020, 73). Hayward and Komorova (2019, 36) have discovered that often for people in the era of the open border, travelling over the border is not an activity, but a way of life which is part of the everyday life, as people go to work, shop or visit family and friends.

As borders can provide grounds for a common identity to those who inhabit borderlands, a hypothesis can be drawn from this section that the border has become visible as a shared space which provides a basis for a common identity which is defined by the experience of living near the border. It is likely that through this the border has become visible as a space which connects, similarly to the idea of borders as bridges instead of dividers. However, it is also possible that the intensity of the borderland has not been the same for everyone, as essentially only one side of the border is leaving the European Union. The border is most likely present in local consciousness, especially on the everyday level, and has become visible in this way.

3.4. Performativity of borders and bordering

At the centre of critical geopolitics for two decades has been the idea of broadening border studies by focusing on the performative aspects of borders instead of just their physical manifestations or territoriality (Johnson and Jones 2011, 61). This perspective on borders can be significantly enriched by bringing Judith Butler's theory of performativity in to the discussions. For Butler performativity "must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1993, 2). Performative acts, then, "are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements that in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binging power" (Butler 1993, 225).

For Wonders (2006) "border performativity takes as its theoretical starting point the idea that borders are not only geographically constituted, but are socially constructed via the performance of various state actions in an elaborate dance with ordinary people who seek freedom of movement and identification" (Wonders 2006, 64). Deriving from what performativity is for Butler, Kaiser (2012) discusses performativity and power as part of border performatives, which to him "naturalize and essentialize socio-spatial categories by materializing borders and separating interior from exterior" (Kaiser 2012, 532). To maintain the relationship between the socio-spatial categories and what stays outside of them requires policing at the borders. The border is performed by enacting and resisting the narratives of the state as its citizens cross borders or are prevented from doing so. Thus, the state performs also its own sovereignty, which is particularly visible at its borders. (Salter 2011, 66.)

Salter (2011) identifies three "registers" of border performativity. There are formal performances of the border, which include the defence of territorial borders, practical performances which include the politics of enforcing the filtering at the border, and popular performances, which include the public and political contestation over the meaning of the border (Salter 2011, 66).

Even though states attempt to consolidate national borders, the state policies have a little meaning unless they are performed by state agents or border crossers (Wonders 2006, 66). Borders and border posts are sites for the display and performance of state sovereignty. At borders, whether on land, waters or airports, border performances are enacted with flags, uniforms, interrogations and even guns (Coplan 2012, 511; see also Rytövuori-Apunen 2017, 178). These events and activities in which sovereignty and power are presented, performed and enacted constitute and characterise borders (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 73). Borders are also enacted and performed though immigration enforcement (De Genova 2012). Border agents have a significant role in determining "where, how, and on whose body a border will be performed" (Wonders 2006, 66). The locations of borders are constantly negotiated and represented at different points of a society, which can make borders visible or invisible (Brambilla 2015, 19).

Sometimes the physical manifestations of state power that are usually associated with borders might be used to bring borders into being in cases where no formally recognised borders exist or have no other reality. A crucial element of the performative display of borders are the

material aesthetics of border zones. Together with practices of customs and immigration the material aesthetics, signs and symbols function to establish and maintain borders. (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 73.) State officials must make the crossers feel fear with their performance, so that they recognize state sovereignty and submit to state power. It might often be the citizens of the states whose border crossings have the most elaborate performance who have the most cynicism towards the regulations, and who might even seek alternative ways for cross-border movement. There is also performance that needs to be enacted by the ones crossing the border, when for example travelling. (Coplan 2012, 511.) Even when the border in Ireland was technically always open to movement due to the CTA, the security concerns of the Troubles caused the state to result to security checks and monitoring (Komarova & Hayward 2018, 552), which could be seen as a way of the British state performing its own sovereignty against a security threat the IRA posed.

Looking at a border as an event rather than just a thing allows us to see it as a performative arena, where symbolic messages are exchanged. On these areas symbols of the state are usually the most prominent ones symbolising the boundary, but other groups also attempt to establish presence on the border zone. (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 75.) After studying borders between African countries Coplan (2012) connects border performances with the credibility of states, claiming that states with less credibility often put more effort into the performance occurring at its borders. In what he calls theatrical border management symbolic interaction and formalities create more sense of security for the state and authorities in question. Bordering is never complete, and will always require performative maintenance of markers separating "us" from "them". (Coplan 2012, 509.) Coplan (2012, 519) also points out that examples such as the breaking down of the Berlin Wall show that there is also a performative element to unmaking borders, with the desire to remove the markers that once obstructed human aspiration.

Border zones as performative arenas are sites where actors such as states attempt to fix meanings in the landscape. The areas can be described as liminal spaces which are in constant transition, in which people's social identity changes and takes new aspects. (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 76.) The idea that Donnan and Wilson present is close to the idea of a "borderscape". Through the concept of a borderscape, borders can be studied and mobile and relational, by studying the practices, performances and discourses that seek to use the border (Rajam & Grundy-Warr 2007, x).

Like the case of the border in Ireland has shown in the past, the experience of borders can often clash with what geopolitical theory assumes, so the impact of borders and their dynamic relation with everyday life, as well as how the border is lived, experienced and interpreted by those who live at the border can be understood through the borderscapes concept (Brambilla 2015, 27). Taking the concept further, Brambilla suggests that it can express "the representation of borders as well as individual and collective practices of construction (bordering), deconstruction (de-bordering) and reconstruction (re-bordering) of borders (Brambilla 2015, 27). The idea of the performativity of borders in this chapter is very similar to the idea of "borderscaping", which can be looked at as "practices through which fluctuating borders are imagined, materially established, experienced, lived as well as reinforced and blocked but also crossed, traversed and inhabited" (Brambilla 2015, 30). The way borders are constructed is then imposed from above as well as from below, and in order to understand this aspect of borders fully, border theorisers should pay attention to the local level of borders by listening to personal and group narratives of those who have a daily experience of the border (Newman 2006, 154). Studying borderscapes turns the attention away from the normative dimensions of borders, and instead focuses on the ways they collide with daily practices and relationships (Gualtieri 2015, 239).

The idea of borderscapes is very useful to the study of the border in Ireland, as it has a very strong everyday dimension to it (see: Nash & Reid 2010). In the terms of borderscaping, the people living on the border had to collectively reconstruct the border and the practices that made the border in order to carry on their daily lives. As the security structures and border checks have been removed, the state has no longer performed the border this way, and it has not affected local lives the same either.

Out of this section a hypothesis could be drawn that the performative functions of the border have been heightened, especially if the presence of symbols on the border has increased, because actors on the border try to fix meanings on these symbols through performance. However, the performativity of the border and the performances at the border might differ from the way they were previously, as no actual security structures have been constructed on the border by the state as a result of Brexit. It is possible that as Brexit concerns have been heavily voiced by those who live near the border, the everyday dimension of the border and the border practices have become more visible as well.

4. Methods and data

This chapter will present the way the research is designed and carried out. It begins by introducing the data and the data collection process, as well the reasoning behind using the exact data that was chosen. It then explains the kind of methodological framework that was developed to accommodate the type of data that was used. The last section of this chapter explores the limitations to this research that are brought by the type of data that was used, and the effects of those limitations to the overall results of this research are acknowledged. The last chapter also looks into the ethical aspects of the research.

4.1. The research process and the data

As I began searching for suitable data for the research I wanted to carry out, I first established a time frame. Because I wanted to ask how the border's visibility has been affected by the Brexit process, I looked for data from between 23 July, 2016 and 31 January, 2020. This particular time frame is very natural, since it starts form the Brexit Referendum and ends on the date the UK officially left the European Union. By choosing this time frame this research is able to examine the time period which was characterised by uncertainty over what Brexit would mean for the UK and especially for Northern Ireland, which resulted in actions such as protest campaigns and art projects. By ending the time period at the official exit date this research is firmly focused on the effects of Brexit, but only before Brexit took place officially.

In order to study the visibility of the border, I will be understanding visibility as "the actions and materialities through which attention can be shared and focused onto something visible" (Traue, Blanc & Cambre 2018, 5). The selection of data was then guided by the idea that visibility is something that is created, and in order to focus on the factors that have created visibility for the border, it was important to not only look at visualities such as pictures, but also actions that can produce visibility.

However, because I did not start gathering data for this research back in 2016, nor was I able to travel to the border region to witness events, but I still wanted to look at actions from the entire Brexit negotiation period, I essentially had to rely on material that could be found online.

The data that I used for this research, then, is all media content by definition, as it is information that was distributed by the media (Shoemaker & Reese 1996, 4). This comes with its own limitations, which I will be reflecting upon on the limitations- section of this chapter. Despite the limitations, the use of this type of data was still important in order to produce an analysis that properly answers the research question.

In order to better reflect my research question, and to focus on particularly on the effects of Brexit on the visibility of the border, I narrowed my data to actions and visuals that were somehow produced as a response to Brexit. I then decided to primarily put the geographical focus on Northern Ireland, or the overall border region. For example, instead of looking into the numerous Brexit-demonstrations that had taken place all over the world during the Brexit negotiation period, I focused on demonstrations by a group called Border Communities Against Brexit (BCAB), because they were focused on the border issue, and usually took place on the actual border. The common factor in the data I chose to analyse, is that it has all been produced as a way to comment on Brexit, in the light of what has been known about Brexit at the time.

With the question of visibility in mind, most of the data will be visual, but most of it will be supported by textual elements, such as descriptions of the visual elements. For example, an art installation will be analysed through images of the installation, and in one case, a short film which was part of the installation, but the images and video will be supported by descriptions of events in order to get a better understanding of the unfolding of the events. The analysis in some cases is also enriched by other textualities, such as quotes by the artist describing the aims or the process of creating the installation. The set of data also contains two short skits from a BBC Northern Ireland comedy show, which comments on the border issue and Brexit. These videos will both be seen as textual and visual data, as the analysis will not only look at what is shown on the screen, but what the story is about. On the other hand, there are also two picture essays, which only consist of images, and no textual data.

The data that was analysed for the research is very particular, because it does not fall under only one category. Rather than being concerned with only images, like those taken for news articles or for photo essays, this research looks at a broader array of visualities, along with textual elements that are connected to these visualities. Like explained above, because the events were not observed first hand, the research has to rely on the media content that was

produced from the events. For example, the demonstrations will be analysed through news stories written about the protests. Visual material will be drawn from the images used in the articles. Textually, the descriptions of events will be used to gather an understanding of what took place to enrich the analysis. As I have now explained why this research requires the use of an unconventional set of data, I will now outline the process of gathering data, as well as introduce the final set of data that was used.

As explained above, in order to gain information about the organised demonstrations I wished to analyse, I had to look into news articles about the demonstrations. Because I had decided to look at protests organised by BCAB, I began by finding out when and where the group had organised demonstrations. As described above, my research was limited to those demonstrations that has been somehow recorded, usually in news reports. Out of the ones that were described on various news sites, I ended up choosing three occasions of protests to look at more closely. I use the term occasion here, because in two of the cases, the same weekend contained protests in more than one location, and I will be looking at material from more than just one location. Essentially my choosing of these protests in particular was guided by the fact that most material about these protests was found. I ended up choosing to also use one demonstration that was not organised by BCAB, as it was organised by lorry drivers who brought their trucks, thus standing out from the other protests. My data through which I analysed the protests consisted of two articles by The Irish Times, one article by The Guardian, one article by The Irish World, one article by the Journal.ie and two articles by The New European. These, together with the descriptive text, contained in total six images and one video.

The other major category that I looked into was art installations. I began by exploring the content of two major art festivals taking place in Northern Ireland or the border area: Belfast International Art Festival, and a collection of smaller festivals titled Arts Over Borders. From the festivals I chose to look at three installations, because they commented on the issue of the border and Brexit.

From Belfast International Arts Festival I chose to look at *Across and In-Between* by Suzanne Lacy, because it explored the impact of the border on the lives of the people who live on it during the Brexit era. This installation was analysed through one short film and images from the film, the artists' description of the project, as well as a written accord by the people who

participated in the installation. The artists' comments were gathered from online sources; Lacy's website, as well as The Irish Times and the Belfast International Arts Festival website. From Arts Over Borders I focused on two installations from the 2018 festival, which was then believed to be the last one before Brexit came to be. Both installations took place on the border, which is why I wanted to focus on them. Unfortunately, the website of the 2018 festival was no longer available during this research, so the installations will be analysed mainly through descriptions on a The Guardian article.

As I was researching the art installations, I came across a smaller art installation by Rita Duffy titled *Soften The Border*, which was part of the Belcoo festival in 2017. This installation will be analysed through two pictures of the installation, an article on Culture Northern Ireland which describes it further and contains quotes from the artist. I also found a community event, that was also held in Belcoo. During the event, people from both sides of the border were invited to join and have dinner on the Belcoo bridge, which crosses the border. The event was organised by Irish food champions, and was analysed as it was described in an article in The Irish Times.

In order to include more data that was purely visual, I chose to include two photographic essays by Charles McQuillan, a near Belfast based photographer. I choose these particular essays, because they were about the border and Brexit. One essay from 2018 was titled *Border Lives* and it was also featured on The Guardian. It contains eight images. The other essay, from 2019, is titled *Border Ghosts*, and it contains 13 images in total.

Lastly, I am looking at two comedy skits from a BBC Northern Ireland comedy show *Soft Border Patrol*. The show in total consists of three seasons, which in total have 12 episodes. Each episode consists of multiple short skits, that the show has also posted online as separate short videos. After reviewing the episodes which I was able to find online and access from my country, I watched approximately ten short skits, out of which I chose two which had the most material for my research, and which dealt with similar issues than my other pieces of data did. The skits chosen were from the first and third episodes of the first series of the show, and they originally premiered on BBC in 2018.

Even when this research does not aim to study the media content as such, the fact that the data comes from media sources, often news media sources, means that the sources will have to be further looked into. That will be done in the following section.

4.1.1 Using news articles as source material

As described above, some of the analysis will look at visual and textual data from news articles describing the demonstrations and other events I am analysing. Many of the demonstrations mentioned in the analysis were reported by multiple news sites. In the end news from five different news outlets were chosen. These outlets were chosen, because they had the most reports of the demonstrations, and their reports contained the most description of the events and/or pictures of the events.

When news articles are used for research, it needs to be acknowledged that instead of selecting and reporting on topics, news construct events (Hodgetts & Chamberlain 2014,381), by using frames, which "call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements" (Entman 1993, 55). Because online news sites were so heavily relied on as a source for the data that was then analysed, it is important to take a closer look at the sites that were used. Information about the news sources that were used was taken from eurotopics, which is a press review project of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, with a database that "provides information about more than 500 print and online media in over 30 countries, including details about their political profile, publishers and circulation figures" (Eurotopics 2020). The following information of the news outlets that were used has been taken from the eurotopics database.

The Guardian and The Irish Times are both described to be pro-European and centre-leftist by political orientation. The Guardian is based in London, UK and The Irish Times is based in Dublin, Ireland. Information about demonstrations was also taken from the Journal.ie, which is described as liberal, and is based in Dublin, Ireland. Some information was also taken from The New European, which is the most pro-EU out of the news sources, as it was founded in the UK after the Brexit Referendum. It is also described as liberal. One article that was chosen was from an online newspaper called Irish World, which was not in the eurotopics database.

Because the site itself claims to be the "voice of the Irish community in Britain", it can be assumed that it is likely to have a pro-Irish view. However, I chose to include information from the article, because it was relevant for one of the demonstrations I was looking at.

What can be seen from this review of news sites, is that in this research, the data comes from a liberal, pro-European perspective. This means that the news stories that were used to analyse the demonstrations were more likely to occur on these sites, as opposed to, for example, a heavily pro-Brexit or anti-EU news source. An interesting question could be brought up regarding the pro-Brexit news outlets that did not report the demonstrations and other stories to the same extent than the pro-European or 'anti-Brexit' media outlets did. Perhaps they did not wish to frame Brexit through this kind of a lens. Furthermore, even though pro-European news outlets were not purposefully chosen to be the sources of data, they probably were more likely to be chosen merely because they chose to publish the kind of content that this research aimed to analyse. Applying what Entman (1993) said, a large amount of the data used for this research has been produced through a pro-European, liberal frame. The limitations arising from this will be further discussed in section 4.3.

4.2. Building a methodological framework

Something can become visible, when attention is called to something by "showing it" (Dayan 2013, 146). Like stated previously, in order to research the ways in which the border has become visible, I will be understanding visibility as "the actions and materialities through which attention can be shared and focused onto something visible" (Traue, Blanc & Cambre 2018, 5). Visibility is not just concerned with the visual, but is could be described as symbolic. Brighenti (2010, 3) describes symbols as the material element of the visible. Drawing from these interpretations of what visibility is, I begin the research from the idea that the border is made visible through actions and materialities which call attention to it. In this research I will be looking for symbols, which represent the border as something that is visible. These symbols can be simply material such as images, or objects, but also actions, as these two create visibility together.

The analysis will be guided by the theoretical framework of border studies, which was presented in the previous chapter of this research. When approaching a set of data, a researcher can approach it inductively, meaning that the data is used as a starting point, or deductively, meaning that existing theoretical concepts provide a foundation for how the data is seen (Terry et al. 2017, 22). The data used for this research will be approached deductively, as the ideas that the data is searched for will be derived from the border studies theoretical framework. As the theoretical framework was divided into three sections, there will be three categories of symbols which will be looked for from the data. These symbols from now on will be referred to as expressions of the border, and they will be divided into three categories; expressions of the border as a *physical divider*, expressions of the border as a *connective space*, and expressions of the border as a *performance*. To look for these actions and materialisations from my data, I will be deriving from multiple methodologies in order to build a way to analyse the different ways the border has become visible in the Brexit negotiation period. I will be drawing from Bleiker's (2015, 882–883) argument that even seemingly incompatible methods can be combined when the idea of totality is replaced by embracing the idea of assemblages, where the methods can each operate on various interconnected levels. After drawing out the methodological framework, I will explore each category in more depth.

I apply the methodology of visual research, as fields such as visual sociology or visual anthropology are grounded on the idea of acquiring scientific insight by observing and analysing visual manifestations, such as behaviour of people or material products of culture (Pauwels 2011, 3). Deriving this I will be applying the idea of not just using images but also behaviour as visual data. In my case I will be looking at demonstrations and art installations as visual manifestations. Because the imagery I have collected to be used as my data has been existing and not something I myself have produced, my research will focus on a 'secondary' visual reality (Pauwels 2011, 6).

In her work on visual methods, Rose (2016) identifies four sites where the meanings of images are made; the production of an image, the image itself, its circulation and the site where it is seen by audiences. In building his pluralistic methodological framework Bleiker (2015) draws from Rose, by exploring the methodological challenges posed by each site. Multiple methods such as semiotics, discourse analysis and content analysis can be applied to understand the image itself, as well as the receiving of the image by the audiences, which Bleiker (2015, 879)

refers to as the "actual impact of the images". Images have the potential to shape what can or cannot be seen, thought, said and done in politics, because images work by performing the political, but a direct causal link between images and actual political outcomes often cannot be pointed (Bleiker 2015, 884–885). Drawing from these ideas I hope to show that the images and visual events and actions influence how the border is seen, and thus contribute to making it more visible.

In order to recognise different expressions of the border from the data, especially the visual data such as images, I will be applying semiotics. Semiotics is the study of signs, which is a field of research relevant to a wide range of disciplines (Nöth 2011, 298). Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) has defined the sign as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect to capacity" (Peirce 1897, cited in Nöth 2011, 301). A sign does not necessarily have a material form, as it can also be an idea. The semiotic process consist of the sign, which can be a word, a picture or a mental image. It then gets associated with something else, which is what is represented by the sign. The sign is the interpreted by associating it with what it represents. The interpretation is a mental image, idea, though or action evoked by the sign. (Nöth 2011, 301–302.) Contemporary semiotic research does not study signs in isolation, but as parts of 'sign-systems', thus studying how meanings are made, or how reality is represented (Chandler 2007, 2).

Because my data is combining textualities and visualities, attention needs to be paid to the idea of multimodality, which focuses on multimodal texts and communicative events which combine different semiotic modes such as language and images (van Leeuwen 2015, 447). Because multimodal analysis considers the meaning of visuals together with meaning that rises from other semiotic sources such as text (O'Halloran 2004), the idea behind it is useful to this research. Multimodality ties into the theoretical framework of social semiotics, which is an approach that has been explored by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). For them, representation is a process in which the maker of the sign seeks to make a representation of something physical or semiotic, motivated by the context in which the sign is produced. In social semiotics a sign is not pre-existing and 'available', but the form and meaning of the sign are only brought together by the sign maker (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, 3). The meanings expressed by the makers of the signs is first and foremost social, so images are not only aesthetic and expressive, but also have a structured social dimension (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, 20).

In addition to semiotics, discourse analysis is an another useful methodological tool that can be drawn from onto the methodological framework used for this research. The basis of discourse analysis is in the notion of discourses, which are central to the theoretical arguments of Focault (see: eg. Focault 1972), and can be defined, for example, as "ways of constituting knowledge, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them" (Weedon 1987, 108). There are many forms of discourse analysis which social scientists use. Fairclough's (2003) approach to discourse analysis focuses on language, which he assumes to be a part of social life which is dialectically interconnected with other elements. Fairclough's approach analyses text, which he uses in a broad sense to mean written and printed text, but also spoken conversation, television programmes and web-pages. Any instance of language use can be a text, but for example television programmes, which can also be seen as text, contain visual images as well as language. (Fairclough 2003, 3.)

This approach to discourse analysis fits well into the methodological framework of this research, especially when it comes to the textual data. Fairclough sees discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world from a particular perspective, which can then be identified from a text (Faiclough 2003, 129). In my analysis I will be applying this idea by identifying representations of the border from by data, and then identifying the perspective from which the border is represented. Like previously explained, multimodal analysis combines the meaning which arises from multiple semiotic resources, such as visual images and language. Multimodal discourse analysis takes into account the meaning which is constructed by the integrated use of images and text together (O'Halloran 2004, 1). Just images can also be analysed through discourse analysis, in order to see how they construct specific views of the social world visually (Rose 2016, 192).

Above I have described the kind of methodological framework I have used to analyse the particular set of data I am working with. For example, when looking at images such as those taken by McQuillan, semiotic analysis will be useful in recognizing how the different symbols that can be identified from the images represent the different aspects of the border. Similar ways of visual analysis can be applied to the images of for example the protests which were looked at as a part of the analysis. On the other hand, in the case of the *Yellow Manifesto*, which is a text document produced as a part of the *Across and In-between* art project, different discourses

about the border can be identified, and then further divided into the categories of divider, space and performance. The BBC Northern Ireland comedy series can also be analysed in a similar fashion, when it comes to the language aspect of the series. To complement the pluralist methodological framework I will be applying some ideas of thematic analysis to the actual processing of the data, as thematic analysis is flexible and can be conducted within various theoretical frameworks (Terry et al. 2017, 20). Thematic analysis focuses on identifying and describing themes, which are both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Guest, MacQueen & Namey 2012, 11).

By combining ideas from the methods presented in this section, the data was approached by looking for symbols and discourses which represent the border, and act as an expression of the border becoming visible in one of the three main ways. By using these multiple and somewhat contrasting methodologies I hope to show the borders' visibility on multiple levels.

The first section of the analysis will look at the data and identify expressions of the border as a *physical divider*. These are ones that highlight the physical dividing functions of a border, such as fences, walls and other obstacles. For example in a demonstration organised by a group called Border Communities Against Brexit, the participants constructed a mock wall and brought mock soldiers to the border in order to express their fear of the border becoming highly militarised again. I will also look for symbols that have been present on the border in Ireland historically. I will also look at expression of the physical border line and its visibility, which are addressed for example in the BBC Northern Ireland comedy show *Soft border patrol.*

Contrasting to the first section, the second section of the analysis is concerned with the border as a space, especially as a *connective space.* The analysis will then look at the data for expressions of the border as a connective space, such as sharing, connecting, emphasising community, as a well as material expressions such as bridges. As the idea of borders as a space through the concept of a borderland, in this section I will also look for expressions of the border as an identity, and connecting to that I will look for the idea that the people living on the border have a special relationship with the border. For example, the art installation *Softening the border* as well as the dinner event on the Belcoo bridge not only highlight the physical bridge that connects the people on both sides, but also the idea of the border as a space where you can look at art or enjoy a dinner.

The third section of the analysis is concerned with the *performative functions of the border*. This section will look at the data, and search for expressions of the border as a performance, for example actions which perform state sovereignty, acts of bordering, and acts of unmaking borders through performance. For example, the border was performed in an art exhibition, where people from the border formed a line on the border, and then erased it by moving away. After recognizing border performances, I will be looking at how the effects of the border are performed, and who is performing the border.

4.3. Limitations and ethics

4.3.1 Limitations of the data

The type of data that this research uses presents a set of limitations, which I as a researcher acknowledge. In this section I have attempted to present the limitations, and reflect on how they affect the results of this research.

One limitation for this research is the fact that I was not able to conduct field research, and thus not able to be present for and witness the events I am including in this research. Media content is based on what happens in the physical world, but through the creation of salience (see: Entman 1993), certain elements are highlighted over others, and "reality is necessarily manipulated when events and people are relocated into news" (Shoemaker & Reese 1996, 34). It must be acknowledged, that because of the data that this research uses, I cannot claim that I have been able to access the events exactly as they took place in "reality", as I only have access to them through the media content that was available to me as a researcher.

Publication is an instrument of community consciousness. Mass production and distribution is able to transform selected private perspectives into public perspectives, which are maintained through publication. The media of mass communications are the ways in which stories, symbols and images are selected, composed, recorded and shared. Mass media thus produces and distributes discourses. (Gerbner 2011, 15–16.) The notion that media selects perspectives, which are then made public means that essentially this research is heavily relying on discourses that have already been selected for publication. Like was already established in section 4.1.1,

the media sources of data that are analysed in this research come from news sources which positionality is pro-European and liberal, which most likely means that they give voice to those who do not wish for a hard border in Ireland, most which are people who are against Brexit altogether. Because of this, the voices I analyse are voices that are coming from a standpoint, and I acknowledge that it is these types of discourses that are present in my data simply because these are the stories the news sources have chosen to report on.

This research does not ask how the border has become more visible *in the media,* but the role of media visibility has to be acknowledged, as it is indeed the heightened media visibility to the border as a result of the Brexit process, that makes this research possible. The development of communication media frees the idea of visibility from the spatial and temporal properties, as one no longer has to be present in order to witness and action or an event (Thompson 2005, 35). For me as a researcher, a large part of my data is only available to me, because media makes situations visible by placing visibility on events, persons and narratives (Dayan 2013, 146). At the same time, mediated visibility does not only act as a tool which brings events and actions to attention, it is also a means by which political and social struggles are articulated (Thompson 2005, 49).

For example, the case of BCAB could be viewed from two different angles; the visibility of their attempts to call attention to their Brexit worries is as much a sum of the media making them visible, as their efforts to make themselves and their struggle visible through media. When reflecting on mediated visibility, Thompson (2005, 49) points out that in the age of mediated visibility, the visibility of actions and events and the way they are understood by those witnessing them through media have become an inseparable part of the way the events themselves unfold. Nevertheless, for the sake of this research it is important to acknowledge the role of media visibility.

These limitations inevitably have implications on the sort of claims I can make. For my research this means, that the analysis cannot form claims without taking into account that the overall perspectives to Brexit and the border issue have already been selected, and the analysis can only look for the expressions of the border and its visibility in material that is not impartial to the fate of the border. For example, I will not be making the claim that all the visibility to the

border has been created by anti-Brexit actions, as I recognize that pro-Brexit actions and views have most likely not been represented in my data.

4.3.2. Ethics and positionality of the researcher

When it comes to ethics, in a topic such as this it is important to make sure that discourses that support the conflict on either side are not being reproduced. Because identity plays such a great role in the conflict surrounding the border, it is important that I will be careful with the language I use, and that I acknowledge that by using some language I am inherently siding with one side. Reconciliation in Northern Ireland has not been an easy task, and political narratives play a big role, even to the point where concepts such as reconciliation might create more conflict. For Northern Ireland, any success of reconciliation is closely tied to linguistic expressions, since there is an intersection of narratives (Little 2011, 85.) The situation in Northern Ireland is very close to possibly escalating and my duty as a researcher is to make sure anything I produce will not take a side or support the narratives of one side.

Because the terms used in the context of Northern Ireland can sometimes be loaded with meaning, I have chosen to use terms which I hope are as neutral as possible. Instead of calling the border which I am studying "the Irish border" I will be calling it "the border in Ireland". Instead of calling the peace agreement the Belfast Agreement or the Good Friday Agreement, I will be using the term "the 1998 Peace Agreement". This way I hope I can as a researcher avoid supporting a narrative that would only take one side.

When it comes to the positionality, I acknowledge that I have no connections to the border region in Ireland apart from my academic interests towards it. When the results of the Brexit Referendum where announced, the first question that came to my mind was "what happens to Northern Ireland?". This question is what guided me to choose the topic for my research, as I wanted to find out what exactly would happen to Northern Ireland, and especially the border dividing the island of Ireland into two countries. Since this research was started before the UK had officially parted ways with EU, it was not possible to ask the question of what happened to the border *after* Brexit. Instead, as I followed the news stories of protests erupting in Northern Ireland, especially near the border, I became fascinated with the idea of how Brexit had effected

Northern Ireland *before* officially taking place. I further focused the question on the border, as the border question seemed to be at the centre of the demonstration stories I was following.

I come from Finland, which is a country that has lived through periods of intense societal divides. After experiencing a civil war in 1918 the country was divided in political affiliation, something that was embedded into many generations of Finnish people. Only very recently has the memory of the civil war allowed open public conversations of the topic, something which only a few decades ago would have been unheard of. It could easily be argued that my Finland, the one I grew up in has no longer been divided by those political affiliations, but new divides have taken their place. However, I do not think these divides can be compared to what the people of Northern Ireland have gone through during the last hundred years. For me, this is mostly because I have been privileged enough to grow up in a climate, where divides never hindered me in any major way. Moreover I acknowledge that the situation in Northern Ireland and the border region in Ireland is not something that I as a researcher can ever fully grasp and understand. Like acknowledged before, my data often comes from a point of view that is critical towards Brexit, but as someone who is an outsider to the particular situation Brexit creates for the border, I have not disclosed any of my own feelings towards Brexit, and thus not allowed them to effect my analysis.

5. Analysis and discussion

In this analysis section I will be exploring the different ways in which the border has been actualised and that way made more visible during the Brexit negotiation period. I will be doing this by showing examples of the empirical data I have gathered. A link to the piece of data which is discussed can be found on a footnote when the particular piece of data is mentioned for the first time, to help the reader to visualise what is discussed. The analysis will be divided into three separate sections based on three kinds of hypothesis I have made about the ways the border's visibility has increased. The section will begin by exploring how the borders nature as a divider, especially tied to the history of the border as a security barrier, has been highlighted in the empirical data. It will then look at the border as a space, mostly through the border's functions of connecting people in order to explore the way the border has become more visible as a basis for an identity. In the last part of this section the border will be looked as a practice, with a focus on how the performative functions of the border have become more visible.

5.1. What does the border look like? The physical border as divider

In this section I explore how the border has become more visible as a physical divider, especially through different symbols of the state which are often present at borders. By finding examples from the data that was analysed though the methodological framework I will show how the presence of certain expressions of the border have created visibility to the border in this manner.

Even when borders are not always 'at the border' anymore (see: Cooper & Rumford 2017), the border in Ireland remains a fixed place, which can be made more visible with different practices. Since the Brexit Referendum, a large number of demonstrations and protests opposing Brexit have taken place. Many of these demonstrations have been organised by a group called Border Communities Against Brexit (BCAB), who according to their own words are:

"[A] group of people from all sectors – business, community, farming – as well as individuals who have come together out of concern that the North's remain vote will not be respected. We are really worried about the devastating impact that Brexit will have in this region and we want to make sure our voices are heard when decisions are being taken in Dublin, London and

Brussels . . . We know from experience that a hard border in Ireland would create real hardship particularly for people in this region who cross the border on a daily basis" (BCAB, 2020.)

It needs to be noted, however that BCAB, despite their name, do not represent everyone on the border. Some material from their demonstrations suggests that some people partaking are not only opposing Brexit, but supporting for the abolishment of the border completely, in hopes for an united Ireland. Even among the people from the border communities who are strongly against Brexit, or any hardening of the border, there are also people who identify themselves as British and wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom. It might also be the case, that some of the people who oppose changes made to the border in Ireland do not actually oppose Brexit at all. Even when BCAB's protests are making the border more visible, it cannot be assumed that everyone on the border shares their views or messages.

By placing a protest to a certain location, the protesters can take part in the re-negotiation of the visibility of borders (Pellander & Horsti 2017, 163). The demonstrations that have been organised by BCAB have usually taken place in the border area, often at border crossing sites, where members of the communities from both sides of the border have attended them. Because these demonstrations are taking place on the border, it makes the border as a fixed place more visible. By placing the demonstrations on sites that are popular border crossings, it draws attention to the nature of the border as something that is crossed, but it also brings attention to locations that have historical significance.

For example, only months after the Brexit Referendum, in October 2016, as many as 150 protesters gathered at the border between the towns of Belcoo and Blacklion.[5] The protest was organised by BCAB, and it was the first in the area. (Edwards 2016a.) The two towns lie on the border between the counties of Fermanagh in Northern Ireland and Cavan in the Republic. During the Troubles Fermanagh was vulnerable to IRA attacks, because unlike some border areas, it had a substantial Protestant minority, whose civilian activities made them targets for attacks (Patterson 2013a, 42).

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[5] First protest by BCAB

Similarly, in these demonstrations attention has also been drawn to the history of the border as an economic barrier. Back in 2016, a BCAB protest took place in the Old Customs Post[6] in Carrickcarnon, which is located on the road that connects Belfast and Dublin (Edwards 2016b). As part of the demonstration, people set up a mock customs point. The Irish Times article describing the events of the protest show pictures of the set-up of the mock customs point, where the 'customs officers' are wearing outfits similar to those worn by actual customs officers in the past. Using a customs post as a prop for the demonstration again draws attention to the violent history of the border, as the customs post, soon after their establishment in the 1920s, became popular targets of attacks as symbols of partition (Nash, Dennis & Graham 2010, 426). Establishing customs posts was also what made the new border "real" (ibid, 425).

Locations of protests are not the only thing which creates visibility for the history of the border and the separation it has created. Traditionally states aim to keep border visible by placing material symbols such as pillars, flags, fences and signs on the border, in order for the border to perform its purpose (see: van Schendel 2005). What has created visibility for the border in Ireland, especially before the 1998 Peace Agreement have been the physical structures such as army checkpoints and watchtowers, that have had strong symbolic meanings fixed to them (see: Donnan & Wilson 2010). Since the Peace Agreement of 1998 these symbols have been displaced by symbols of cross-border cooperation in order to make the order a shared, neutral space.

Even though these symbols have since been displaced by those of cross-border cooperation in order to make the border a shared and neutral space, during protests these physical structures have been brought back. During a protest in January 2019[7] those organising the demonstration constructed a mock eight-foot wall and an army watchtower as a part of their effort to make "a stand against Brexit, borders and division". There were also actors posing as troops at the mock border. The pictures show men dressed as soldiers with their faces painted with camouflage, holding weapons and guarding the wall that was set up as a part of the protest. (Daly 2019.) As previously discussed, these protests use the same material structures that Donnan and Wilson identify as having a strong fixed symbolic meaning.

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[6] Mock customs point at a BCAB protest
[7] January 2019 protest with mock soldiers and border structures

Donnan and Wilson speak of the symbolic form of the borderlands in Ireland shifting (Donnn & Wilson 2010, 78). This kind of sifting is present at the border also between 2016 and 2020, as new symbolic meanings are connected to the structures set by the protesters. Particularly in the case of the economic barrier structures such as custom posts, since there are now fears of them coming back, they no longer represent only the past, but also what might be to come. In a sense the symbols that are still visible on the border are now symbolising the looming Brexit at the same time with their old symbolic meaning. Physical objects were also brought to the border in October 2019[8], when more than 150 lorry drivers wanted to highlight the importance of free flowing movement over the border by driving a convoy of trucks over the border (Read 2019b). The free movement over the border is important to these drivers, because an estimate of 177 000 heavy goods vehicles and 208 000 light vans cross the border every month (Parliament.uk 2018). Similarly to the staging of a customs check, the act of blocking the border crossing with the tuck creates a barrier on the border, as well as draws visibility to it as a location. At the same time they also bring more symbols of Brexit on the border, as they are communicating their fear of not being able to cross the border freely, which could create long queues at the border.

As the border infrastructure that represented the separation of the Troubles was removed, some of the physical structures were left behind, empty. Charles McQuillan, a Belfast based photojournalist has shot a photo essay titled *Border Ghosts[9]* which shows the border infrastructure left behind after the Peace Agreement of 1998 and also features people who were affected by the Troubles and who still live along the border (McQuillan 2019). Similarly to the symbols of the borders violent past brought to the border by the BCAB protests, the photo essay also makes the border visible through the symbols of its past. But instead of showing the border posts in action like some of the demonstrations have, McQuillan's photos highlight the emptiness of the border by showing the abandoned border structures that have been left from the past. The customs huts or watch towers used to be symbols of the state, but they have been left behind, and they are shown to be old and decaying. They still represent the states presence on the border through establishing a connection to the border's past, but at the same time they highlight that the state no longer present, and the border has been left empty like the structures.

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[8] [Protest staged by lorry drivers](#)
[9] [Border Ghosts](#)

After the Peace Agreement of 1998, scholarly has widely discussed about the border becoming invisible. The idea of the invisibility of the border is also present on the empirical data analysed for this research. Charles McQuillan has also shot an another photo essay relating to the border in Ireland. His 2018 essay titled *Border Lives*[10] shows a series of pictures of people who have a relationship of the border. According to McQuillan, "the most problematic issue with photographing the border is that there is essentially nothing there to photograph". What he wanted to do was shoot the people with the landscapes of the border behind them to show the 'nothingness' of the border. (McQuillan 2018.) McQuillan's work creates visibility to the border by drawing attention to the fact that the border cannot be seen, which is something that can also be seen in other examples from the empirical data, and will be further explored next.

The issue of the visibility, or rather the invisibility, of the border has also been addressed in BBC Northern Irelands *Soft border patrol,* which is a comedy show based around the notion of the border in the Brexit context. The writing process of the show was inspired by the border discussion on media during the Brexit negotiations (Christie 2018). One of the short skis titled "Just a plank"[11] shows a farmer, who has put up a piece of wood on the ground over where the border is in order to get across to take care of vermin in the bushes. For a member of the Soft Border Patrol however, this is a problem because the farmer could "have an accidental immigration" because "there is no demarcation". (´Hearts and Minds´ 2018.) Behind the farmer only open fields is seen, which highlights a very similar emptiness as the McQuillan photographs in *Border Lives*.

What is implied in this skit through the use of humour, is that demarcations of borders are what make them tangible, and that in order for a border to exist, it has to be made visible. This is very similar to Newman's (2006) idea of demarcation of borders being not only the act of drawing the border, but the process of determining the borders' functions as a barrier. At the same time it plays into the discussion of illegality and flows across the border, which has been one way the border has been presented as a security issue for the UK. However, like Hayward (2020) states, the border in Ireland is not a line of immigration control, and it "disrupts the Brexitian conception of the British state" (Hayward 2020, 274). This disconnect between the security/control dimension of the border which is associated with Brexit, and the everyday

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[10] Border Lives
[11] Youtube video of Just a Plank

dimension of the border as something people are constantly crossing to attend their daily business is highlighted in "Just a plank".

The show also takes note of the unmarked nature of the border in another skit where the Soft Border Patrol encounters a group of activists who are "moving the border"[12] little by little each day in order to unite the nine counties of Ulster. At the end of the skit it is revealed, that the men were moving the sign into the wrong direction. ('The Eyes of The World' 2018.) What is implied in this skit, is that the existence of the border is merely brought into being by the sign that marks the border. If the sign would be moved, so would the border, because the border has no other form than the one tied to the presence of a sign.

What is interesting about the joke at the end about the men moving the sign into the wrong direction the whole time, is that it seems to imply two different realities on the border. On one hand, the border is so invisible and insignificant for the daily life of people, that it can be moved by moving the sign without anyone noticing, as it does not actually have presence in the daily lives of people. At the same time, however, the concept or the *idea* of the border is so important to these men, that they are attempting to move its location to where they want it. This goes to show that the location of the border is important, even when it cannot be seen or felt. A similar idea is expressed by Donnan and Wilson (2010, 57), who note that the symbols of a political frontier are often ambiguous, but make the border a reality for those who can recognise the symbols, which is why the visibility of the border is in "the eye of the beholder".

Reflecting back to "Just a plank", we could say that the idea of the border being in the "eye of the beholder" is actually expressed there the exact opposite way. The farmer does not "see" the border, because it is so closely tied to his every day experiences and he is dependent on crossing it daily. Simultaneously, the border officer symbolising Brexit "sees" the border as something very concrete that is located at its exact spot so, that if someone from the other side crosses it even accidentally, what results would be an immigration. This aligns with the traditional view of borders as physical, visible boundaries that separate spaces (see: Newman 2006).

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[12] Youtube video of Moving the Border

The people who live near the border have been able to communicate their relationship with the border through more than just the organised demonstrations. *Across and In-Between*[13] was an art installation by artist Suzanne Lacy, and it was commissioned by 14-18 NOW and Belfast International Arts Festival in 2018. It was created together with the communities from both sides of the border in Ireland, and it explored the impact the border has on the lives of people who live on it "during a time of intense internal focus around Brexit" (Lacy 2018). A part of this project was a "Border People's Parliament", which consisted of people from border communities who had participated in the other parts of the art project. The Border People's Parliament produced a written document titled the *Yellow Manifesto: A true account of the border and its people*[14] where they expressed their feelings over the border's future. (Belfast International Arts Festival 2018.)

The around 150 people taking part to the Parliament were asked to consider their lives on the borderlands of Ireland, and given postcards to write their thoughts and feelings. The cards were then collected and the Manifesto document was produced by author Garrett Carr, who was assisting Lacy in the production. Carr has shared some pictures of the original cards that people taking part in the project wrote[15]. One picture shows a card that says "*It's only divisive when you physicalize it*", (Carr 2018) which, too, reflects the idea that the border is not visible beyond its physical markers. The idea that the physical border is invisible, and is only being brought into reality with markers that are not connected to the essence of the border is also reflected in the final Yellow Manifesto document:

"*Keep the border invisible and confined to maps.*" (The Yellow Manifesto 2018).

Drawing back to the hypothesis that was presented at section 3.1. it can be seen that the border has indeed become more visible as a physical thing, especially through the symbols that have been associated with the security situation on the border region after the partition of Ireland. Protests on the border have created visibility to the location of the border, some of which have been historically significant, which has again brought forwards the symbols of the borders' past. The idea of the border as a barrier has been highlighted in the demonstrations that have placed security structures on the border. In demonstrations were the people partaking organised

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[13] Across and In-Between
[14] The Yellow Manifesto
[15] Carr's blogpost containing the mentioned picture

a customs check point, they made the border a barrier again by stopping cars for a customs search.

What was not evident in the empirical data, was the border's visibility as a separator of 'us' and 'them'. The border did become visible as a barrier, through the placement of material elements, and the questioning of the physical nature of the border, but the symbols of the border's divisive nature were often tied to the past of the border. The symbols of the state that were present at the border were not new symbols of state sovereignty, but old symbols which those who oppose Brexit found ways to re-use and assign new meanings to. What was remaining of the old security structures was also highlighted through the photography of McQuillan, but those photos actually highlighted the invisibility of the state at the border rather than the visibility, as it showed the security structures as abandoned and empty.

A strong everyday dimension of the border was present in the empirical data, especially as a contrast to a traditional geographical understanding of borders as physical and visible creators of difference. At the border, the idea of Brexit was very closely tied to the traditional understanding, which was then shown as contrasting to the everyday experience of the border. In this way, the border did become visible as a physical divider, but it did more so though the idea that the border was *not* a physical divider in real life, and that its visibility and entire existence in terms of security and sovereignty was only tied to the material expressions of the border, or the fact that on a map the border could be visualised as a line. Expressions such as "it's only divisive if you physicalize it" communicate that the border cannot be understood in terms of traditional theory about borders as markers of state sovereignty.

5.2. Whose border? The border as a shared space

In this section I explore how the border in Ireland has become more visible as a place, especially a connective and shared space which can provide a basis for a common identity, which is shaped around the experience of the border. The visibility of the Irish border will be explored in the context of a place of connection and encounter (see: Cooper & Rumford 2013), instead of a divider. In the context of the border in Ireland, the ability of the border to act as a bridge has been especially significant, as research has shown that after the Peace Agreement the border was configured as a bridge instead of a barrier (see: McCall 2011).

The border can be seen as a space through exploring the connective functions of borders. There seems to be especially one place where the border has been configured as a bridge as a way to comment on Brexit; on the actual bridge which separates the two bordering countries of Fermanagh in the North and Cavan in the South that sits between the villages of Blacklion and Belcoo. The two villages were separated by customs blocks and border security during the Troubles, but within the villages there has been a strong desire to rebuild cross-community relationships despite the memory of the Troubles (Walsh et al. 2012, 352). As a part of the Belcoo festival in August, 2017, a Belfast born artist Rita Duffy exposed her art installation titled *Soften the Border*[16] on the Belcoo/Blacklion bridge. As a part of the installation, the bridge was decorated by crochet projects made by the women from the area. According to the artist, the aim of this project was to make the border appear soft, colourful and comfortable for the duration of the festival. (Cathcart 2017.) A similar act of making the border appear welcoming took place on the same bridge in September 2019. A long-table seating 150 people was placed on the Belcoo/Blacklion bridge, in an event organised by The Irish Food Champions[17]. The dinner served was a traditional Irish dish of boxty, which was made from potatoes from both sides of the border. (Digby 2019.) Like *Soften the Borders*, this event also highlighted the borders function as a bridge by taking place on the connecting bridge.

According to Cooper and Rumford (2013), border monuments and public art situated on borders or near them can celebrate cultural encounters and the ability of borders to connect. Projects and events like the ones mentioned above create visibility to the functions of the border as a connector instead of a separator, as it makes the border crossing appear welcome. With art, even difficult problems can be addressed in a light way, which can have the viewers more open to listening to problems others may have (Giudice 2015, 247). It is also important to pay attention to Soften the Border, which was produced by women from both sides of the border. The act of these women bringing visibility to the border as a space can be tied to the ideas of the everyday and how it ties to feminism (see: Enloe 2011). Women according to a report, are more vulnerable against possible economic downturn brought on by Brexit due to the restricted participation at the labour market, the burden placed on women by the gendered division of labour in the private section as well as welfare dependency (Women's Regional Consortium 2017, 26). Women also commonly cross the border to access pregnancy health care, which

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[16] Soften the Border
[17] Irish Food Champions event

would also be more difficult, in case there are any restrictions on border mobility (Galligan 2019, 369).

At the same time it highlights the fact that even though the bridge crosses the borderline, the bridge itself is a tangible place enjoyed by the community on both sides. By joining together on the bridge, the people from the border region are gathered on the border space which does not 'belong' to either side more than the other. These events highlight the concept of a bridge in two ways. In one hand, the physical bridge is highlighted by colourful and eye-catching art, or by an event which celebrates the culture of the area by bringing people together. On the other hand it also highlight the symbolic bridge between the people of the two border villages, who were invited to collaborate on the artwork and the dinner. What has been described here can be tied to Cooper and Rumford's (2013) idea of monumentalising the border as a connective.

From the borders ability to transform into a place, it is natural to move and look at the border region as a borderland, where the people might share the identity of a borderlander. The border in Ireland can be seen as a liminal space, where different people have tried to fix its meaning to suit their political, ideological or economic agenda (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 78).

Like already discussed earlier in this research, researchers such as Teague (2019) have found that Brexit has already brought forward a sense of mistrust in the nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland. According to Tonge and Gomez (2015), until the emergence of a common shared Northern Irish identity, the country is divided with rival national affiliations; a rival identification scenario might continue to outweigh a broader sense of national community. However, while not disagreeing with this, Nash and Reid (2010) note that politics and residential segregation in Northern Ireland still reflects the old identity categories of religion and political affiliation, but the experience of the impact of the border might be a basis for a new sense of identity.

The empirical data that was reviewed for this research seems to imply that there is also an identity aspect to Brexit that has not been widely research in this context. Boundaries can be understood as a part of the narratives that construct social groups and their identities, highlighting borders as exclusive constituents of identity (see: Paasi 2005). It would appear that in the context of Brexit, the border in Ireland has not performed in this way, at least not only this way, as instead of highlighting the difference of people's relationship to the border,

Brexit has highlighted people's similarity in relation to the border. Of the border communities, living in the counties that are at the border, many are becoming together as one, against Brexit and its possible hardening effect on the border.

The empirical evidence seems to suggest that an identity that has been prominent in the Brexit context, especially in demonstrations, is a "border identity". A very prominent way this identity has been on the front line has been the BCAB group, which even has the words "border community" in its name. The people who are the border communities are people who live on the border area, but from the name it does not become clear whether the individuals in this community are Irish or British, or whether they come from Northern Ireland of the Republic. Even though it was established earlier that not everyone on the border shares the message of BCAB or is represented by them, it can still be argued that their demonstrations have brought visibility to the idea of a 'border community'. The people identifying as border communities can be looked as a transboundary community, since they do not have a strong borderline between them (see: Rytövuori-Apunen 2017). What is important to the communities living on the border is that the borderline between them, that being the physical land border in Ireland, continues to be weak like it has been after the Peace Agreement of 1998.

A good example of the prominence of a border identity was presented in a protest that was held in March, 2019 on the bridge between Blacklion and Belcoo by the locals from these villages, who were protesting to demand the UK government to hear the voices of the border communities[18]. The Irish World article describing the events of the demonstration notes:

> *"They identified themselves not as from County Cavan, the Republic of Ireland or County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland, nor indeed as from the province of Ulster, which encompasses but as 'from the Border."* (Prescott 2019).

It is common to many of these protests, that the locals claim the purpose to be to remind people what the border used to look like, or what it could look like after customs checks would be put in place as a result of Brexit. This shows that even though the border has become less present in people's lives through debordering practices set in place after the 1998 Peace Agreement, the border has remained a central concept in local consciousness and border imaginaries of

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[18] March 2019 protest

those who live on the border (see: Cassidy et al. 2018). By identifying as border communities the people living close to the border create visibility by simply naming themselves as border communities. These communities, especially BCAB have been present on the media throughout the time frame, which draws attention to the group and by doing that it also draws attention to the border itself.

In 2010 Nash and Reid suggested that developments at the border in Ireland reflect "possibilities of a new collective cross-border and cross-community identities based on shared experiences of the border and more complex senses of difference" (Nash & Reid 2010, 280). These shared experiences included things such as struggling to deal with road closures during the Troubles, which often resulted in them being cut off socially from those on the other side of the border, feelings of being unfairly associated with violence, and a sense of neglect and isolation from their respective governments. People on the borderlands described a lack of general understanding of what it meant to live near the border from those who live further away. (Nash & Reid 2010.)

The fears of the border communities have also been voiced in other ways as well. Carr, the author who worked with Susan Lacy as a part of the *Across and In-Between-* project on the Border People's Parliament highlights how united the people taking part in the project were in their wishes for the border to stay open. (Carr 2018). Very similar ideas to those Nash and Reid present in their research are also present in the Yellow Manifesto.

In the fourth point of the Yellow Manifesto the border communities express:

"[We know h]ow to get along with neighbours even when out views are opposed. We don't fit the stereotypes" (The Yellow Manifesto 2018).

This reflects the same kind of feelings of being associated with the border's violent past, that Nash and Reid (2010) discuss. This suggests that those living on the border who identify as the border communities still feel like they are only being associated with the violent past. Projects such as the Yellow Manifesto can create visibility to the border as a definer of an identity. At the same time they also highlight the nature of the border as a common space, by emphasising the people from the border as a "we". The people who took place in the project were from the border counties on both sides of the border, and according to Carr, while they did not always

agree on their stances on Brexit itself, they agreed on what was important for the future of the border (Carr 2018).

A similar sense of exclusion and lack of understanding is felt in relation to Brexit, which is visible in the data. These demonstrations that have been held after the Brexit Referendum have all shared a similar goal of highlighting to those who are not from the borderlands, of how Brexit, especially a hard border, would affect those living at the border. A main fear that is often highlighted during these demonstrations is the fear of possible restrictions to movement across the border with the return of check points and other border infrastructure. These are all things that again relate very closely to the everyday dimension of the border, and have shaped the local consciousness of the border.

The people partaking in the Parliament express how important crossing the border is for them in the third point of the Manifesto:

> *"We value our ability to live and work in either jurisdiction. Many of us cross the border daily."* (The Yellow Manifesto 2018.)

By stating this, the Manifesto brings visibility to the everyday dimension of the border, which is very similar as Hayward and Komorova's findings in 2019 about crossing the border being more like a way of life than simply an act of travelling. In a similar fashion the people worried about border checks have spoken of very mundane things, like wanting to walk your dog at the border, or visit your grandparents on the other side of the border without needing a passport (Garry et al. 2018, 22).

Besides the Border People's Parliament, *Across and In-Between* also contained a film titled *The Yellow Line,*[19] which showed over 300 residents from the border communities of Fermanagh, Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan dressed in yellow essentially creating a yellow line across the borderlands (Moriarty 2018). The film highlights the sense of the border as a space, as it shows the people partaking existing in open fields and landscape, instead of on a defined border line. To borrow ideas from the previous section of this chapter, the only way the film

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[19] Trailer for The Yellow Line

communicates where the border line is, is by having the people physically stand on it. Without the people present on the line, it is nothing but open landscape.

The Yellow Line also highlights the border identity which exists outside the political identities. The choice of using the colour yellow is one way to show the unity of the borderlands as opposed to the conflicting identities that are usually attached to Northern Ireland and the border. According to Lacy the use of yellow allows the idea of the border to be looked at without assigning politics to it, by not using orange, green, red or blue (Lacy 2018, quoted by Moriarty). According to Giudice (2015, 247) art can also be involved in the configuration of identities through the emotional involvement it can provoke. The *Yellow Line* will be further explored in the next section of this research.

Of course the strong sense of a "border identity" does not mean that there is no more opposing identities present in the border region of the border in Ireland. The absence of strong nationalist/unionist or English/Irish identity in the empirical data does not mean that scholarly has been wrong about the deepening divide between the Northern Irish identities, nor does it mean that there are no expressions of such identities even among those who live on the border. What it highlights, instead, seems to be what research on borderlands and identity has argued; that national and ethnic identities around borders can be configured differently than elsewhere in the state (see: Donnan & Wilson 1999). The events that have created visibility to the border as a space and that way created visibility to the border as a basis of identity have not highlighted the participants' pre-existing identities as nationalist/unionist or English/Irish, but invited the people to explore what could possibly connect them: the experience of the border.

Like the hypothesis in section 3.2. assumes, the border has become visible as a common ground, and a basis for a shared space and a shared identity. This corresponds well with the message of BCAB, about Brexit and a hardening of the border in Ireland having profound impacts on the border communities, in ways that they will not have on the communities living elsewhere in the UK or Ireland. By drawing attention to the identity of one from the border that is shared by some, visibility is created to the border itself as a connective space. The findings made in this chapter support previous research which suggests that there is a sense of shared identity developing in Northern Ireland and the border region around the experience of the border, which is again strongly tied to the everyday dimension of the border, which is very separate

from the experiences of those who do not inhabit the borderlands. Placing installations on the border or organising community events on it highlights the way borders are not just lines on maps, but have their own space. In this space, some of the people who share the experience of living near the border, have expressed signs of a borderland identity, which has its basis in not only experiencing the border, but also experiencing Brexit, or at least the uncertainty of it. Considering the idea of the everyday as the meeting point of the higher and lower activities (see: Summa 2020), the visibility of the border not only as a place overall, but also in the context of the everyday dimension of the border has heightened. The border communities who have chosen to voice their Brexit concerns have highlighted the importance of the border as something that is open, because of the tremendous effect restrictions to mobility would have on their daily lives. The everyday aspect becomes even more visible, when looking at the power imbalance that affects the border communities due to the border's overall economic vulnerability as well as the specific vulnerabilities faced by women.

5.3. How is the border made? The performative aspects of the border

In this section I explore how the border in Ireland has become more visible through the concept of performativity. I will explore how the border has been embodied and performed, but also on who performs the border.

The most visible actions which highlighted the performativity of the border, came in the way of the BCAB demonstrations. Thinking about performances as a whole, there is also a performative aspect to social movements. A social movement could be defined as "a form of acting in public, a political performance which involves representation in dramatic form, as movements engage emotions inside and outside their bounds attempting to communicate their message" (Eyerman 2006, 193). The people opposing Brexit, especially BCAB, can be categorised as a social movement by this definition. The demonstrations organised by a social movement can be studies as performances of opposition, as they dramatize the movement through acts which communicate their message beyond the movement itself (Eyerman 2006, 197).

BCAB has organised multiple demonstrations throughout the time frame, out of which many had a performative element even beyond the performance of opposition. Many of the

demonstrations included a part where protestors set up some sort of fake border crossings. In this this way their performances connect to border performativity, and work to bring visibility to the performative aspects of the border in Ireland.

In October 2016, in the first ever protest BCAB organized, a mock customs point was set up in the border town of Carrickarnon, including a physical structure of a border check point, a signs and even a dressed officer (Edwards 2016b). In a BCAB protest set on the date that was originally supposed to be the date for UK's exist, a border crossing was also staged, with mock Customs Officers and armed soldiers stopped traffic to ask similar questions that border officers actually asked the passing cars when the border was an economic barrier. One lorry carrying livestock to Northern Ireland via the bridge was even stopped because there was no proper documents. (Prescott 2019.) The January 2019 protest with the mock wall and soldiers already mentioned in the first section of the analysis also had a great performative element to it. According to a spokesperson from BCAB, it was important to re-enact the functions of a border checkpoint to show people how the checkpoints used to look. The pictures from the demonstration also show actions such as knocking down the constructed mock wall with a hammer. (Daly 2019.)

The action of knocking down the wall with a hammer can be seen as a sort of representation of the knocking down of the Berlin Wall, which was an act of performing the unmaking of a border (see: Coplan 2012). The connection to the Berlin Wall is further highlighted by images from the coverage of the protest from The New European[20]. This article shows that the wall the protesters constructed as a part of the demonstration is made from similar concrete blocks that were also used in the Berlin Wall. In a similar fashion to the Berlin Wall, the wall at the protest was decorated by anti-Brexit and anti-border slogans such as "NO BORDER HERE" or "Say No To Brexit". (Read 2019a.)

This does not only show that the border has become more visible in relation to Brexit, it shows that the nationalist effort to unite Ireland has also become more visible through the border performances at the protests. The Berlin Wall as the most visible symbol of the Iron Curtain is seen a symbol for the division of Germany (Saunders 2009, 11). Making connections between the border in Ireland and the Berlin Wall draws attention to the fact that for nationalists, the

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[20] Images of the protest with the Berlin Wall- like structures

border is seen as a symbol for the division of Ireland. Making the border more visible through the performance of physically knocking it down makes visible the wish for an united Ireland. However, like previously explained, it is very important to note that all of those who oppose Brexit or a hard border are not nationalists.

These protests can be seen as a re-enactment of the kind of border performativity that maintain borders (see: Coplan 2012; Donnan &Wilson 2010). The border becomes visible and actualised in these protests, even when the actions themselves are performed by the protestors and not real state officials. In the case of the Blacklion/Belcoo bridge or Carrickcarnon, the protesters are performing the actual functions of the border, on the actual border crossing locations. In this way their performance of the border also maintains the separation of the interior from exterior (see Kaiser 2012). Them performing the actions from actual history of the border also highlights the performative side of the border during the conflict. The performative of the separation gets emphasised if we look at the border as not just the border that separates the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, but also a separator between the inside and outside of the European Union, which could be the case if border checks are brought on the border after the transition period is over.

The demonstration itself is already a performance of opposition, but the demonstrations organized by BCAB themselves also contain a dramatic performance or border crossing or border enforcement, which connect the performance of opposition to border performativity.

During the Brexit negotiation period the border has been performed in many ways by different art installations taking place on the border. The biggest of these installations was a part of the already mentioned *Across and In-Between* project, a short film called *The Yellow Line.* The film shows the project, where over 300 people from the border region dressed in yellow formed a line on the landscape. According to the artist:

> *"Across and In-Between generated a response by over 300 border residents interrogating a line on a landscape with a collective, metaphorical act of 'drawing and erasing.' In five rural regions where the borderline between Northern Ireland and Ireland is indiscernible, residents engaged in playful construction of unique 'actions' expressing their various sentiments and hopes for the future of their region."* (Lacy 2018.)

There is a very specific performative element to this installation. The film and pictures of this project are not simply about people creating a line in a landscape, but the people from the border are creating and then erasing the border through their actions. This can be tied to Butler's idea of performativity, as performative politics can bring a situation into being through language or other forms of media (Butler 2013, 102).

There have also been other art installations that have taken place on the border. As a part of the 2018 Arts Over Borders festival[21], which consists of multiple smaller art festivals, an installation called *Walking for Waiting for Godot* took place on at a border crossing point, by a sculpture of a tree placed on the borderline. After walking to the crossing point, the audience was invited to sit in a circle around the sculpture so, that half of them were in Northern Ireland, half in the Republic of Ireland. Actors then arrived to perform the play *Waiting for Godot* by the Irish writer Samuel Beckett. The play itself is about waiting for something, but it never happens. In another installation a chess board with pieces was placed on the bridge that crosses the border in the village of Pettigo, with the black and white pieces placed on the opposite sides of the border allowing visitors to play. (Kennedy 2018.)

The choice of putting on *Waiting for Godot* highlights the uncertainty which is felt in the border areas because of Brexit, as similarly than in the play, back in 2018 there was great uncertainty over when exactly Brexit will take place. As the people experienced the wait for Godot as a part of the art installation, they also symbolically took part in the performance of waiting for Brexit, as they sat directly on the border, waiting for something uncertain to happen. Performing borders though theatre can affect the ways in which borders are perceived and imagined, and the performance can offer new was to understand border construction, and the experiences of the locals on the borders (Gualtieri 2015, 234).

The art installations that have been described are not border performances in the sense that they perform sovereignty or power, or enforce the border through the actions of state officials. However deriving from what Salter (2011) says about border performativity, the border is performed by enacting and resisting the narratives of the state. When the people who participate in these art installations on the border, they are enacting the narrative of the kind of border they wish to have, which is easily crossed and can be used as a space of coming together. At the

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[21] Description of the mentioned art installations

same time the people partaking in art at the border are resisting the narratives of the border which the pro-Brexit movement is trying to enforce (see: Hayward 2020). It is then very easy to connect also the expressions of the border explored in this chapter very strongly to the everyday dimension of the border in Ireland.

This could also be connected to Coplan's (2012) idea of the performative aspect of unmaking borders, as Lacy herself also mentions the participants of *The Yellow Line* having the power to 'draw and erase' the border as a part of the installation. More of Lacy's installation can also be connected to border performativity:

> *"Our project draws those who live along the often-invisible boundaries between countries into a conversation-metaphoric and literal – on personal and symbolic meanings of this border and by extension all such borders drawn by political forces. The artwork explores inverse paradigms: visible and invisible, official and unofficial, rural and urban, the real border and imagined ones."* (Lacy 2018, quoted by Belfast International Arts Festival.)

When the border is viewed as an event instead of a 'thing', it becomes a performative arena where symbolic messages are exchanged. However, a border performance is not only the national political rituals, but also the performances of those who routinely cross the border. In this way border zones can contain overlapping and contested symbolic meanings, than can even create a sense of belonging (Donnan & Wilson 2010, 75.) It's symbolic meanings like these that Lacy and the people from the border are able to highlight in *The Yellow Line*. The people from the border communities are those who routinely cross the border, thus engaging in the border performance in their daily lives. By creating visibility to their existence through art, the people are also highlighting the performativity of the border. Because the border communities have a personal relationship with and an experience of the border, they also have their ability to make, or unmake, the border as they wish. By using their bodies to form the border line and then erasing it, the people partaking in the installation are negotiating and representing the location of the border, and making it visible and then again invisible (see: Brambilla 2015, 19).

After all, Salter's (2011) third register of border performativity contains the popular performances of the border, which include public contestation over the meaning of the border. The performativity of the border in Ireland has not become more visible by being performed by

the sates of Ireland of the UK, but through the performances of the people who inhabit the border area and who want to be able to engage in the border performance in their own way in the future as well. Here, the gap between the experiences of the border and geopolitical theory focusing on sovereignty (see: Brambilla 2015) really gets highlighted. Even though the demonstrations containing elements of border enforcement, like the customs booths or armed soldiers, the borders is not a performative arena where the state makes the border a boundary (see: Donnan & Wilson 2010), but an arena where the border communities are allowed to perform their own version of the border. If the border agents determine how the border is performed (see: Wonders 2006), projects like *The Yellow Line* are also a border performance.

Arriving to the conclusion, that visibility to border performativity during the Brexit negotiation period has been created by those who inhabit the border region, ties together with the borderscape concept. Approaching borders thought the concept of performativity allows one to understand the way the border is experienced and represented (Brambilla 2015, 28). The people at the border in Ireland by performing their own version of the border, are creating their own representations of the border which embody their experience of the border. Borderscapes can also be connected to idea of borders as 'sites of struggle' (Brambilla 2015, 29).

The idea of border struggles in literature seems to be often tied to the idea of the borders' ability to create inclusion and exclusion (see: e.g. Rajam & Grundy-Warr 2007), which in turn often gets connected to the idea of discursive formation of the category of illegality (see: e.g. DeGenova 2012). However, what is interesting in the case of the border in Ireland, is that what is seen there is the articulation of a very different border struggle. As stated in the second section of this research, one of the major achievements of the Peace Agreement of 1998 was the institutionalisation of the rights of the people in Northern Ireland to the citizenship rights of both or either Britain and Ireland if they wish so. The people articulating the border struggle then, are not migrants, but people who have the right to 'belong' to both sides of the border if they wish to do so. Even if they are people who only choose to claim one national identity, they have under the CTA the right to cross the border whenever they want to.

The people from the border regions, who are taking part in the borderscaping in order to perform the border in their ways are revealing the border as a 'site of struggle', but it is not the struggle for them to cross a border, it is the struggle to at least keep the border as it is, in a state where it is invisible and crossing it is not regulated. Even when some of these people might wish for

the complete removal of the border by calling an united Ireland, not everyone who opposes a hard border is campaigning of an united Ireland at all. They can still articulate their struggle, by campaigning for a border that will remain the same. This is a very concrete way of highlighting the special conditions under which the border in Ireland has always existed, and will continue existing no matter what the outcome of Brexit will be.

As the border in Ireland is in a state of insecurity over its fate once Brexit actually happens, it exhibits the characteristic of a liminal space in a constant transition, where different actors are trying to attach their own meaning to symbols (see: Donnan &Wilson 2010). What this chapter has shown, is that the border communities, though their own border performance, are using not only the symbols of the border but the border itself to attach their own meanings to it. Perhaps an interesting connection can thus be made between the border communities' wish for the border to remain as it is, and the slogan of the pro-Brexit movement: "Taking back control". Where the slogan has been deemed something that would be impossible for Britain to do with Brexit in Northern Ireland (Hayward 2020), the empirical data here shows that in a sense the idea behind the slogan has been overtaken by some of the border communities, which is reflected through how they have performed the border during the Brexit negotiation period.

To return to the hypothesis that were set in section 3.3., the performativity of the border has become more visible. However, what it interesting is the fact that the performances have not been carried out by the state, which is what most literature about border performativity seems to suggest, but by the people who experience the border on an everyday level. Out of the hypothesis made for this section, the everyday dimensions of the borders and their embodiment though performance has been the most visible part of the performativity at the border.

6. Conclusion

It can be said that the 'invisible' border of the post-Peace Agreement era has become visible in many ways during the Brexit negotiation period. This visibility is not tied to administrative changes, as those have not been made yet as this research has been written. However, even though no actions on the future of the border have been taken, it could be said that the border itself has not remained the same.

The border has become more visible as a physical divider, when attention has been drawn to the location of it. At the same time attention has been drawn to specific border crossings, which have a historical significance. Demonstrations on the border have brought back symbols which make the border a security and customs barrier, which has heightened the presence of symbols of the past contestations over the border. However, as these symbols are no longer controlled by the state, new meanings have been attached to them. Traditional understandings of borders as security barriers which are physical lines on maps have been challenged by creating visibility to the invisible nature of the border. Through photography and even a comedy series the idea has been explored that the border is so invisible, that it needs to be physicalised somehow in order for it to become real. This highlights the everyday dimension of the border, which differs from how the idea of Brexit has tried to define UK's borders.

The border has also become visible as a place which connects some of the people from both sides of the border. This visibility has been especially high on the Belcoo/Blacklion bridge, which divides the two border towns. By holding events on the bridge, the borders' functions as a bridge have been highlighted by drawing attention to the actual physical bridge, but more so by drawing attention to the way the border is something that can be shared by people from both sides of the border. What has been very interesting, has been the prominence of a "border identity", something that has been highlighted in previous research a little bit, but not yet in the context of Brexit. This border identity has become very visible during the Brexit negotiation period, and while it does not mean that Brexit has not created a rift between the already existing identities, it shows an interesting point which deserves to be further explored as time goes on. This, too, connects to the everyday dimension of the border, as this identity is not tied to political or religious affiliations as identities in Northern Ireland often are, but to the experience of the border.

The performative functions of the border have also been greatly highlighted throughout the Brexit negotiation period. However, if borders are usually performed by state officials in order to establishes their sovereignty and highlight the separation between 'us' and 'them', this research has shown a very different emphasis on the performative functions of the border. Instead of allowing the border which they inhabit to be performed by state officials, the communities along the border who have been attempting to get their voice heard have taken control of the performative functions of the border in order to show that they do not want a border which restricts the mobility over the border. The border communities have performed the border themselves by a performance of opposition in demonstrations, but also by taking part in art performances on the border, where they have been able to control how the border is made into an border, and then unmade.

A lot of these ways were connected by the way they attempted to make the border visible as something that was beyond or separate from politics. In the context of those who live on the border, this reflects their need to have visibility to the border as not a political issue, but something that has been and still is a part of their daily lives. The border in Ireland has always had a very present everyday dimension to it, which it continued to have over the Brexit negotiation period. The border has shown itself as a place where border struggles are visible, but these are not struggles or legality or immigration control which are usually tied to borders. Instead they are struggles of trying to convey the everyday dimension of the border to the rest of the world.

Even though this research divided the visibility of the border into three sections which all explored the border from different angles, the biggest finding that was made was that all three kinds of visibilities highlighted one type of visibility the most; the visibility of what I called the everyday dimension of the border. When the border was drawn by officials in the 1920s, it cut across existing communities and networks. It was not a border was that established where there was an existing divide between the people, it was established so that it divided people, and it then continued to enforce this divide through customs stops and security checks. The lives of the people living in the borderlands were thus shaped by the border, and they were forced to find ways to exist around it. After the 1998 Peace Agreement, the people on the border continued to live their lives, which relied on the disappearance of the border from view. What has become visible during the Brexit negotiation period is the stark contrast between the willingness the UK and the supporters of Brexit to establish borders as lines which separate

those who are seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the UK, and the need of the ordinary people living in Northern Ireland and the border region to continue existing at the border, which for them is a space where they have always had the right to exercise their freedom of movement, no matter which national identity they have claimed.

A similar observation can be made about the theoretical framework of border studies as a whole; while the three theoretical stands that were explored in this study occur in literature as separate from each other, in real life they are interconnected and do not have such a clear separation between them. A border can be a line on a map, a shared space and something that is embodied through performance simultaneously, especially when it is tied to the everyday dimensions of a border. This shows that purely theoretical discussions of borders can be artificial, and not correspond with the experience of a border in practice.

If we consider this as a research of what has happened after the Brexit Referendum but before Brexit, a very natural follow up to this would be to look at what happens now that Brexit has happened. As I am writing this, there is still time left in the 11 month transition period and no clear direction to what will happen after. In the future we could probably study the true effects of Brexit on the border on all of its aspects. Based on this research it would be interesting to see future research on the activity at the border, and how it highlights the border issue if the border itself changes. I believe that especially focusing on the everyday dimension would be beneficial for understanding just how the border continues to shape lives in Northern Ireland and on the border region.

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