

## (Dis-)Ordering the state: territory in Icelandic statecraft

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DOI:

[10.1111/tran.12154](https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12154)

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*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Clark, J & Jones, A 2016, '(Dis-)Ordering the state: territory in Icelandic statecraft', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12154>

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**(Dis-)Ordering the state: territory in Icelandic statecraft**

Journal:	<i>Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers</i>
Manuscript ID	TIBG-RP-Aug-2015-0088.R2
Manuscript Type:	Regular Paper
Keywords:	political technology, state periodization, modern geopolitical imagination, material territory, State
Abstract:	<p>Foucault and Lefebvre’s writings have rekindled interest among geographers in territory-state relations, with recent work conceptualising territory as a state strategy to control space, and on the state as a socionatural relation. However, what is lacking is how these debates intersect with post-human understandings of nature’s materialities, and how the resulting ‘material territory’ mediates state periodization. Drawing on a case study of Iceland, we address this issue to show how pre-modern territorialisation shaped state territorialities, and how state periodization arises from political order imbricating with the materialities of territory. The originality of the work is threefold. First is to show how territory as a material category resists or reinterprets political ordering through longitudinal examination of a single case. Second is to reconceptualise state periodization as an evolutionary material-political, as much as socio-economic, process. Third is to establish empirically the unacknowledged tensions between the state’s use of territory to order ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ affairs. We analyse the implications of a material conception of territory for state periodization and for wider understandings of contemporary statecraft. The state is revealed as a site of multiple territorialities in space, and territorial multiplicities over time.</p>

## (Dis)Ordering the state: territory in Icelandic statecraft

### Abstract

Foucault and Lefebvre's writings have rekindled interest among geographers in territory-state relations, with recent work conceptualising territory as a state strategy to control space, and on the state as a socionatural relation. However, what is lacking is how these debates intersect with post-human understandings of nature's materialities, and how the resulting 'material territory' mediates state periodization. Drawing on a case study of Iceland, we address this issue to show how pre-modern territorialisation shaped state territorialities, and how state periodization arises from political order imbricating with the materialities of territory. The originality of the work is threefold. First is to show how territory as a material category resists or reinterprets political ordering through longitudinal examination of a single case. Second is to reconceptualise state periodization as an evolutionary material-political, as much as socio-economic, process. Third is to establish empirically the unacknowledged tensions between the state's use of territory to order 'domestic' and 'foreign' affairs. We analyse the implications of a material conception of territory for state periodization and for wider understandings of contemporary statecraft. The state is revealed as a site of multiple territorialities in space, and territorial multiplicities over time.

**Key words:** Territory, political technology, 'material territory', state periodization, modern geopolitical imagination

### Introduction

There is renewed interest in human geography in the state as a relational form. Recent studies have proposed novel perspectives on the state as object (Meehan *et al.* 2013), foregrounded improvisation in bringing the state into being (Jeffrey 2012), and examined the mundane spatialities by which 'the state effect' is realised (Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006). Much of this work builds upon post-structural accounts that excavate the historical roots and spatial foundations of statecraft (Foucault 1991, 2007; Lefebvre 2009).

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5 In explaining the state's apparent stability, geographers have drawn attention to the territorial  
6 rationalities underpinning its presence. Thus Hannah (2000), Murphy (2002) and Hakli (2008) focus  
7 upon the institutions that embed state territory domestically, while Moisió and Paasi (2013a)  
8 emphasise the geoeconomic imperatives of state space. Another approach, developed by Brenner and  
9 Elden (2009), is to historicize territory as a technology comprising discursive and calculative  
10 techniques of spatial management that evolve through time. As Elden (2010a, 2013a) demonstrates,  
11 this approach is fecund with analytical possibilities.  
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21 Here we seek to contribute to this aspect of the state debate in geography. Building on Brenner and  
22 Elden's contributions on territory, and work on the state as a socionatural relation (Bridge 2013a,  
23 Parenti 2015) whereby nature is rendered inseparable from political processes, we identify substantive  
24 new areas for research. First is to progress understanding of how territory's materialities imbricate  
25 with state strategies of spatial control. Following the post-human turn in geography, we contend these  
26 materialities resist or reinterpret these strategies, limiting territory's governability. Secondly, struggles  
27 between territory as political ordering and what we term 'material territory' require reconceptualising  
28 state periodization (Brenner 2009) as an evolutionary material-political as much as socio-economic  
29 process. Thirdly, a material territory has consequences for statecraft when it is used to orchestrate  
30 'domestic' and 'foreign' policy domains. For while territory affords opportunities for political  
31 ordering, we contend its protean qualities can also disrupt or unravel state presence. This paper's  
32 contribution to geography is to thus to connect literatures on territory-state relations and post-human  
33 understandings of territory with work on state periodization. We show state periodization matters to  
34 these debates as it charts how the material-political struggles over territory become encoded over time  
35 as pre-modern and modern state architectures.  
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54 The empirical case examined is Iceland, a country overlooked by scholars interested in the state's  
55 territorial production (though see Ingimundarson 1999, 2015). Thus while research exists on  
56 landscape's role in shaping Icelandic national identity, much less consideration has been given to  
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3 territory as a political technology. We show how Icelandic state presence emerged from particular  
4 pre-modern local, colonial and latterly national configurations of political order with territory's  
5 materialities. In the process, attempts to impose territorial meaning domestically have, we argue, also  
6 been foundational rationalisations for Iceland's projection globally. Since becoming a republic in  
7 1944, territory's constitutive relation with the state has embroiled Iceland in the "modern geopolitical  
8 imagination" (Agnew 2003, 3).  
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17 Material territory emerges as a fissile political quantity, with fixities and mobilities that alternately  
18 support and undermine state presence. By analysing the push-back of territory's materialities against  
19 statecraft in 'domestic' and 'foreign' affairs, we demonstrate its capacity for political mobilisation and  
20 its limits as a political technology. This has proved highly problematic for Icelandic foreign policy:  
21 for while territory has furnished the state with domestic presence, this quality has not always been  
22 compatible with building scaled relations beyond the state.  
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31 The argument proceeds as follows. First we examine the growing literature on the territory-state  
32 relation in geography, as a basis for exploring the role of material territory in the emergence of states.  
33 We then analyse the co-evolution of material territory with pre-modern and modern state forms  
34 through four periodization episodes, identifying how this co-evolutionary process has been mediated  
35 by local and at-a-distance political relations and practices, and by material territory's unruliness  
36 perforating human attempts to impose political order. While latterly state territorialities have been  
37 fundamental to stabilising Icelandic presence, this has not been unproblematic, with political tensions  
38 arising from using territory to order the 'domestic' and the 'foreign'. The conclusions consider the  
39 implications of the case study for wider understandings of state periodization, and for examining  
40 territory more generally in contemporary statecraft.  
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#### 54 **Territory and the state**

55 A growing body of scholarship confirms territory's importance in reifying the state (Agnew 2013;  
56 Moisiso and Paasi 2013b; Murphy 2013; Paasi 1996). However, the means by which state and territory  
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3 imbricate is unclear. Paasi (2004, 275; emphasis added) perceptively frames the underlying  
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5 conundrum by noting that “territory...refer[s] to classifying and controlling things and ideas in  
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7 material and metaphysical spaces...*it is located in the fuzzy area that brings patterns of nature and*  
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9 *culture together*”.

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13 Three approaches to this conundrum are evident in the academic literature. From the perspective of  
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15 *territory as a state strategy*, Brenner and Elden (2009) explore Lefebvre’s work to show territory’s  
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17 importance to state evolution. Elden (2010*a* and *b*) develops this argument through historical  
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19 examination of territory as a “political technology”: that is, a suite of “techniques for measuring and  
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21 controlling” the world (Elden 2010*a*, 799). Conceptualising territory in this way as a “technology of  
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23 state formation” (Strandsbjerg 2015, 4) compliments earlier work on the state as a relational and  
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25 material entity (Abrams 1988; Mitchell 1991). This corpus highlights ‘the state’ as an ensemble of  
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27 political relations, objects and things in continual flux, identifying creative tensions that require  
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29 political ordering to reify “the state as an effect” (Mitchell 1991, 94). These orderings range from  
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31 mundane practices requiring work and effort (Painter 2006, 2010) to highly formalised “state  
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33 projects” (Jessop 1990, 9). Crucially Elden confirms the pervasive role of territory as political strategy  
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35 in anchoring these disparate activities, thereby enabling state control to be rooted in the everyday.  
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39 A second strand of research meanwhile conceptualises the state as *a socio-natural relation*, where  
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41 technologies are used less to exercise state power over space than to render nature as resources for  
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43 capitalist accumulation (Bridge 2013*a*). As Parenti (2015, 830) reflects, “the modern state delivers  
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45 non-human nature to [capitalist] accumulation...through its place-based property regimes; its  
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47 production of infrastructure; and its scientific and intellectual practices that make bio-physical reality  
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49 economically...accessible”. As well as facilitating resource exploitation, this enables nature to be  
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51 framed territorially as ‘the environment’; in doing so, the state and environment become inextricably  
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53 intertwined.  
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3 A third tranche of work is now emerging that seeks to explore territory and the state from a post-  
4 human/‘more-than-natural’ perspective. This advances nature as constituted from diverse  
5 materialities, with quasi-agential properties (Bakker and Bridge 2006; Whitehead *et al.* 2007; Bennett  
6 2010). It follows that territory as land, sea, and air may resist or facilitate mobilisation as state  
7 technology, as nature continually unsettles political calibration for human-defined ends. Although the  
8 resulting tensions between territory as political technology and as a material and relational entity are  
9 now being examined (eg. Squire 2015; Boyce 2016 and the burgeoning work on elemental  
10 geographies (Jackson and Fannin 2011), the broader longitudinal effect on state development has not  
11 been considered. We posit the concept of a ‘material territory’ as a means of addressing this gap.  
12 Unlike the portrayal of the state as a socio-natural relation, material territory foregrounds nature’s  
13 mutabilities as continually challenging state imaginaries and practices of spatial power. It thus  
14 encompasses the ceaseless interplay over time between political strategies to stabilise the  
15 geographical spaces of the state and the ructions and reinventions of these strategies prompted by  
16 territory’s physical, visceral and place-based specificities. The concept thus critiques reductionist  
17 ontologies of territory as space over which political power is unconditionally exercised, asserting  
18 instead its historical emergence from human and post-human multiplicities. From this viewpoint,  
19 alongside capital accumulation, it is inevitable that a ‘material territory’ is a significant driver of  
20 statecraft and of state periodization, defined by Brenner (2009, 134) as “how the various phases of  
21 [state] development are to be understood and differentiated from one another”.

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43 This raises questions of how a material territory might figure in periodization. In particular, how do  
44 distinctive “architectures of state scalar organization” (Brenner 2009, 134) arise from material  
45 territory mediating/being mediated by political ordering at different times and in different spaces?  
46 This requires analysis both of territorial *fixities* – attempts to order politically its materialities and  
47 mutabilities – as well as its *mobilities* (its circulations, material flows and imaginations), and how  
48 these play out in ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ domains. Instructive here is recent work by Brighenti  
49 (2014, 16) who observes how “the making of a territory entails the imagination and creation of a  
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3 relational programme between living beings, the script of an encounter, a project which comes to be  
4 inscribed into or projected onto specific materials”.

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9 In conjunction with post-human reevaluations of territory, this helps identify the state as a “relational  
10 programme” that orchestrates over time materialities and imaginations of territory domestically and  
11 internationally for political effect, while recognising the concomitant and unpredictable effects of  
12 material territory in reworking this programme. In turn, this suggests limits to governability of  
13 territory not just in the domestic sphere, but also as discourses and practices of statecraft and  
14 diplomacy. For as Sassen (2013, 23) observes, “Territory takes on more formats than that of the  
15 national”, because its historical-geographical and material qualities exceed ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’  
16 domains. Moreover territory is one expression of polymorphous sociospatial relations that transcend  
17 place, scale and networks: each is constitutive of and expressive of the other (Clark and Jones 2008,  
18 2013; Jessop *et al.* 2008).

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31 Material territory then encompasses more than building the domestic state. Its significance as concept  
32 and practice is to interpenetrate domestic *and* foreign affairs to grant states seeming permanence in  
33 time and space (Murphy 2002, 2013). Here it is useful to consider how politicians and diplomats  
34 engage with the “modern geopolitical imagination”, that depicts “The world [as] actively  
35 spatialized...[to] provide the geographical framing within which political elites and mass publics act in  
36 the world in pursuit of their own identities and interests” (Agnew 2003, 3). From this perspective,  
37 territory furnishes the physical and symbolic capital for these elites<sup>i</sup> to underwrite state presence  
38 through actions such as international border control, financial regulation, and resource management.  
39 Importantly relations with hegemonic states are negotiated in this geopolitical imagination, and  
40 “reactions to hegemony can entail [state] strategies that...reconfigure the institutional as well as the  
41 ideational dynamics that define territories” (Kadercan 2015, 154). Territory’s multiscaled  
42 sociospatialities thus pose elites with as many challenges as opportunities, arising not only because of  
43 its unpredictable materialities, but because territorial projections impact ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’  
44 domains differently. Most clearly, domestic state presence coheres around territorial fixities (eg.  
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3 codifications of territory through legal means or economic calculation), while for elites involved in  
4 foreign affairs territorial mobilities are needed to “adjust to a world politics in constant evolution and  
5 not just of their making” (Agnew 2010, 571).  
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11 Consequently we argue that by scrutinizing over time how territory as political ordering aligns with  
12 the fixities and mobilities of a material territory, new insights can be derived into the relational state,  
13 and into state periodization. Until recently, periodization was taken as shorthand for state chronology.  
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15 However following Brenner’s (2009, 124) pioneering work, geographers have begun to explore  
16 periodization as more complex patterning of “how and why...state spatial forms evolve...and how  
17 and why they vary across contexts and scales”. Yet so far these explorations have been confined to  
18 political economy studies. While valuable, these overlook the equally important periodizations by and  
19 through which materialities of territory have been ordered, *and reorder*, state political strategies of  
20 territorial measurement and control over time, which is our aim here.  
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31 Excavating how these (re)ordering struggles evolve thus requires longitudinal analysis of territory’s  
32 material-political relations, from pre-modern primitive accumulation generative of domestic/local pre-  
33 modern territorial associations; through transition to sovereign authority over territories, and evolution  
34 of political technologies in response to ruptures, breaks and crises arising from material territory; to  
35 the accommodations struck between these materialities and the discourses and practices of the modern  
36 state in ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ affairs. These analyses need to be sensitive to territorial fixities and  
37 mobilities over time. From this perspective, state periodization can be reconceptualised as  
38 intersections and accommodations between political power strategies for measuring, calculating and  
39 reifying space with the mutabilities of material territory.  
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51 We therefore argue a crucial ingredient missing from periodization studies of the modern state is  
52 condensation (Poulantzas 1978) of these material-relation struggles of territory, and how these fashion  
53 the ‘domestic’ and the ‘foreign’. Here we seek to excavate these tensions empirically to demonstrate  
54 the “imaginative and practical work...entailed” (Brighenti 2014, 14) in reconciling material territory  
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3 with realising the state as a political form. We begin by setting out how we applied this theoretical  
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5 approach to the Icelandic case.  
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### 8 9 **Methodology**

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11 As Elden (2015, 101) reflects, “power-place relations at different scales [are] important to track the  
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13 emergence of...state territory”, a point that resonates with Brenner’s (2009, 135) assessment that “the  
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15 challenge of state periodization involves determining the degree to which the dominant scales of  
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17 institutional reorganization within a given territory have been qualitatively reshuffled” over time.  
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19 Tracking Icelandic state periodization longitudinally thus obliged us to use bespoke methodologies for  
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21 data collection and analysis, as follows.  
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25 Initially, six months’ archival research was undertaken to determine primitive/pre-modern territorial  
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27 associations in Iceland, focused on analysing cartographic records and maps held by the British  
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29 Library’s Scandinavian section. Analysing these materials enabled tracing of the precursors of  
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31 territory from the island’s settlement to the early medieval period. Secondly examination was made of  
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33 works on Icelandic history in order to generate a chronology of pre-modern political strategies of  
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35 territory, ranging from archival descriptions of land management and historic trading records, to  
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37 reports, articles and contemporary legal documents. Translations from Icelandic were made for us by  
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39 professional agencies.  
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43 Thirdly we conducted detailed empirical scrutiny of modern state-territory relations. Following  
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45 Foucault, this was structured around three concepts: “orderings” of territory as pre-modern/state-  
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47 based objectives, instituted for particular spatial effect; “technologies” as the practical rationalities  
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49 needed to implement these orderings, for example through territorial strategies and latterly public  
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51 policies; and “governmentalities” as the techniques (concepts and practices) delivering these  
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53 strategies. Contemporary primary research comprised semi-structured interviews conducted during  
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55 2010-2013 in English with Icelandic politicians, civil servants, civil society groups and citizens, and  
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57 with senior non-Icelandic (American, Danish and Norwegian) diplomats and attachés to provide a  
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3 comprehensive range of views on the territorial orderings of the country. This happened to coincide  
4 with the country's negotiations over possible accession to the European Union (EU), furnishing an  
5 apposite case study of contemporary periodization. In adopting this threefold approach we recognised  
6 the interdependencies between each methodological strand, with archival and historical work tracking  
7 pre-modern orderings of space, and material territory informing data collection on modern state  
8 orderings.  
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17 As Brenner notes, the crucial question in periodization studies is the criteria used for delimitating  
18 periods or episodes. Following the argument that territory is both polymorphous (comprised of  
19 multiple sociospatialities; Jessop *et al.* 2008) and polysemous (derived from multiple imaginaries,  
20 Paasi 2004), our approach was to examine the fixities and mobilities of 'material territory' in terms of  
21 change in actions, imaginations and events in the territory-state relation (see Table 1). Specifically we  
22 looked for discontinuities in the scales, places and networks that mobilised or engaged with the  
23 materialities of Icelandic territory. From this perspective, state periodization emerges as change in  
24 "the ensemble of acts aimed at stabilizing a [material] territory" (Brighenti 2014, 17)  
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35 Based on this approach, and our reconceptualization of state periodization as evolutionary material-  
36 political process, four periodizing episodes were identified: *Corporeal/associational/natural bases of*  
37 *territory*; *At-a-distance spaces of political control and 'economic territory'*; *Defining the Icelandic*  
38 *state: spaces, volumes, knowledges*; and *Volumetric orderings and Iceland in the modern geopolitical*  
39 *imagination*. These are used to structure the paper<sup>ii</sup>. Our focus on territory as a material-political  
40 category provides an underlying and hitherto under-researched variable that cuts across trade,  
41 domestic and external drivers of Icelandic history, criteria used for state periodization in earlier  
42 studies (Aðils 1915; Þorsteinsson and Jónsson 1991). It also enables forensic examination of how  
43 material territory animates periodization episodes both conceptually and practically.  
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### 1: The corporeal/associational/natural bases of Icelandic territory

Mann (1986, 2003) notes how pre-modern territorialisation, as expressed through individual, domestic and community behaviours, began the process of defining the scope and extent of human authority over space. As Elden (2010a) demonstrates, central to this is land as a form of territorialisation, and Waage (2012, 182) specifies three notions of land in early Icelandic literature.

The first is '*natural*'. Settled from c.870 AD, colonists were confronted by the uninhabited island's immense spaces: their "focus [wa]s not on the land itself, but on the distances, movement, and relocation... independent of human existence". Settlers thus positioned themselves in relation to nature through corporeal acts to chart Iceland's environments. This conception has clear resonances with post-human debates on nature's materialities and mobilities (Adey 2006; Bakker and Bridge 2006).

Waage also identifies land formalised as an economic good in these accounts, through settlers establishing farmsteads to claim 'rightful' ownership. In contrast to the 'natural' category, this *ad nema* ('to take') notion defined land as property, requiring institutionalisation across space and time through law and inheritance rights. *Ad nema* land then was instrumental to the eventual emergence of national political economy. Waage's (2012, 182) third conception is "*ad byggja*" ('to build'), the idea that land is an inherently social category "brought into existence by settlement, suggesting the inseparability of an area and its people". This emphasises the building of a peopled territory, materialised through formation of clans, and defending land rights through physical force<sup>iii</sup>. As we show, this construction has conferred an intrinsic sensibility to bundle and control nature in novel ways, particularly over Icelandic designation of natural resources.

By delineating sociospatial organizing of land, we argue these three notions acted as territory's antecedents (cf. Elden 2010a), encapsulating human attempts to stabilise nature's unruliness through political ordering: originally via pre-modern institutions of family and the clan. Crucially however, the 'natural' category has continually resisted and at times unravelled the cultural impress of *ad*

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3 *nema/ad byggia*. As we show, while these material-political coherences have been overwritten by  
4 foreign occupation they have proved surprisingly resilient, underwriting primitive accumulation  
5 (particularly agriculture and fisheries), and nodes of social-political organizing (community and  
6 religious institutions) to configure mobilities and fixities of territory (Lacey 1998).  
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12 From its settlement until 1262 Iceland was governed through chieftaincies or *goðorð*, whose irregular  
13 domains were based on corporeal and associational rather than spatial boundaries, partly to respond  
14 more easily to changing clan allegiances, and the materialities of a harsh subsistence life (Jakobsson  
15 2011). *Goðorð* were loosely organised through the *Alþing* (national assembly), an annual summer  
16 gathering of freemen and chieftains from across the country. Here chieftains elected the  
17 ‘Lawspeaker’, with responsibilities *inter alia* for codifying and adjudicating land disputes. Over time,  
18 this began to make land holding a form of political ordering (Bjock 2002) and in c. 965, the *Alþing*  
19 sanctioned the first spatial division of the country into four quarters with their own courts. The  
20 Catholic Church was also crucial in promoting this novel spatial-legal conception of land, with its  
21 holdings delimited as bishoprics and parishes after AD1000. Hence the Church and the *Alþing* began  
22 to define land as political (spatial-legal) ordering, rather than through the corporeal or associational  
23 means of clans.  
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39 The *Alþing*’s production of a lawbook (*landnámabók*) in 1117 institutionalised these land rights as the  
40 first national register of property ownership. The oral tradition of stories also began to be written  
41 down at this time in a distinctive Icelandic language as *sagas*, reinforcing spatial inscription of human  
42 practice onto landscapes (Hoggart 2010). The lineaments of territory as political technology thus  
43 arose from a fusion of law-making, religion, geography, and language (Karlsson 2004). In turn, this  
44 intermingling of land’s material and political attributes both drove and was consolidated by pre-  
45 modern forms of political power and identity, namely the Church, the *Alþing*, and the *goðorð*.  
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47 Together, this constituted a putative political identity, the *Goðaveldisöld* (‘chieftain state’) or  
48 Commonwealth.  
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3 Nonetheless, the *Goðaveldisöld* was soon overtaken by growing tensions between chieftains over the  
4 older corporeal and newer calculative constructions of land, heightening their political rivalries and  
5 culminating in clan warfare. Intervention by the Kingdom of Norway followed, within which Iceland  
6 was subsumed in *c.*1260. Subsequent unrest and civil war in Norway led to the Norwegian and Danish  
7 Kingdoms being united under the Danish monarchy in 1380. As part of Denmark, a new period began  
8 in the material-political relations of Icelandic territory.  
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## 17 **2: At-a-distance spaces of political control and ‘economic territory’**

18 For decades, geographic distance rendered the Danish Crown largely ineffective in Iceland, allowing  
19 the bishoprics at Skálholt and Hólar to consolidate their power through tithes, building churches, and  
20 establishing parishes (Jóhannesson 1974). In this power vacuum other European states (including  
21 England) began to exploit Icelandic space, particularly its fisheries. It was only with Danish  
22 conversion to Lutheranism that the bishoprics were directly challenged. Danish officials began  
23 dissolving monasteries in the 1540s, but faced strong resistance. Following an armed uprising  
24 organized by the Bishop of Hólar, in 1551 military forces landed and resistance was quashed  
25 (Gunnarsson 1987).  
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37 The resulting reordering of Iceland was fundamental and far-reaching. Most clearly, imposition of  
38 Dependency status in 1602 deprived the population of any governing role, with the Danish Crown  
39 seeking to extract maximum economic value from land at minimum cost (Ringler 2002). As Brenner  
40 and Elden (2009, 368-369) note, “...territory...is a broad, historically and geographically specific set  
41 of processes, particularly evident at determined moments”. To facilitate the Danish goal to reorder  
42 Iceland as *economic territory*, new extractive technologies were introduced.  
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51 First, Iceland was viewed by the Danes solely through the prism of commoditization, with annual  
52 quotas set for fish, wool and agricultural goods, exported through specially established coastal  
53 entrepôts (Eggertsson 1994). This economic conception of territory was institutionalised through  
54 imposing mercantilism and, latterly, a trade monopoly, demonstrating law’s importance in  
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3 underwriting territory as political technology, for "... the focus is on the qualities of territory, that is,  
4 precisely that which can be measured" (Elden 2013, 13). Indirectly, this imposition of mercantilism  
5 gave the pre-modern *ad nema* conception of land new legitimacy.  
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10 'Economic territory' was also reordered as agrarian, arising from the at-a-distance calculation of the  
11 Danish Crown to maintain a low, easily extracted and sustainable source of revenue (Gunnarsson  
12 1987). The socio-economic consequences were dramatic. As late as 1703, 96 per cent of the  
13 population were still tenant farmers (Larusson 1967). This 'agrarian vocation' was normalised by  
14 statutes requiring virtually all adults to work on farms, while forbidding foreigners to overwinter in  
15 the country when fish stocks were abundant. English and Baltic influences in Iceland were thereby  
16 abated, enabling Denmark to exploit inshore fisheries; in fact fish, through their winter feeding  
17 grounds, determined where coastal settlements were established (Gustafsson 1985).  
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28 Iceland was therefore recast as calculative economic space. Mercantilism altered territory at all scales,  
29 from the macro-economic structure of the trade monopoly, to establishing entrepôts and charting new  
30 sea lanes to Copenhagen, down to the imposition of extractive land management practices (Winkler  
31 1861). Foreign rule brought the first national census and natural resource survey and some  
32 improvement in literacy and living standards, with Denmark enjoying seeming complete political-  
33 strategic and economic control through technologies of revenue collection, law and cartography.  
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41 **[FIGURE 1 HERE]**  
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43  
44 Notwithstanding economic ordering, nature's materialities challenged mercantilism. Figure 1 vividly  
45 conveys the cartographic anxieties and unpredictabilities of territory for the Danish Crown. The  
46 physical act of surveying for this document was a formidable undertaking, exacerbated by the  
47 featureless terrain of the central Highlands and surveyors' genuine fear of Iceland's uninhabited  
48 interior (Þóroddsen 1896/2004). Moreover, elemental mobilities such as mudslides, volcanic eruptions  
49 (Katla 1755, and Hekla in 1766) and earthquakes continually disrupted the fixities of land  
50 management and trading, creating resistances to Copenhagen's economic calculations.  
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5 Territorial mobilities were expressed in other ways, too. Climatic cooling during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>  
6  
7 centuries resulted in regular crop failures. However, it was the catastrophic eruption of Laki in 1783-4  
8  
9 resulting in *c.* 10,000 deaths (almost 20% of Iceland's population) and the ensuing *móðuharðindi*  
10  
11 ('famine of the haze') that rocked the mercantilist Dependency to its foundations (Ringler 2002).  
12  
13 Ultimately this threatened the country's existence, and led to withdrawal of the trade monopoly in  
14  
15 1787. Interestingly recent tephrochronological studies show that only by reverting to the smallscale *ad*  
16  
17 *byggja* and *ad nema* land management practices of the first settlers was "the viability of the  
18  
19 socioeconomic order" stabilised (Streeter *et al.* 2012, 3669).  
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23 Mann (1986) discusses the role of ideology as a crucial ingredient in state formation, and landscapes  
24  
25 acted at this time as focal points for the crystallisation of Icelandic political consciousness and  
26  
27 national identity (Hastrup 2008). According to Oslund (2011, 45), the Laki eruption clearly  
28  
29 demonstrates this interrelation: "The barren lava fields left behind by the Laki eruption...represented  
30  
31 the failures of the Danish state and the administration of the island. While volcanic eruptions were  
32  
33 natural occurrences, the responsibility for controlling them and their effects lay with [Danish]  
34  
35 people". Yet equally this episode tellingly reveals the failure of the Danish Crown to appreciate how  
36  
37 nature could unravel the fixities of political ordering and identity through the mobilities of eruptions:  
38  
39 how lava flows and choking ash clouds could obliterate state infrastructures to expose the frailties of a  
40  
41 surficial, rather than a volumetric, calculation of territorial power. Thus material territory appears to  
42  
43 have prefigured Icelandic nationalism rather than being shaped by it. Indeed calls for political  
44  
45 autonomy focussed initially not on seeking independence, but on clarifying Iceland's status as *part of*  
46  
47 Denmark: a consequence of the profound interdependencies forged through the material-political  
48  
49 relations of territory<sup>iv</sup> (Karlsson 2000).  
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54 By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the climate worsening, mass emigration to the US and Canada began. The  
55  
56 crisis in material and political relations caused by the natural coupled with growing nationalist  
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58 sentiment among Icelanders was finally acknowledged by the Danish crown in 1845 with  
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3 reinstatement of the *Alþing* as an advisory body. Absolutism was abolished in Denmark just three  
4  
5 years later, starting a process of wresting sovereignty from Copenhagen's at-a-distance relations, with  
6  
7 the country finally gaining independence in 1918. This ushered in state formation and the first  
8  
9 attempts by an Icelandic state to grapple with the material-political relations of territory.  
10

### 11 12 13 **3: Defining the Icelandic state: spaces, volumes, knowledges** 14

15 In defining state identity and presence, the crucial task for the first governments was to address the  
16  
17 legacy of Danish colonialism. Fundamental to this was to recalibrate territorial orderings,  
18  
19 technologies and governmentalities to take account of the country's uneven population distribution  
20  
21 and immense spaces and distances; for Iceland was both "too small and too large a territory"  
22  
23 (Hartthaler 1999, 57-58). Shaping a new state territory also reflected human attempts to 'master  
24  
25 nature' in the face of its apparent unpredictability and destructiveness.  
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28  
29 State strategies played a crucial role here (Brenner and Elden 2009) and in 1921 Iceland became one  
30  
31 of the first European countries to introduce spatial planning in order to map, delimit and attempt to  
32  
33 control territory. This calibration of a distinctive state presence around national economic  
34  
35 development materialised first as programmes of road building and telegraph communications  
36  
37 (particularly around Reykjavík), with state initiatives to stem rural depopulation and outmigration  
38  
39 (Lacey 1998). Ordering territory as a modernist project of 'national planned space' also required  
40  
41 defining the natural through introducing territorial knowledges. For centuries, underground hot  
42  
43 springs and geysers had been used for domestic purposes. Yet institutionalisation and dissemination  
44  
45 as a territorial practice, geothermal energy, began only in 1930, when a three kilometre pipeline was  
46  
47 constructed to Reykjavík to heat two schools, 60 homes, and the main hospital. In 1943, the first  
48  
49 district heating company was established. By 1945, an 18 kilometre pipeline ran through the city,  
50  
51 servicing over 2,850 homes (Bjornsson 2006).  
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54  
55 Crucially, the state codified geothermal energy as a volumetric, rather than a surficial construction of  
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57 territory (Elden 2013b). This confirmed the state's assertion of not just the reach, but the height and  
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3 depth of its political ambitions: in effect, a physical embedding of political authority nationally (cf.  
4 Elden's (2013b, 8) argument on how the "depth of [state] power" derives from volumetric calculation  
5 of space). Indicative is how volumetric territory opened up exploitation of other elemental energies by  
6 the state, including hydropower, which facilitated new forms of territorial exploitation, notably the  
7 aluminium smelting sector. This terrestrial recalibration complimented the introduction of marine  
8 diesel engines in the 1900s and sonar in the 1950s that enabled marine volumes to be reconstituted as  
9 abundant demersal fisheries (particularly herring and cod).  
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19 New volumetric ordering however ran alongside continuities with pre-modern territorialities<sup>v</sup>. Thus  
20 following independence the *ad nema* conception of possessing land was implicitly endorsed through  
21 consolidation of an identity politics based around the emergence of 'clan-like' behaviours in banking,  
22 finance and business, and government intervention in farming and fishing (Pálsson and Helgason  
23 1996). Indeed these sectoral interests, emphasising property ownership and corporate control and  
24 exploitation of natural resources, underwrote the building (*ad byggia*) of the Icelandic state, and their  
25 mobilisation of territorialities continues to inveigle everyday life and politics in a fundamental way.  
26  
27 For example the Independence Party, a conservative grouping that either on its own or in coalition has  
28 been a government party many times since 1944, still draws its popular support and financial backing  
29 from communities dependent on fishing. This bond between territory and domestic political identity is  
30 further cemented through over-representation of rural constituencies in the *Alþing*.  
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44 In building the Icelandic state great reliance was therefore placed on territorial orderings imprinting  
45 political relations onto everyday life to legitimize authority. In effect, state presence has been derived  
46 from spatial extent, volume and verticality of territory (Braun 2004), with ensuing struggles to capture  
47 'the natural' using these political technologies playing an integral part in state periodization.  
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51 However, this chthonic territory-state relation has not simply underwritten domestic state presence: it  
52 has also driven political identity formation within the modern geopolitical imagination. We examine  
53 this aspect next.  
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#### 4: Volumetric orderings and Iceland in the modern geopolitical imagination

Danish mercantilism had demonstrated to Icelanders how territory transcends the domestic domain. Unsurprisingly therefore territory as political ordering also became the lodestone for foreign affairs: the means for Iceland to adapt to a world politics in flux (Kadercan 2015). Yet capturing territory to project state presence internationally has proved difficult. Not least, its unruly materialities have proved even less amenable to governing when stretched across the multiple sites, places and actors of the modern geopolitical imagination. Moreover, within this imagination Iceland's politicians and diplomats have had to negotiate alternate territorial orderings for the country held by dominant powers (particularly the US) intent on casting the island as a site of formal geopolitics. As Agnew (2014, 318) comments "various spatialities of power are at work in the world to condition and limit the operation of territory as...spatial organization", and Icelandic territory has been refracted through this geopolitical imagination on multiple occasions. Two "state projects" (Jessop 1990, 9), underwritten by *geostrategic* and *maritime* territories respectively, demonstrate the consequences for state periodization.

Iceland as *geostrategic territory* arose from its occupation by the British and latterly the US during World War Two to control transatlantic sea lanes. The post-War period saw deteriorating US-USSR relations, accentuating the country's importance to the US (Ingimundarson 2004). As the Cold War took hold, in 1949 western European states, Canada and the US instigated a new ordering in the modern geopolitical imagination, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). For Iceland, securing NATO membership as a "state project" offered the country shelter, with membership secured in 1949 in the face of vociferous public opposition.

However, this came at the cost of the island being recast by the US as a space of interdiction in a strategic ocean area, the so-called 'Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap': a bulwark of US defence space to prevent Soviet air, sea and submarine transit. Successive US administrations in the 1950s and '60s were concerned that a Soviet occupation of Iceland would directly threaten the US (Ingimundarson 1999). Addressing this dilemma required Icelandic territory to be reinscribed at the

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2  
3 US's behest as a volumetric and vertical geostrategy, governed through military-industrial  
4 technologies. First was construction of the Icelandic Sound Surveillance System (ISOSUS), a  
5 complex installation of audio detection devices placed on the Atlantic Ocean floor to prosecute anti-  
6 Soviet submarine warfare (Woodard 1991). Secondly, the government agreed to major US investment  
7 in aerial surveillance systems to deter overflights by Russian bombers. This comprised national radar  
8 arrays and major expansion of Keflavik air base to station maritime patrol aircraft, fighter-interceptors  
9 and missile batteries, creating the Icelandic Military Air Defence Zone (IMADIZ) (Sigurdsson 2000).  
10 Icelandic politicians cannily played on the country's resulting geopolitical significance to NATO,  
11 leveraging Marshall Aid, trade and airline privileges from the US during the 1950s (Ingimundarson  
12 2004).

13 ISOSUS and IMADIZ became the key geostrategic technologies of Icelandic territory during the Cold  
14 War: attempts to render calculable the opacities of oceanic and atmospheric volumes. Yet while  
15 reliant on leading-edge industrial military hardware and design, 'plugging the GIUK gap' also  
16 demonstrated profound historical-geographical continuities. For in essence these technologies were a  
17 new instantiation of *ad byggia* that sought to mobilise these volumes to build a fortified territory. As  
18 under the Danish dependency, therefore, Iceland's occupation by the US wrought a fundamental  
19 recharting of territory, but using a geopolitical rather than a geoeconomic compass.

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Iceland as *maritime territory* was progressively defined through confrontations during the 1950s and  
1970s with the United Kingdom – the so-called 'Cod Wars'. Each was characterised by brinkmanship,  
confirming fisheries as pivotal to domestic interests, and central to a new state project based on a  
volumetric calculation of the country's teeming marine resources. Nonetheless the Cod Wars also  
confirm powerful relationalities exerted by the marine. The state was effectively forced to  
acknowledge nature's capacity to remake foreign policy, even to the point where war was considered  
'legitimate' state behaviour. Hartthaler (1999, 67) refers to the "fisherman's mentality" among  
politicians at this time: "a tendency to focus on quick, spontaneous action", which the author likens to  
the movement of a shoal of fish. Thus while events were portrayed in the UK as British trawlers  
battling for their livelihoods, significantly in Iceland they were enacted as the *landhelgisstríðin*: "the

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2  
3 war for the territorial waters” against a former imperial power (Ingimundarson 2003). First-hand  
4  
5 accounts from trawler skippers and naval officers are certainly warlike and spatial, rife with  
6  
7 contradictory accounts of position, distance and velocities of merchant and military vessels (Platten  
8  
9 2013), records of physical collisions, and the trajectory of shellfire (Welch 2006).

10  
11 Significantly it was the Icelandic threat to close Keflavik that prompted resolution of this conflict  
12  
13 between the two NATO countries in 1976. Iceland had already announced its intention to extend its  
14  
15 domestic fishing limits to 200 miles in July 1975, which, together with other marine resource rights,  
16  
17 was consolidated as an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by the United Nations in 1982. Politicians  
18  
19 had wagered Iceland’s geopolitical significance for high stakes to project the country globally. By  
20  
21 using coastguard ships and converted trawlers to exert maritime possession during the  
22  
23 *landhelgisstríðin*, the “border fixity” of island status (Atzili 2012) was overcome, with the EEZ  
24  
25 physically extending Icelandic territory by a massive 760,000 square kilometres<sup>vi</sup>. These events  
26  
27 underscore Elden’s (2013a, 14) comment that “what is of particular interest is the quantification of  
28  
29 space and the role of calculative mechanisms in the commanding of territory”. This outcome also  
30  
31 indicates the potential for small states to refigure the modern geopolitical imagination, suggestive of it  
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33 as not simply a hegemonic construction, but a more nuanced material-relational assemblage of  
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35 transaction and negotiation among international actors.

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38 Enclosing and ‘onshoring’ this maritime volume as fisheries resource occurred in 1990, through  
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40 introduction of Individual Transferrable Quotas (ITQ). ITQs assigned to boat owners a percentage of  
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42 the annual catch, allowing deepwater fisheries to be reinscribed as a domestic possession, confirming  
43  
44 fluidity of ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ affairs. However, as many trawlers were already in corporate  
45  
46 ownership, ITQs bolstered the financial power of fishing cartels, facilitating business and political  
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48 connections and reinforcing an older instantiation of territory – the ‘clan turf’, and the role of the  
49  
50 chieftain (Pálsson and Helgason 1996). Over time these clannish identities became so intertwined  
51  
52 their shared commercial dealings are known publically as ‘the Octopus’ – an appropriate metaphor,  
53  
54 given the recalibration of public life as much by the marine<sup>vii</sup> as by the economic.

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3 Under David Oddsson's government, state-owned fish processing factories were sold off as part of  
4 wider privatisation, while continued buying and selling of fisheries quota fuelled expansion of  
5 domestic credit markets. This demonstrated how far 'the natural' had penetrated the Icelandic state,  
6 for fish had effectively left "the seas and becom[e] enfolded into new chains of legal and financial  
7 experience via particular scale-switching practices" of physical landings, investment decisions and  
8 spot-market forecasts (Maguire 2015, 141). Nonetheless, the mutabilities of the marine provided  
9 uncertain foundations for contemporary political orderings of territory. At the same time, overseas  
10 foreign investments by Icelandic companies increased dramatically, off the back of which the  
11 Oddsson Government proclaimed the need to adhere to global, rather than territorial, metrics of  
12 statecraft.  
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Oddsson's resulting deterritorialised model of economic development envisioned scale-spanning  
networks 'touching down' in Reykjavík, and benchmarking of Icelandic GNP with the G-7 countries  
(Portes *et al.* 2007). The three national banks were privatised in the late 1990s to facilitate this  
deterritorialization, enabling further expansion of credit markets. A new entrepreneurial business  
class, the *útrásarvíkingar* (literally the 'outvasion Vikings') went on spending 'raids' internationally,  
buying up global corporate brands – particularly in Iceland's former occupying states Denmark and  
the UK. By October 2008, the debt load of the privatised banks exceeded nine times national GDP.  
Financial collapse and the country's near bankruptcy followed (characterised as the *kreppa*: literally  
crisis and suffering).

Novel vertical and volumetric technologies and governmentalities of territory have thus underpinned  
*both* domestic and foreign affairs in Iceland. Nonetheless, their foundational rationalities have spilled  
over from centuries-old pre-modern territorialisation – *ad byggia* (building Icelandic territory –  
ISOSUS, IMADIZ and EEZ) and *ad nema* (taking possession of territorial waters through ITQs). As  
these geostrategic and maritime examples show, the fixities and mobilities of material territory have  
decisively shaped state periodization, sometimes at catastrophic cost. Hence while massive capital  
outflows destroyed the Icelandic economy, it could be argued the purging of territory from the state's  
spatial registers by the Oddsson Government unravelled the Icelandic polity.

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3 Such tensions and pressures are, we contend, also evident in the country's entanglement with  
4 European Union (EU) accession. This recent episode again demonstrates how 'material territory'  
5 drives contemporary state periodization (Jones and Clark 2013a). The resulting intersections are  
6 briefly examined here.  
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13 Following the cataclysm of the *kreppa*, politicians sought for ways to rebuild the Icelandic state. One  
14 possibility was to reinstate maritime territory as the fulcrum of foreign policy to secure shelter for the  
15 shattered economy through deepening relations with the EU. This was made possible in 2009 when a  
16 Social Democrat-Left Green coalition government took office. After difficult talks with its anti-  
17 European Left Green partners – and in direct response to continued financial turbulence – the Social  
18 Democrats ratified a "state project" (Jessop 1990, 9) to apply for EU membership, and to begin  
19 preliminary accession negotiations ('prenegotiations')(Clark and Jones 2012). The Coalition  
20 Government's uneasy position on EU membership was bridged through mutual recognition of  
21 territory-state relation as decisive to the application. The Coalition Government thus endorsed  
22 assertion of '*Maritime Iceland*' in prenegotiations – a fluid land:sea ordering based on enormously  
23 productive fisheries. The centrality of this projection was confirmed in accession documents through  
24 Iceland's depiction as a fish (Figure 2).  
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40 [FIGURE 2 HERE]  
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43 'Maritime Iceland' allowed the relational state to cohere around fisheries, political autonomy, and  
44 prosperity, allowing mobilisation by political fractions with radically different beliefs. For opponents  
45 of EU membership, it offered the means to slow or to stall discussions with the European  
46 Commission, by placing strenuous demands during prenegotiations over fisheries (Jones and Clark  
47 2013b, Jones and Clark 2016). By contrast for EU proponents, if independent management of the EEZ  
48 was secured in prenegotiations, 'Maritime Iceland' would act as a bridge to European shelter. This  
49 political ordering therefore allowed condensation (Poulantzas 1978) of Icelandic state presence in the  
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3 modern geopolitical imagination around a common projection that concealed diverse domestic  
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5 identities.

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9 Running through all Government documentation circulated to the EU was emphasis on Icelandic  
10 territory as harsh and uncompromising. So in the Government's *General Position statement to the*  
11 *European Council* (Icelandic Government 2010), territory evokes the sensibilities and feelings of the  
12 country's settlers: "Iceland would be the most westerly member state, remotely situated and faced  
13 with harsh natural conditions. It would be the only one located in its entirety within the Arctic region.  
14 These unique features will shape the negotiations in the months to come" (Icelandic Government  
15 2010, Art. 14). This document also presented national technologies and governmentalities of fisheries  
16 as inviolable ("The lifeblood of the Icelandic economy"), and depicted the EEZ as a cultural, as much  
17 as an economic resource – a product of the bitter struggles to build Iceland, invoking the spirit of *ad*  
18 *byggja* land. Implicit throughout this document is the importance of geohistorical specificities of the  
19 Cod Wars to underscore territory as an enduring political technology of 'domestic' and 'foreign'  
20 affairs.  
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35 As important as making these territorial claims was the opportunity afforded by prenegotiations to  
36 explore how EU membership would reconfigure the orderings, technologies and governmentalities of  
37 the state (Clark and Jones 2009). For although vigorously denied by the Coalition Government,  
38 prenegotiations formalised new at-a-distance territorial calculations between Reykjavik and Brussels,  
39 instituting negotiating benchmarks (new orderings), foregrounding policies such as the Common  
40 Fisheries Policy (CFP) and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (new technologies), and threatening  
41 to disperse powers from fisheries and agricultural cartels to multiple agencies at different levels (new  
42 governmentalities). In essence, the Icelandic state as the embodiment of material-political relations of  
43 territory would be challenged by EU law, putting in doubt forms of political power and identity  
44 embedded in decades-old sectoral corporatism. Certainly, negotiators knew adoption of the CFP and  
45 the CAP meant remapping of primary resources (particularly fisheries), while tacitly acknowledging  
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3 that “given the historical memory [of the Cod Wars], it would be almost impossible politically to  
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5 allow foreign vessels to return to Icelandic fishing grounds” (Sigfusson 2004, 5).  
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9 Ultimately, prenegotiations proved too divisive and, with the election in 2013 of a right-of-centre  
10  
11 Government against EU membership, the application was effectively withdrawn. However talks had  
12  
13 already unearthed deep concern over the complex de- and reterritorialisations required by EU  
14  
15 membership. More than that, it showed that territory as political technology of the state was  
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17 increasingly questioned by a knowledgeable enfranchised population, distrustful of previous elite  
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19 ‘sell-outs’ (particularly over NATO membership and the handling of the *kreppa*), and eminently  
20  
21 capable of mobilising alternative territorial imaginaries through written, spoken and social media. The  
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23 depths of ‘Maritime Iceland’ had been plumbed to reveal a country intensely sceptical of the state’s  
24  
25 use of territory as political technology.  
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## 28 29 **Conclusion**

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31 This paper has examined material territory as the ceaseless interplay over time between political  
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33 strategies to stabilise state spaces, and their ruction and reinvention through territory’s physical,  
34  
35 visceral and place-based specificities. We have shown how the Icelandic state is a condensation of the  
36  
37 ensuing struggles between political technologies of control and the materialities of nature. We have  
38  
39 also demonstrated how key moments in elaborating pre-modern territorialities (‘natural’, *ad nema*,  
40  
41 and *ad byggia*) furnished the preconditions necessary for state formation, confirming territory as “an  
42  
43 important type of spatial arrangement through which power is deployed and experienced *but which is*  
44  
45 *not limited to the state*” (Agnew 2013, 2 emphasis added). Thus material-relational coherences at  
46  
47 different scales (family, kinship, clan) have underwritten the state as a relational form, ordering nature  
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49 through corporeal/associational and legal means to foster sectoral identities that have mobilised ‘the  
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51 natural’ for political purposes, resulting in strong domestic presence. In turn, the state, from  
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53 Dependency to independence, has shaped political technologies of territory (eg. spatial planning,  
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55 volumetric and vertical territories). ‘Modernity’ and ‘progress’ have thus been defined by state  
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57 attempts to devise new political technologies with which to calculate and capture nature.  
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5 The Icelandic case is also instructive for the ways in which territory has been (re)made outside its  
6 geographic limits: notably through the economic calculation of mercantilism in Copenhagen, and as  
7 ‘US Defence Space’ crafted by the Pentagon. These at-a-distance conceptions of territory have  
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9 ‘US Defence Space’ crafted by the Pentagon. These at-a-distance conceptions of territory have  
10 blurred the ‘domestic’ and the ‘foreign’ to provide foundational rationalisations of Iceland’s place  
11 globally. Since independence, successive governments have sought to keep the ‘domestic’ and the  
12 ‘foreign’ together through territorial orderings that address the interests of domestic constituencies  
13 and project state presence into the modern geopolitical imagination. ‘Maritime Iceland’ is one  
14 example, constituted from volumes, technologies and liquid and solid spaces, places and things (as  
15 diverse as audio detection and radar, to geothermal pipelines and fisheries quota). However  
16 contemporary Iceland’s reliance upon sectoral identities to structure domestic order has had major  
17 implications for diplomacy, for example closing down the possibilities for stronger bilateral relations  
18 (eg. with the UK), and for cultivating shelter with potential external allies (eg. EU accession). The  
19 study thus confirms the categorical error of the “domestic/foreign polarity” of the “territorial trap”  
20 (Agnew 1994, 65).  
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35 Territorial mobilisations have required considerable effort and work by politicians in the face of rival  
36 US claims made within the modern geopolitical imagination. From this study, it appears territory’s  
37 material-political coherences lose legitimacy, and are more open to challenge, when stretched over  
38 scales. The crucial importance of territorial registers in stabilising the state is demonstrated by the  
39 dramatic consequences resulting from the Oddsson Government’s abrupt deterritorialisation of  
40 Iceland’s domestic and foreign policy domains. Overall therefore, while existing scholarship  
41 characterises the country’s post-War development as about ‘sovereignty and fish’, we have shown this  
42 misses the underlying cementation provided by territory as political technology<sup>viii</sup>.  
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54 We have also identified territory’s mobilities – and its resulting ungovernability – in terms of the  
55 natural continually resisting state calculations. Volcanoes, earthquakes, and famine have reconfigured  
56 Iceland politically as much as physically. Similarly, attempts to build Iceland vertically (airspace  
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3 through MADUZ) and laterally (through EEZ) have demanded intense state efforts to measure and  
4  
5 control land, air and sea. Material territory (from lava flows and ash clouds to shoals of fish) has  
6  
7 intervened constantly in state periodization, and its quasi-agency means “Anything is possible – the  
8  
9 worst disasters or the most flexible evolutions” (Guattari 2000, 66). The geographies of Iceland’s  
10  
11 atmosphere and especially its subsurface are crucial here: for just as “The underground is a very  
12  
13 particular spatial context” (Bridge 2013b, 55), so too is ‘underwater’. The Icelandic case demonstrates  
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15 statecraft grappling with underwater fluidities and mobilities through attempts to seize its ‘buried  
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17 treasures’ via EEZ, and to assay its depths and potential for military subterfuge through Cold War  
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19 technologies such as ISOSUS. The Icelandic state has to live with the continued unruliness of material  
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21 territory and its often shocking consequences – from eruptions of Eyjafjallajokull and Bardarbunga  
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23 remapping its political economies, to the political-strategic ‘Mackerel War’ with the UK and the EU.  
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27 The Icelandic experience thus shows periodization matters to territory-state debates. Not least, by  
28  
29 excavating periodization as concept and practice we have demonstrated the importance of pre-modern  
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31 territorialisation through kinship, clans and the Church as precursive of state territory, and the  
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33 continuity of these coherences over time. In particular, periodization foregrounds the tensions  
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35 between the natural and political-strategic facets of territory as central to state formation and change:  
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37 the resulting patterns of (in)stability drive periodization. Secondly, the spatiotemporalities of  
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39 particular periodizations reveal the state as coexisting with, and being constituted from, multiple  
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41 territorial identities (from clannish business behaviours and hegemonic imaginations, to  
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43 knowledgeable publics; Murphy 2010). In doing so the state is revealed as the site of multiple  
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45 territorialities in space, and territorial multiplicities over time. Thirdly by zooming in on the  
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47 imbrication of the state and nature, we have shown how our approach contributes to understanding  
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49 states as mobile rather than fixed or static formations. In drawing these conclusions, it is of course  
50  
51 important to recognise caveats: islands are, after all, a highly specialised form of state-territory  
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53 interaction. Yet as Mountz (2014, 3) observes, they “are also revealing, offering spatial form, pattern,  
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55 and logics that are everywhere reproduced”. Overall, our view is that material territory’s role in state  
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57 periodization warrants further examination in other empirical contexts.  
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5 We conclude that periodization of the Icelandic state is founded upon the creative and conflictive  
6 tensions between territory as a political technology of the state, and as quasi-agential in its own right.  
7 Crucially however, as Iceland's EU imbroglio shows, territory is also created through the collective  
8 practices of people<sup>ix</sup>: it is realised and perpetuated in and through their everyday activities, as much as  
9 through the political calculations of politicians. So while territory is central to informing the often  
10 grandiose (de)illusions of diplomacy, it also constitutes one of the principal means of everyday  
11 geopolitical seeing. In doing so, it will remain a significant influence upon state periodization into the  
12 21<sup>st</sup> century.  
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## 42 End notes

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45 <sup>i</sup> 'Elites' are defined here as actors whose scaled imaginations and practices seek to calibrate, manage and/or  
46 project control over 'material territory'.

47  
48 <sup>ii</sup> While any division of history is ultimately arbitrary, our fourfold periodization coincides broadly with that of  
49 Karlsson's (2000) history of change in the political-administrative form of Icelandic government

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51 <sup>iii</sup> Thus Waage (2012) notes *ad byggia* land has security and military connotations associated with 'the defence  
52 of the land' (*land-vurn*), 'defenders of the land' (*land-varnarmaður*), and 'the guarding-defence of land' (*land-  
53 gæzla*).

54  
55 <sup>iv</sup> The *sjálfstæðisbarátta* or "the struggle for independence" came later. From 1918 to 1944, although Iceland was  
56 sovereign (The Kingdom of Iceland), the Danish Crown retained custody of its foreign affairs. Severing this  
57 connection happened only with British/US occupation of Iceland in 1940-41, and German occupation of  
58 Denmark in 1941, resulting in Iceland becoming a republic in 1944  
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4 <sup>v</sup> *Ad nema* and *ad byggia* are archaic terms that are not in common usage in Iceland. As we seek to show  
5 however, both have powerful resonances within the country's contemporary statecraft, providing a key to  
6 unlock the continuing "allure of territory" (Murphy 2013) for Icelandic politicians and diplomats

7  
8 <sup>vi</sup> Compared with Iceland's total land area of *c.* 100,250 km<sup>2</sup>. This creation of 'fluid' territory through territorial  
9 calculations has some parallels with China's manufacture of islands at Johnson South Reef in the south China  
10 Sea

11 <sup>vii</sup> The pervasiveness of 'Maritime territory' as the national 'way of seeing' and experiencing the country is  
12 neatly summarised in Durrenburger's (1996, 184) description: "political mobilisation, national self-  
13 determination, capital investment, wage labour and the hope of a prosperous future all developed together to  
14 link fishing, the sea, prosperity, national and individual independence into a single *gestalt* in terms of which  
15 Icelanders now understand their recent past and present"

16  
17 <sup>viii</sup> Recently as a corrective to this 'deterritorialisation', politicians have sought to carve out a new territorial  
18 inscription for Iceland through assertion of its status as 'front door' or 'gateway' to the Arctic. This latest  
19 instantiation of *ad byggia* portrays the country as a nexus of transarctic shipping in order to cement ties with  
20 China (Ingimundarson 2015)

21 <sup>ix</sup> This was demonstrated again in April 2016 with the ousting of Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð  
22 Gunnlaugsson. Media coverage focussed on his use of overseas shell companies to conceal personal tax  
23 liabilities, but public opinion seemed as shocked by his attempts to overcome the country's boundedness for  
24 personal gain, and his neglect of Prime Ministerial oversight of domestic territory in favour of 'the offshore'  
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		<b>‘MATERIAL TERRITORY’</b>						
		<b>FIXITIES</b>		<b>MOBILITIES</b>		<b>POLITICAL IDENTITIES</b>		
<b>PERIODIZATION EPISODES</b>		<b>Instantiation and expression of ‘material territory’</b>	<b>Strategies of political ordering</b>	<b>Material-territorial resistances</b>	<b>Material flows and limits of governability</b>	<b>Change in territorial ordering/(pre-) state architectures</b>	<b>Continuities in territorial identity and ideology</b>	<b>Predominant forms of sovereignty</b>
<b>PRE-MODERN</b>		Corporeal/associational/‘natural’: <i>conceptualisation</i> of ‘material territory’ c.AD 830-1240	Corporeal/associational. Settlement ( <i>ad byggia</i> ), socio-economic organizing ( <i>ad nema</i> )	Scale, space; physiography	‘Natural’ productivity and subsistence. Tensions between corporeal and calculative conceptions of land	Corporeal ( <i>goðorð</i> ) → spatial-legal (church (parishes) law ( <i>Alping</i> , landownership, quarter courts)	Political identities emerge around distinctive language; territorial precursors ( <i>ad nema</i> , <i>ad byggia</i> )	Domestic, clan-based; ecclesiastical
		At-a-distance spaces of political control: <i>codifying</i> ‘material territory’ as economic c.AD1240-1900	At-a-distance political control; attempts to codify ‘material territory’ as ‘natural resources’	Physical distance; volatilities (volcanism, earthquakes, famine)	At-a-distance political control vs. <i>in situ</i> material flows (lava, ash, climate, people)	Spatial-legal (church)→ Mercantilism (Danish Crown)	<i>Ad nema</i> : codifying territory as ‘economic’	At-a-distance Dependency → limited political autonomy
<b>MODERN STATE</b>		Defining the Icelandic state: spaces, volumes, knowledges: <i>calibrating</i> ‘material territory’ spatially/volumetrically c.AD1900-1944	Spatial planning: state territorial knowledges (hydropower, geothermal)	Space as ‘too large’; population as ‘too small’	Evasiveness of ‘material territory’. Reconciling political authority with territorial fixities and volumes	National institution building: political metrics of distance, space, volumes (through spatial planning, regional policies)	<i>Ad byggia</i> : ‘building’ the state; ‘clan-like’ social behaviours (clientalism, sectoral corporatism)	Limited autonomy → national sovereignty→ Independence
		Volumetric orderings and Iceland in the modern geopolitical imagination: <i>capture of coexistence</i> with ‘material territory’ c.AD1944-	Military-industrial (ISOSOS); scientific-technological (EEZ)	Maritime and atmospheric volumes	Coping with ‘textured’ territory; with modern geopolitical imagination	Multilateral institutions (NATO, EU) → need for ‘shelter’	<i>Ad byggia</i> (‘building’ the state through EEZ) and <i>ad nema</i> (neoliberal natures)	Spatially diffused through complex territorialization and deterritorialization processes, e.g. EEZ, NATO

Table 1: ‘Material territory’ and state periodization in Iceland



Figure 1: Map of Iceland by Abraham Ortelius (1590), dedicated to Frederick II of Denmark. Note the anxieties engendered by the 'natural' through its depiction as disruptive (sea monsters, volcanoes, driftwood, pack ice) and unknown/unknowable (little coverage of the central Highlands) [source: Scandinavian Section, British Library].



*Figure 2:* The Icelandic Government's logo for EU accession negotiations [source: Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs]

Peer Review

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