

Geopolitical teleconnections

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Geopolitical teleconnections: diplomacy, events, and foreign policy

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Abstract

We know little about how diplomacies narrate events to sustain state presence. This paper tackles this deficit, examining how foreign policy narratives try to tame the material-affective excess of events by asserting the fictive identity of states. To do so, we extend posthuman approaches to diplomacy by blending assemblage thinking with insights from topology on events to develop the concept of *geopolitical teleconnections*. We define this as diplomatic attempts to manipulate material-affective intensities between assemblages by tethering these intensities and the events they generate to state-sanctioned geohistories and policy narratives. Geopolitical teleconnections thus have potentially profound influence in mapping posthuman events onto the spatiotemporalities of states. We explore the utility of teleconnections as a conceptual scaffold through the empirical case of Iceland's turbulent geopolitics following the 2008 financial crisis. Our analysis shows how, despite intense diplomatic efforts, material-affective intensities actualised events that continually threatened to exceed Icelandic foreign policy narratives. In doing so it reveals the state as a congeries of assemblages and past-present-emergent events in teleconnected space-time, with diplomacy furnishing one means of giving a sense of permanency to something profoundly unstable. Moreover, geopolitical teleconnections expose foreign policy as a complex co-mingling of human and posthuman agencies, forceful in that they unsettle diplomatic bodies and destabilise diplomatic subjectivities by suddenly collapsing multiple times and spaces. In this way, the swarming multiplicities of events make myriad connections between diplomatic bodies and the body politic of the state.

Introduction

The state as a political object is a friable entity, sustained by keeping materials, things and bodies in constant circulation (Mitchell 1991; Mountz 2010). The intrinsic demands of these circulations pose the question of why states have proved so enduring. Political geographers have developed spatial explanations of this durability, for example the centrality of sovereignty-territory relations to state presence (Brenner and Elden 2009). Less well studied is how curating events as a geopolitical strategy perpetuates the illusion of the state, for as well as being a “resonance object” (Meehan *et al.* 2014 1) for objects and affects, states also reverberate with multiple events and times (Frow 2001; Koselleck 2004).

Defined by Žižek (2014 2) as “something shocking, out of joint, that appears to happen all of a sudden and interrupts the usual flow of things”, a key debate on events is whether human agency is causal to their emergence (Ricoeur 1992; Deleuze 1990; Badiou 2005). Typical of human-centred explanations is mainstream International Relations (IR) scholarship portraying events as significant happenings in state development towards progressive modernist futures (Moravcik 1998; Wright 1955). From this perspective events are depicted as sequential and pliable to human management. However, spurred on by applying Deleuzian sociospatial theory across the social sciences, the role of posthuman agencies in generating events now attracts considerable scholarly interest (Cornago 2018; Dilkes-Frayne and Duff 2017; Protevi 2009). Here events arise from affective and material rather than human agencies, and are never singular in their times or spaces. Using insights from assemblage thinking and Science and Technology Studies, geographers have contributed to understanding posthuman events by conceptualising how they manifest (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Kaiser 2012; Shaw 2012), and how multiple temporalities are bound up within them (Anderson and McFarlane 2011; Ingram 2017).

In this context, the folding of time to legitimise ideal pasts and justify preferred futures is central to state sustenance, and takes many forms. In China for example from the first century AD historians were appointed to compile authorised Imperial chronologies (Sargent 1944), a practice adopted later by Medieval European monarchies as a way of realising a linear succession of events tractable to state

control (Ertman 1997). Similarly, war histories, monuments and memorials (Johnson 1995), and truth and reconciliation commissions (Nevins 2003) serve as key anchorages in states' temporal ordering. Given this, it is strange that diplomacy's role in narrating events geostrategically to sustain the illusion of state presence has not merited scholarly attention. Extensive diplomatic oral history projects of course exist in Foreign Affairs Ministries, alongside many autobiographical accounts from diplomats (eg. François-Poncet 1946; Herzl 2014). Surprisingly however, diplomacy's part in crafting narratives to tame the more-than-human excess of events – often the 'first cut' of histories implanting state legitimacy among publics – is unexamined. In particular “the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will of humans but to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities or tendencies of their own” (Bennett 2010, viii) troubles the compilation of state histories, yet no consideration exists of how lively materialities evade this temporal codification. Advancing posthuman approaches to address this is warranted given the importance of materials, affects and their happenings across time and space in geopolitics, for example the assassination of ex-FSB¹ agent Alexander Litvinenko in November 2006. Confirming diplomacy's importance in shaping events through foreign policy, this episode played out as a composite of traces of lethal radioactive material Polonium-210 on multiple objects stretching from Hamburg to London, their intersection and concentration in Litvinenko's body in an intensive care bed, and briefings and counter-briefings from Russian and UK government sources in London and Moscow (Ingram 2019).

This paper argues that diplomats and diplomatic practice play major though neglected roles in tempering posthuman events by asserting the fictive identity of states through foreign policy. We focus on the *General Position* statement of the Icelandic Government to the European Commission – a 'live' political document for diplomatic negotiations, aimed at securing Icelandic membership of the European Union (EU) (MFA 2010). This document reordered the energetic materialities of events in real time through scripting diplomatic activities to legitimise the Icelandic state's charting of a

¹ *Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

radically different foreign policy course for the country. It also aimed to stabilise the temporary coalitions of materials and affects constitutive of the Icelandic state by bridging past-present-futures to establish trajectories of political action in uncertain times. We thus argue the document had material agency in its mobilising state-sanctioned geohistories and imaginaries to curate foreign policy for geostrategic advantage.

The paper proceeds as follows. First we extend posthumanist approaches of the event to geographies of diplomacy (Dittmer 2014, 2017; Jones and Clark 2015; McConnell and Dittmer 2018). Blending assemblage thinking with insights from topology, we develop a conceptual scaffold to examine the difficulties for diplomacy in ordering posthuman agencies – what we term *geopolitical teleconnections*. Geopolitical teleconnections differ from other material-affective relations that stretch beyond immediate localities in that they mobilise state apparatus to capture and redefine more-than-human events as linear and sequential through temporal elisions of one sort or another, in attempts to support state presence. Hence their importance is in shoring up states as hegemonic political objects that allegedly can mediate posthuman agencies. This is achieved by apparatus such as foreign policy narratives downgrading or depleting other geopolitical relations involved in the apparent genesis or resolution of events, in a conscious – and often laborious – effort to actualise the state over these other relations.

We apply teleconnections to the case of Icelandic attempts to negotiate EU membership in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Our analysis shows how, despite intense diplomatic efforts, material-affective intensities between near and far assemblages actualised events that continually threatened to exceed Icelandic foreign policy narratives. In doing so, it reveals the state as a congeries of assemblages and past-present-emergent events in teleconnected space-time, with diplomacy furnishing one means of giving a sense of permanency to something profoundly unstable. Moreover, geopolitical teleconnections reveal foreign policy as a complex co-mingling of human and posthuman agencies, forceful in that they unsettle diplomatic bodies and destabilise diplomatic subjectivities by suddenly collapsing multiple times and spaces.

Assemblages, events and geopolitical teleconnections

Assemblage thinking offers powerful insight into events. From this perspective, social and material worlds are arrangements of objects and affects continually in a process of becoming through their interrelations (Deleuze 1990; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Rather than emerging from human action, events arise from the material-affective potentials within and between assemblages. Differences (intensities) in these potentials reach a point where they are released as sudden change in the “usual flow of things” (Zizek 2014, 2), ranging from the imperceptible to the transformative. Events (de)territorialize lines of flight of assemblages, depicted variously as ripples of energy across assemblages (Dittmer 2014; Dittmer 2017), and the bubbling up of multiple times within them (Kwintar 2002). From this perspective, McConnell and Dittmer (2018, 143) identify events as the “result of intensive processes that push an assemblage across a tipping point, transforming the materials, bodies, and energies found within a given assemblage and potentially altering neighbouring assemblages”.

The multiple times of assemblages mean human attempts to curate events into linear chronologies are challenging, yet are essential to statecraft. Events matter because their sequencing and interpretation determines the very identity and public legitimacy of states (Hartog 2015). Central to this is rendering the backwards-forwards tracteries of events as coherent, flowing linear time. This requires state apparatus to actualise in very particular ways what Deleuze (1990, 52) describes as the virtual event: a welter of “turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion, condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, ‘sensitive’ points...”. In turn, this demands coding intensities and materialities through assemblages of Foreign Ministries, Embassies, high-level meetings, political speeches and foreign policy statements. Actualising events this way as pasts-presents-futures engages the political subjectivities of citizens with the hegemonic times and spaces of states, enabling their incorporation into sovereign political contexts. Thus as Protevi (2013, 42) observes, constructing linear “history...is the time-

keeping and self-fulfilling prophesy of States”, recasting lively materialities and affectivities to accelerate lines of flight towards preferred state futures.

In a major account of events in the making of state histories, Sewell (2005) examines how social relations produce chronologies for explicitly political purposes. We argue diplomats are central to this through their professional practices and embodied performances. Crucial here is how they attempt to actualise virtual events to relate to existing state geohistories through temporal elisions of one sort or another – in effect, diplomatic cuts and ruptures that fold particular times into state spaces. Adam (2004, 2008) is instructive on how this might be achieved.

First is diplomacies can cut virtual events into *temporalities* endorsing state action by imposing upon assemblages “directionality, that is, [progress toward] an unbounded future” (Adam 2008 6): so temporalities might be defined through new foreign policies promising delivery of desirable goals. Secondly, Adam emphasises policy *timing* – here “the synchronisation and co-ordination of [state] plans with projected outcomes” (Adam 2008 6) is often realised by diplomatic performances of their necessity in securing the ‘national interest’. Thirdly, diplomatic practices can underwrite the need to execute state policies at particular *tempos* – “the speed, pace [and] intensity of projected actions...packed into...a future already in the making”. Together, these temporal codings try to actualise virtual events with reference to state-sanctioned geohistorical, political, policy and electoral timings to create diplomatic “timescapes²” (Adam 2008 1) promoting the presence and purposefulness of states.

However, the multiple possible lines of flight of events mean their essence is never fully captured: “what History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency, in its self-positing concept, escapes History” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994 110). Yet no consideration exists of *how* events outdo diplomacy’s

² “a timescape perspective acknowledges...spatiality, materiality and contextuality but foregrounds the temporal side of the interdependency” (Adam 2008 1)

temporal codings this way. Crucial here is how posthumanist agencies challenge diplomatic actions targeting the “circulation of information and ideas about history and...conjuring up the past” (Bevernage and Wouters 2018 1) that are foundational to state presence. As important is to consider how the material and affective energies of virtual multiplicities course through diplomatic bodies to unsettle and remake human sensing of these events. In our view, both aspects require thinking through the inherently topological nature of events, for “...topology [enables] an understanding of the structural principles of order (and disorder) within the play of events and processes” (Markus and Saka 2006 104).

Topology is implicit in all assemblage thinking, and existing work provides a useful basis for analysing how material and affective intensities between assemblages exceed scalar configurations to precipitate events (Allen 2011; Martin and Secor 2014; Decuypere and Simons 2016). Massumi (2002) for example introduces concepts of event-transitivity and event-space. Event-transitivity refers to how affective and material intensities of events expand from their originating sites to cascade across assemblages, producing near and far secondary events that may be broadly similar to, or radically different from, what initiated them. Important here is the event-space within which events actualise: “what is pertinent about the event-space is not its boundedness, but what elements it lets pass, according to what criteria, at what rate, to what effect” (Massumi 2002, 85).

Applied to diplomacy, virtual events produce turbulences in geopolitical assemblages. These unbalance agreed geopolitical narratives, and jumble diplomatic bodies, practices and the discourses that sustain them. They trouble relations between diplomatic partners, and demand agility from diplomats to impose on rapidly cascading events the temporal ordering required by states. This therefore requires exploration of what we term *geopolitical teleconnections*. We define this as diplomatic attempts to manipulate the scale-invariant surfaces of material-affective intensity that spring up between assemblages, by tethering them to geohistories and policy narratives supportive of state presence. We argue the concept enables interrogation of diplomatic attempts to actualise events in particular ways (ranging from individual diplomatic acts, through to complex coordination of

diplomatic performances that may take place thousands of kilometres apart) by clarifying how these are realised in event-spaces. The concept makes visible how diplomatic efforts engage with virtual events unfolding at different rates and with different intensities, requiring discursive and embodied attempts to control material – affective excess – in effect, struggles to ‘tame’ the virtual event – over often vast distances.

This accords with Massumi’s concepts of event transitivity and event space. However, geopolitical teleconnections also entail consideration of how state apparatus second-guess the potential of virtual events to transform event spaces politically, and respond through diplomacies-in-the-act. We contend this requires attending more closely to the role of symmetries in material-affective dispositions between assemblages. As the number and alignment of assemblages at any given moment is infinite, state apparatus (including diplomats) work with the patterning of state-sanctioned geohistorical events, seeking to weave these into a temporal relation with desired futures. They do so by identifying material-affective symmetries between geohistorical events supportive of state presence and their attempted actualisation of virtual events. Crucial here is diplomats’ determination of “which parts of the past are felt to be near and related intimately to the present and which are perceived as alien and remote” (Clark 2019, 2). Attempting to actualise events so their material-affective dispositions are symmetrical with state-sanctioned geohistories are key to diplomatic efforts to normalise spatiotemporalities in turbulent times. Apparent normality is thus imprinted onto emergent assemblages through diplomacies actualising events to fit with the existing timescapes of states. Importantly, this also channels the flow of information across assemblages to support the spacings and timings of state-based ordering.

Certain virtual multiplicities are thus actualised as events ‘in the name of the state’, ie. as an active geopolitical strategy to substantiate the state’s presence and value during crises by downplaying other geopolitical relations. Multiple states of affairs are in this way rendered as singular affairs of state by apparatus denying or degrading particular evental lines of flight. Thus geopolitical teleconnections are different from Massumi in that they are less affectively than geostrategically driven; and different

from Massey's (2005) conception of place as emergent from spatial connections extending beyond localities in that multiple geohistorical times, as well as spaces, are invoked. Our contribution thus deepens current topological applications in assemblage thinking by clarifying how posthuman agencies reverberating through place-based localizations of power are lensed through diplomatic efforts to promote the logical necessity of the state. Actualising events this way is geostrategic in that it actively reproduces the modern geopolitical imagination. Hence teleconnections offer a coarse-grained description of how the disparate spaces and geohistorical times of diplomacy assemble and cohere around spontaneous happenings. 'The state' as hegemonic political object is maintained and changed by geopolitical teleconnections, and crucial here is how effectively mutable material-affective agencies can be alloyed through teleconnections with its fictive identities and meanings. Equally, teleconnections comprise countless diplomacies-in-the-act that actualise, and are actualised, through diplomatic bodies. Diplomats thus co-produce and experience events through their bodies, and their sensemaking of these events is remade through them. Our approach thus focuses attention on "The embodied human costs and benefits of participation in the diplomatic assemblage [that] are left unexamined" by existing studies (Flint *et al.* 2019, 184).

Engaging more closely with topological understandings of time and space through geopolitical teleconnections thus demands examination of two underexplored aspects of posthuman diplomacies. First is the topologies of diplomatic venues and the heterogeneous actors these venues comprise in efforts to actualise virtual multiplicities; as Woodward (2014 29) wryly observes, without this "monkey wrenches [can] be tossed into the works of the state". Second is the unsettling and repositioning of diplomatic bodies from the ensuing dissolution/recomposition of geopolitical assemblages, for diplomatic subjectivities are ultimately shaped by multi-sited and multi-scaled experiences and performances. Consequently, here we use geopolitical teleconnections to explore how diplomats seek to actualize events by invoking 'the state' through various apparatus, and the ways in which material-geopolitical excess inevitably evades capture to jolt and remake diplomatic subjectivities. Our empirical case is the tumultuous period in Icelandic history ushered in by the

country's financial collapse in September 2008, allowing us to discern how multiple affects, things and times underpin events as much as human action.

Methodology

The underpinning research for this paper was conducted in Iceland over the eight years 2008 – 15, regarded as the most turbulent geopolitically in the country's recent history (Thorhallsson 2013). This work explored Icelandic diplomacy over EU accession in relation to geographical uniqueness, mundane diplomacies and the friable nature of the state (Clark and Jones 2012; Jones and Clark 2013; Jones and Clark 2015) – all aspects cascading from or amplified by the country's financial crisis. Our methodology for the current study was directly shaped by this research and by assemblage thinking, specifically Deleuze's writing on the event. For Deleuze, the becoming of any event comprises backwards – forwards tracteries of multiple assemblages, demanding detailed longitudinal analysis. We thus re-examined extensive data sets from interviews conducted with senior negotiators, parliamentarians, diplomats, NGO representatives and policy staff on Iceland's EU experience through the lens of state attempts to coordinate and manage geopolitical teleconnections. Shedding light on geopolitical teleconnections and their emergent spatio-temporalities enabled us to follow evental trajectories released by the 2008 financial crisis (tellingly, characterised in Iceland as the *kreppa* – literally 'loss' or 'suffering') to enrich understanding of posthumanist diplomacies.

Supplementing this extensive data base, a further 11 semi-structured interviews with a senior Ministerial source in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) and ten high-ranking diplomats were also conducted. All had been interviewed as part of our earlier research, enabling them to reflect on how events in which they had been directly involved resounded beyond state borders. Between them, interviewees oversaw foreign policy during 2008 – 15, offering a unique 'inside' account of Icelandic geopolitics from within the highest echelons of the MFA. Respondents were interviewed in the Ministry and in offices near the Icelandic Parliament (*Alþingi*) in Reykjavík. By probing interviewees' in-the-act diplomacies to address the *kreppa* and to rationalise actions taken in relation to it, we sought to explore with them foreign policy narration of the Icelandic state project of EU accession;

how the unruly circulations of the *kreppa*-as-event challenged this narration; and, from their personal experience, what were the affective consequences of actualised events on their emotions and diplomatic subjectivities.

Interviewees' accounts were of course subjective, and invariably were couched in terms of statecraft advancing the cause of EU membership. Events were thus often described as successive crises of sovereignty and financial autonomy, requiring intensive diplomatic efforts to impose spatiotemporal order. Significant here was the need to realise Iceland-as-state in a time of crisis, for as one interviewee remarked: "What is Iceland? Is it only the country that tried to become a banking superpower and fell on its face? No, we are more than that". The candid comments that follow often betray the diplomatic struggles involved in taming the lively more-than-human forces driving this actualization process. They also show that bodily feelings and affects matter in the remaking of diplomatic subjectivities by offering fresh perspectives on diplomats' anxieties and frustrations in trying to shape the 'first cut' of foreign policy: a fraught process involving "collective assemblages of enunciation, machinic assemblages of desire, inside the other and...plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 44).

Diplomacy and the *kreppa*: assembling Iceland – EU

The transformative potential of the *kreppa* emerged with the collapse in September 2008 of Lehman Brothers, the US's fourth largest investment bank (Prasch 2011). Within a week, material-affective intensities between massive debts shot across global financial markets, breaking Iceland's three biggest banks (Glitnir, Landsbanki, and Kaupthing). Combined losses ran to almost eight times the country's gross domestic product, far beyond the Central Bank of Iceland (CBI)'s capacity to address. The national currency, the *króna*, plummeted, requiring the CBI to impose exchange controls and seek financial bail-outs from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Nordic countries. Politicians were left desperately seeking ways to shield Iceland's shattered economy, with the incumbent Haarde Government forced to resign in January 2009.

The *kreppa* also disrupted diplomatic worlds, demanding capture of this event by state apparatus. This teleconnection sought to address Iceland's financial meltdown through a state project imparting "directionality" (Adam 2008 2) – the imposition of linear chronological time – upon the *kreppa's* disorderly flows through state-determined temporalities, timings and tempos, enabling diplomats and politicians to realise the Icelandic state as meaningful at a moment of profound national crisis. In particular "the synchronisation and co-ordination of [state] plans with projected outcomes" (Adam 2008 6) was essential to shore up the MFA's claims of working in the 'national interest'. So once IMF and Nordic bail-outs were secured, interviewees described how a divided political class came uneasily together through a new Social Democratic Alliance–Left-Green Movement Coalition Government that recognised the shelter offered to a battered national economy by EU membership. A senior diplomat involved in these talks noted how "applying for membership was all about having a place to shelter from economic storms, a safe harbourage for Iceland. We'd always experienced the strong protective shield of the Nordic extended family, and I knew greater protection would be accorded to us in the EU as a matter of fact. That was absolutely part of our intention in taking the bid forward".

Yet this teleconnection required careful "synchronisation and co-ordination" (Adam 2008 2). On one hand, Iceland has deep European social and cultural affordances, demonstrated in membership of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (1970), and participation in the European Economic Area (EEA) (1994), and the Schengen Area (2001). Potent emotional energies arising from older colonial histories with European countries were also harboured in 'inside' assemblages however. Notably Iceland was a Danish colony for almost 500 years (Bergmann 2014), resulting in opposition to closer European ties especially among political parties and farming and fishing communities. But as the *kreppa* unfolded, the public attraction of joining the EU grew as a way of insulating the economy from further shocks (Thorhallsson and Rebhan 2011), with popular affective desire coded in May 2009 by the new Government submitting to the *Alþingi* a resolution to apply for EU membership. This was narrowly approved and the Government embarked on a formal application to the European Council. Again timing was crucial, with the Icelandic Minister for Foreign Affairs ensuring the application was delivered during Sweden's EU Presidency – an ally that just months before had

sanctioned EU bail-out loans to the country's stricken banks. On 17 June 2010 the European Council unanimously agreed to open accession negotiations.

Channelled through Iceland's participation in EFTA and EEA agreements, these material-affective attractions between 'inside' and 'outside' assemblages were formally coded in the Government's *General Position* statement, published on 27 July (MFA 2010). At face value, this document simply mapped out Iceland's aspirations for accession. More profoundly, it orchestrated consonant Icelandic and European materialities and affectivities, with diplomacies seeking to exert control over the extraordinary volatilities of the *kreppa*-as-event by promoting the stability that would be afforded Iceland by EU membership. To this end the text brings together symmetries between state-sanctioned pasts and presents to explore future diplomatic ordering between Iceland and Europe, noting that "from the days of settlement Iceland has been inextricably a part of Europe" (MFA 2010, 1), and how the "contribution of Iceland to the history and culture of Europe" and "its values steeped in the European tradition" (MFA 2010, 2) would accelerate the tempo of accession. Nonetheless, more contentious materialities and affectivities around Iceland's vast fisheries were also spelt out: "In the history of a fishing and seafaring nation like Iceland, fisheries also constitute our cultural history and are an important part of our self-identity. In fact, nearly every Icelander comes from a family of fishermen. We fought hard to gain control of this resource within our own exclusive economic zone" (MFA 2010, 5). Here the diplomatic agencies of Icelandic national interest directly acknowledge the difficulty of controlling protean more-than-human materialities and affects through foreign policy.

Crucially by its weaving together complementary tendencies, the *General Position* statement advanced a putative 'Iceland – EU' assemblage. The document sought to realise this assemblage through intensive rounds of diplomatic talks focused on thirty-four accession chapters (requiring major personnel recruitment by the MFA); the setting-up of nine negotiating groups in Iceland to harvest public opinion on accession; the hosting of EU political and diplomatic visits to the country (between 2010-13, eight intergovernmental, EP and EC visits were organized by Ministries); the siting of a new EU delegation in prime office space in downtown Reykjavík, changing the

materialities of bilateral diplomacy; and by orchestrating numerous staff exchanges between Reykjavík and Brussels to conduct policy screening activities. This confirms the *General Position* document as a significant geopolitical actor instigating new circulations of money, materials and affective flows of shelter routed through ‘Iceland – EU’.

Icelandic efforts to contain the *kreppa* were thus founded upon the *General Position* document’s diplomatic steerage, with senior negotiators using its red lines to gauge whether the ‘national interest’ could be squared with the enormous body of EU law, the *acquis communautaire*. Aware the Icelandic population was highly sceptical of actual membership, political advantage could nonetheless be gained through diplomatic talks buying time with financial markets (Prasch 2011) as well as providing evidence of the state taking control of events.

Nonetheless, diplomatic practices and performances could not tame all the material and affective excess unleashed by the *kreppa*. Moreover many interviewees overlooked that the Iceland – EU assemblage was itself eventful, marking a decisive break with decades of Icelandic Euroscepticism: the *General Position* statement notes “The negotiations which are starting today are a historic event in Iceland’s relations with the EU” (MFA 2010 10). Anderson (2016) shows how events open up new ways of being and doing. Notably Iceland – EU’s emergence changed the forces of attraction within existing assemblages by conferring on Iceland the affective charge of ‘EU candidate country’. In turn, this revalorised materialities and affects, creating intensities around which countless spontaneous, rather than planned, geopolitical teleconnections emerged.

We argue these spontaneous teleconnections around Iceland – EU proved more important in determining events than the high-level talks emphasized by interviewees. We focus here on two sets of teleconnections crucial to Iceland – EU that cascaded directly from the *kreppa* (see Table 1), blindsiding Icelandic diplomats as they tried to actualise events asserting state presence. These are, first, the Icesave banking dispute, where enormous monetary flows opened a huge gulf in political subjectivities between the state and its citizens, disrupting efforts to establish Iceland – EU. The

second set of teleconnections arose from the so-called ‘Mackerel War’, where enormous fish migrations disrupted diplomatic capacities to narrate foreign policy in the face of growing economic hardship in Iceland, so weakening state efforts to consolidate the affordances of Iceland – EU. These examples are selected as they represent material-geopolitical intensities around the *kreppa* directed through novel diplomatic agreements of the EEA (Icesave), contrasting with long-established material-geopolitical intensities around fisheries (Mackerel) (Table 1). As interviewees’ comments reveal, diplomatic efforts to address the resulting “swarm of differences” (Deleuze 1994, 50) through foreign policy were swept aside by the material-affective turbulence they unleashed.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The Iceland – EU assemblage: geopolitical teleconnections around Icesave

Following the *kreppa*, the Government’s first challenge was tackling the fallout from Landsbanki and Kaupthing’s bankrupt internet arms (Icesave and Edge respectively) which had left thousands of UK and Dutch depositors stranded. The Depositors’ and Investors’ Guarantee Fund (*Tryggingarsjóður*) reimbursed foreign and national account holders but the sheer scale of domestic losses drained this almost immediately, leaving overseas deposits unsecured. Here Icelandic participation in EFTA and the EEA brought times and spaces abruptly together as multiple geopolitical teleconnections. How to control ‘outside’ materialities and affectivities in which almost 350,000 British and Dutch investors were exposed to debts of c. €6.5bn (Agence France Presse 2008) posed searching questions of the CBI in the face of suddenly hostile UK-Dutch authorities. The resulting ‘Icesave dispute’ arose from numerous transversal fields of attraction proliferating through heterogeneous elements as small as financial algorithms to individual losses of livelihood, major business bankruptcies and lengthy legal disputes. The volume of actual and virtual monetary flows was enormous: 85% of Iceland’s financial sector was declared insolvent by 22 October 2008, with uncertainty in the CBI over the magnitude, much less the actual amount, of financial flows out-of-country.

Icesave as virtual event transited with countless ‘outside’ assemblages in the UK and the Netherlands to actualise in radically different ways. Sedimented colonial relations between Iceland and the UK, and memories of centuries- old Dutch piratical actions against the country – including slaving raids – played a part here (Esra 2013). So while the *kreppa* registered in Iceland, the Netherlands and the UK as economic debt, the affective registers in event-spaces were dissimilar. In Iceland shock, anger and loss abounded; in the UK and Netherlands emotions surfaced as desire to settle scores with the CBI over its alleged double standards in reimbursing domestic creditors first. Even at thousands of kilometres distance, Icesave had profoundly material consequences. On 10 December 2008 De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB) started refunding lost deposits to Dutch savers at up to €100,000 per person. To do so, sixty temporary staff were hired to process claims from the second floor of DNB’s Amsterdam headquarters. With around 120,000 claimant files and dossiers already stored here in reinforced crates, the building was unable to support the weight of people and papers, and the entire department had to be moved (Meijer 2008).

In the UK, the sheer volume of internet transactions left the Bank of England’s audit teams floundering in their attempts to identify affected parties. As it emerged the most heavily indebted depositors included UK Local Authorities, political affectivities abruptly changed. Event transitivity unfolded with extraordinary speed, entangling UK financial and diplomatic assemblages and demanding state attempts to control monetary flows. In the UK, the Treasury enforced linear temporalities on Icesave through the hastily imposed Landsbanki Freezing Order (2008). Passed by the UK Parliament at 10am on 8 October and coming into force just ten minutes later, this allowed the Treasury to freeze Landsbanki and CBI assets, breaking financial flows by coding state action as terrorist-related under the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act (HMG 2001). Here symmetries between the unruly material-affective energies of Icesave and handling imperial crisis situations from the country’s colonial past were actualised through law as a geopolitical power play by the UK Government: an estimated 690.4bn *króna* (€4.0bn) of assets was seized this way.

This abrupt change in UK political affectivities towards Iceland – from fellow NATO member and trading partner to a terrorist threat – signalled a massive diplomatic rupture between the two countries. The resulting roil of competing Icelandic-UK political timings between assemblages stirred things, bodies, emotions and materials in complex unpredictable ways, right up to the highest political level. On 9 October, Prime Minister Gert Haarde announced that the Icelandic Government was “shocked” by the UK’s “very hostile action” (Morgunblaðið 2008). Haarde elaborated on this in a statement to the *Alþingi* on 15 October, saying the UK’s intervention was “absolutely unacceptable”. In interview, the diplomacies-in-action on the Icelandic side at this time are vividly recalled by a senior Ministry source:

“[the use of anti-terrorism legislation] came as a personal shock. Gordon Brown was the most deeply unpopular man here, because of his use of the terrorism measures. This was insulting and very bad for me – and it stigmatised Iceland in the world. So I directed all the necessary actions of the Icelandic diplomatic service to fight a hard battle. Fighting, first, the consequences of Icesave, and then to show to the EU we are not to blame and we’ll do everything we can to redress the impact, as we are members of the EEA. And of course in this fight we had to struggle with the UK and the Netherlands from suffocating us. Because it was so tough – everyone here was angry because they’d lost their money, and the Government was widely, perhaps rightly, blamed for this... . And this, all this, before we’d even applied for EU membership”.

Etched in these comments are diplomatic attempts to control Icesave’s looping spatiotemporalities – its different actualizations in Iceland and the UK, and backwards – forwards tracteries linking the *kreppa* via virtual financial worlds to future diplomatic codings of Iceland – EU. Moreover and tellingly, this interviewee shows how diplomatic bodies are shaped through the recomposition of assemblages: namely the UK government’s action being experienced by this interviewee almost as a physically aggressive act, prompting personal distress and disbelief (“...came as a personal shock...insulting and very bad for me...”). So while seeking to increase the political tempo of “necessary [diplomatic] actions” to respond to EU affectivities over Icesave (“we are not to blame”),

it is clear this was not easy because of countervailing actions taken by the UK and Dutch governments (likened to “suffocation”, showing this diplomat almost as embodied signifier of a state disordered by events). Other interviewees confirmed that multiple individual diplomatic subjectivities across the MFA were remade by the forcefulness of this event. Thus a senior MFA figure remarked how diplomacies were entirely overwritten at this time by ruptured political affectivities with the UK and Netherlands:

“the image we were trying to project was that, first, we were not to blame [for Icesave], and secondly that we will do everything we can to pay back what is due to our partners. These were the most important elements diplomatically”.

Icesave also massively folded local event-spaces, leading to strenuous attempts to actualise affectivities through three successive ‘Icesave’ Parliamentary Bills. In the first two of these, the Government proposed to repay all (‘Icesave 1’) and then a proportion of the Dutch and UK government’s incurred debt (‘Icesave 2’) through loans raised via new taxes. This was however spurned by Icelanders who staged public demonstrations and launched online petitions demanding a national referendum to reverse the legislation. This was held in March 2010 and overwhelmingly rejected the proposed loan plan, with 93% voting against and fewer than 2% in favour³. In effect, the state’s legitimacy and authority to act was fundamentally questioned by its citizens, with the Icesave bills opening a rift between national affective (‘us’) and political (‘citizen’) subjectivities. Reflecting on similar measures taken by the Argentine government following financial crisis, Goddard (2006 279) notes how such legislative moments “interpolate...[citizens both] as individual subjects and as part of a national community. The perceived historical quality of [the] moment, its transcendence, [is] precisely to do with [a] collapsing of individual fate and national destiny, which in turn [speaks] to the recognition of the event as the imbrication of past, present and future”.

³ A second, much closer, national referendum held in April 2011 also rejected the loan proposal, resulting in UK and Dutch governments taking the case to the EFTA court (see table 1)

Icesave's geopolitical teleconnections also recast affectivities with the EU. At a press conference on 12 November, EC President José Manuel Barroso noted the Icesave dispute must be resolved before further EU financial assistance was made to Iceland over the *kreppa*. Foreign Minister Ingibjörg Gísladóttir commented ruefully that "We are isolated when all 27 EU member states agree that we have to reach an accord on Icesave" (Mason 2009). In interview, a senior Ministry source was blunt in assessing the effects this had on diplomatic capacities to narrate foreign policy, and how this felt personally:

"When it emerged in our media that...Brussels was going to allow the EU institutions to assist the British and the Dutch with their claims against us through the IMF – when this burst forth in the media, that was a real kick in the balls. We acknowledged that later, but at that time we didn't have good intelligence and we didn't know that they had a meeting with the ECOFIN, the Council of Finance Ministers, where this came out. That was a low, I can tell you".

Icesave thus caused huge surge in affectivities and materialities across European financial and state assemblages at exactly the time Iceland brought forward the state project of EU accession. Moreover, other unforeseen teleconnections now also began to materialise around components of Iceland – EU.

The Iceland – EU assemblage: geopolitical teleconnections around the 'Mackerel war'

Iceland is a fluid sea-land ordering anchored by enormously productive fish stocks (Clark and Jones 2017). Maritime assemblages (fish species, fishing communities) and state apparatus of control (fisheries regulations, and geohistoric struggles to establish Iceland's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)) were therefore central to Iceland – EU's emergence, with fish literally emblematic of this assemblage (Figure 1).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

So it was unsurprising that in its *General Position* statement, the Coalition Government emphasised in colourful language the importance of these maritime flows to Icelandic livelihoods:

“In the history of a fishing and seafaring nation like Iceland, fisheries also constitute our cultural history and are an important part of our self-identity... . They are the life blood of the Icelandic economy” (MFA 2010, 5).

While the Government sought to control maritime assemblages this way as state-sanctioned geohistory, infinitely more material-affective forces remained submerged, extending far below the island. Just a month after publication of the *General Position* statement these manifested as upwelling of warm waters in the Atlantic Ocean, bringing enormous mackerel shoals much further north than usual to spawn in Icelandic and Faroese waters. With mackerel in Iceland’s EEZ, intensities of the *kreppa* resurfaced. This enormous material excess connected with acute economic hardship of Icelanders and the exigencies of multiple times and spaces of the state. In turn, diplomats saw the potential of fostering material-affective symmetries with the country’s successful defence of its fisheries stocks in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s during the ‘Cod Wars’ with the UK. Crucially, this teleconnection depended upon buccaneering statecraft and swift, decisive action. The result was “cash-strapped Iceland” (Davies 2010) unilaterally declaring a huge increase in mackerel quota from 2,000 to 130,000 tonnes.

The material force of millions of tonnes of migrating fish released political affectivities not just in Iceland, but also among fishing communities and fisheries sectors thousands of kilometres distant in Ireland, the UK and France. These were directly routed into ongoing EU prenegotiations via the *General Position* document within which fisheries was flagged as a key chapter for discussion. We show here how these excess materials and affects actualised at different rates and intensities as myriad events, dissolving affordances needed to coalesce Iceland – EU and disrupting diplomatic subjectivities.

Interviewees characterised the pull of mackerel volumes on diplomatic bodies as “visceral”.

Noteworthy was heated discussion in the European Parliament on imposing trade sanctions on Iceland in response to its unilateral hike in mackerel quota. In interview, one Icelandic diplomat based in Brussels recalled his immediate feelings and how this meant diplomacies-in-action needed to be ramped up:

“The mackerel business was very intense. The EU was proposing very tough measures, debated in the European Parliament, and I remember an Irish counterpart talking about all sorts of trade sanctions that I knew were illegal under WTO rules and the EEA agreement. We were aghast at trade sanctions being proposed against us, so I had to cultivate the big players. And at that time, what we were trying to project – the MFA here, and me through my work in Brussels – was the general picture that Iceland was a fishing country. It survives on trade, and fishing sustainably... .And in terms of mackerel, we also tried quite cleverly I think to address this, saying the debate should be settled on the basis of scientific guidance and advice, not national claims or counterclaims”.

These comments encapsulate how Icelandic diplomats strove to tame affective excess (“claims and counterclaims”) of EU states by using scientific data and technological codings unavailable to other countries: a means of taking heat out of debate and slowing down political time by striating turbulent geopolitical affects into more manageable discussions. This teleconnection was helped by the EU’s acknowledging the world-leading Icelandic technologies of fisheries management (including the Independent Transferrable Quota system and fisheries stock monitoring) as key in reforming its problematic Common Fisheries Policy. As important was the way close working collaborations between Icelandic diplomats and their EU peers were tapped for information gathering in Brussels. As one senior diplomat commented:

“Myself and my closest associates in the MFA were very well informed. And we did this through the diligence of our Embassy in Brussels – we’ve by far our largest overseas presence there. And our aim with these staff is for all of them to be very well connected. So we knew always when there was going

to be a meeting of the Fisheries Ministers and what was going to be proposed, and what the positions of the different countries would be. We had extremely good information on the positions of everyone, and pretty soon found out who was two-faced and who was telling us the truth”.

Yet as the Mackerel war wore on, corralling these affectivities meant imprinting the materialities of fisheries onto more and more elements of Iceland – EU, just when wider affordances were needed to ensure its viability. In effect, the elusive, quicksilver movements of mackerel wove a net around the ongoing accession talks. This net was tightened further by EU member states around the Atlantic whose fishing communities were now lobbying for a share of the mackerel bonanza. The timing of mackerel mobilities with the diplomacies-in-action needed to actualize Iceland – EU was therefore crucial. As a senior Ministry source observed:

“You know, with the Irish especially in 2010 it was always a hall of mirrors...they ‘always supported us on the accession’ [makes speech mark gestures], you know, just ‘not right now’. The [Irish] Fisheries Minister was often making very negative and harmful official declarations. But of course the Irish ‘always offered us wholehearted support’ [gestures again] – just not publicly. But they are Celts, so there was always some resonance there⁴. Now with the French it was quite a different story. Gradually it dawned on me that if you were talking about [Icelandic] accession, the French were against it. And they wanted to be very tough on me, on the Icelandic position, so there was a precedent there when and if the remaining Balkan states applied – you know, ‘well, we made an example of Iceland, they had to go through the eye of an needle, so you’ll go through it as well’. They never told us so of course, and would claim even today that they never opposed us. But they burrowed into the southern European delegation, and got them to complain to Barroso that they definitely didn’t want the fisheries chapter to be opened, which of course was vitally important to our application; and that they wanted tough opening benchmarks from the Commission for fisheries. So the only option we

⁴ These positive affectivities are explained by Iceland tracing its roots to an independent ‘Commonwealth’ founded in 930AD, when a community of people of Celtic and Nordic origin settled the country.

had was to always play as well as we could the candidate state card, to prevent the Irish and the French taking us to the cleaners over mackerel quota. That was really important at this time”.

The cascading tracteries of events are clearly exposed here, as is the interviewee’s fury over ruptures in political affect with southern European delegates – and vehemence at this being allegedly stoked by French diplomacies⁵. Apparent too is French awareness of how multi-terminous unfolding events might act as symmetrical “templates of possibility” (Berezin 2012 613) for future EU accessions by Balkan countries. Crucially, this meant Iceland had to invoke its candidate country status to annul rival diplomatic performances of “the constant, stupid threats of the mackerel trade sanctions”. However, this only came at the cost of dissipating political affectivities needed to underwrite Iceland – EU. The resulting animosity around Iceland – EU was characterised pithily by Struan Stevenson, Scottish MEP and senior vice-president on the EP's Fisheries Committee:

“Here is a nation coming to the table to become a member of the EU. Yet, what have they given us? ...Financial problems with their referendum and refusing to pay the debts they owe Britain. And now they are acting in this extraordinarily aggressive fashion over fish stocks. What they are doing is effectively illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing”.

Immense mackerel migrations thus sparked multiple spontaneous teleconnections, causing roil in ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ assemblages to rupture and reconfigure Icelandic geopolitical power and diplomatic capacities to narrate foreign policy. Already set back by Icesave, Iceland – EU seemed to be overwhelmed by the material forces unleashed by the seas.

Disassembling Iceland – EU and different diplomatic closures of the event

Preaccession negotiations limped on through 2011 – 13. Following Icelandic elections in June 2013, the incoming Centre-Right Government, sceptical of closer European affiliation, set out new

⁵ We thank a referee for pointing out that everyday popular perceptions of Iceland in Portugal, Spain and Italy were enhanced by this episode, as Icelandic citizens were seen as the driving force behind this change in foreign policy.

diplomatic timings and tempo for Iceland – EU by informing the European Commission that it intended to “put the negotiations on hold”, as there was little public appetite for proceeding (MFA 2013). Despite requests from EC President José Manuel Barroso to clarify Iceland’s long-term intentions “without further delay...the clock is ticking” (EC 2013), the response from Reykjavík was muted. Foreign Minister Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson gnomically remarked “The [Icelandic] government is in agreement on this subject...the [accession] process has been suspended. But nothing has been closed down, and we will improve our communication and strengthen our ties with the EU without actually joining” (MFA 2013).

Sveinsson’s assurances notwithstanding, this resetting of diplomatic relations had consequences. As political affectivities around Iceland – EU changed, intensities between its constituent assemblages waned. Elements began to break away, with the MFA negotiating committee wound up in September 2013. On 12 March 2015, the MFA issued a press release noting “The government considers that Iceland is no longer a candidate country and requests the EU to act in accordance with this from now on” (MFA 2015), with a formal letter from Sveinsson announcing this decision delivered to the European Council. Yet at a Press Briefing the next day, a EU spokesperson claimed the Icelandic Government had *not* withdrawn its candidacy, but instead suspended negotiations for two years: “If at the end of this period they wished to withdraw, this would need to be lodged with the European Council” (EC 2015). In February 2017, the present Government pledged to hold a parliamentary vote on staging a referendum to restart negotiations. So far this had not taken place. Hence questions arise over whether Iceland’s request for membership has been withdrawn, and what is the fate of Iceland – EU. These are answered by the different ways Icesave’s virtual multiplicities were actualised by and through the varied political times, venues and actors of rival Icelandic and EU diplomacies, with both seeking to narrate different closures to the unsettling of EU-Iceland relations instigated by the *General Position* document. Geopolitical teleconnections thus structure moments of dissolution of assemblages, as much as their immanence.

The MFA's claim of Iceland – EU being the product of carefully calibrated statecraft is thus lacking. Certainly, prenegotiations generated intensities between assemblages, bringing material credibility to the EU membership bid. This meant eliding the *kreppa's* eventual flows to fashion a state project of pre-accession, and ordering, coordinating and performing diplomacies-in-action, notably around Icesave and mackerel (eg. depicting the Mackerel War as a symmetrical eventual continuation of the Cod Wars once shoals entered the EEZ). It also required coding the circular times of events to make them tractable to domains of state responsibility (eg. 'foreign affairs'), timing (eg. the precise moment chosen to submit the membership application), and tempo (eg. certain events being dramatized as 'significant' by suddenly intensifying diplomatic activities and 'effort'). This needed credible, coordinated diplomatic performances in the face of counteractualizations of the same event by the EU (eg. the MFA's "clever" handling of the mackerel dispute in the face of EU disapproval and sanctions). Similarly, efforts to organize materials and affects relating to Iceland – EU were badged as realms of professional diplomatic expertise (eg. the 'uniqueness' of Iceland tendered in the *General Position* document). The MFA's account thus sought to portray the Icelandic state as *the* central massing figure controlling the political affectivities and material forces of posthuman events, playing up certain intensities while shutting down others. In every diplomatic sense then, state maintenance is high maintenance.

Crucially though this is only one line of flight for the Iceland – EU assemblage – a trajectory seeking to legitimise the state's sovereign authority to act in times of economic collapse. We have argued a more complete account of the intertwined events around the *kreppa* and Iceland – EU lies in material affordances and geopolitical energies proving decisive to this assemblage. Key here is how material and affective intensities reverberated between near assemblages and those thousands of kilometres from Reykjavík, demanding diplomatic attempts to tether the events these intensities unleashed to state-sanctioned narratives. The resulting geopolitical teleconnections bring to light mundane as much as transformative events: the innumerable individual acts and lives discharging affective forces to determine the Icesave referendum outcome; the patterns of interference caused by multiple

teleconnections piling up in some spaces and times; and how uncaptured elements of the *kreppa*-as-virtual-event continue to fold space-time.

Overall, we contend scrutiny of geopolitical teleconnections gives valuable new insights into diplomatic capacities to narrate foreign policy. This concept transcends the ploys of statecraft to acknowledge the withheld and withdrawn properties of materials, things and territories. It decentres Iceland's diplomacies-in-the-act to show the significance of multiple material flows, affective intensities and collective agencies in the making of diplomatic bodies and worlds. Ultimately, just like all state diplomacy, Iceland's narration of foreign policy sought to break the continual flow of events for partisan geopolitical purposes.

Conclusions

This paper has brought together thinking on assemblage and topologies to develop the concept of geopolitical teleconnections as a tool to examine diplomatic efforts to control material-affective excess of events by asserting state presence. We have illustrated the concept's value by examining how diplomacies-in-the-act tried to impose the linear time of the Icelandic state onto geopolitical turbulence around its prenegotiations over EU membership, itself a direct response to the 2008 financial crisis. This comprised temporal ordering through diplomatic scripts (the *General Position* statement), performances (bilateral negotiations, hosting EU and member state visits) and practices in efforts to map unpredictable events onto the spacetimes of the Icelandic state, with the goal of securing geoeconomic and geopolitical shelter for the country from the EU. We have shown how these diplomacies grappled with the material-affective circulations of virtual events, only to be swept aside by their protean forces (including vast fish migrations and enormous volumes of monetary and financial flows) recomposing the island's identities and political subjectivities.

We have not simply argued for the existence of geopolitical teleconnections, but instead have shown how decentring diplomacies-in-the-act contests mainstream views that diplomatic events are somehow rational, cognitive acts of statecraft. In its place, complex diplomatic entanglements with

more-than-human agencies are disclosed that profoundly influence state attempts at temporal ordering via foreign policy. Notably, the extended spatio-temporalities of posthuman events link local geographic contexts with numerous outside multiplicities, often over vast distances – from the small of claimant’s documents in reinforced crates in a Dutch bank, to the unanticipated of emergency UK anti-terrorism legislation and European Parliament plenary sessions, to the immensities of (mackerel) species migration. These material and affective capacities cannot be contained, predicted or directed with any certainty, and attempts at control by imposing the strictures of linear time merely serve to expose the frailties of state diplomacy.

Geopolitical teleconnections also open out new directions in research on how evental cascades recompose assemblages to jolt diplomatic bodies and subjectivities, prompting states of disorder/disordered states. Further work here could focus on how diplomats negotiate the dissolution of assemblages through moments of shock, anxiety, creativity, and changed emotions, and how they decompress after these moments. Diplomacies in-the-act will likely vary with age, experience, ethnicity and gender (cf. Enloe 2014; Herzl 2014). Teleconnections thus contribute to assemblage theory by showing the extensities of bodily feelings and affects coursing through/around diplomatic events. Similarly, the study reveals how larger assemblages are shaped by the events through which they have passed, their interior components, and their exteriorities. Thus state-sanctioned geohistories are central to diplomacy’s actualisation of events, as they comprise assemblages with the necessary material-affective dispositions to sustain state identities in the modern geopolitical imagination. Our analysis of the empirical terrain of Icelandic foreign policy shows how these geohistories are mobilised to furnish temporary stabilisations and hiatuses within assemblages that crucially make possible “circumstantial worlds” for new diplomatic initiatives (McCormack 2016 3).

Teleconnections thus offer a powerful means of understanding the precarious nature of states in contemporary geopolitics, where “the warping of temporality by power, the appropriation of historicity by the claimers of sovereignty...may be consciously or even aggressively directed” (Clark 2019, 212). From this perspective, the state is emphatically *not* a stable political – territorial entity,

but a congeries of assemblages and past – present – future events in teleconnected spacetime, with diplomacy providing one means of giving a sense of permanency to something profoundly unstable.

While we have introduced new areas for research, there is clearly more work to be done in clarifying the imbrications between virtual and actualised diplomatic events. Not least, we have shown that diplomatic worlds are sensed by diplomatic bodies in ways that go beyond the chronologies of actualised events. If virtual events do indeed exceed attempts at diplomatic ordering and codification, what effects do their surplus affective and material energies have in terms of associated sensations? This raises the question of how the ‘only felt’ of affectivities and the ‘only thought’ of codings might be traced on diplomatic bodies, and how and in what ways the uncaptured moments of virtual events fold diplomatic worlds. Such work could enable new ways of “examining the dynamic relations by which, on one hand, the borders and territories of the world order are maintained, challenged, and (re)defined; and on the other hand, [how diplomats] constitute themselves as subjects and communities capable of transformative agency across and within such border laden realities” (Mitchell and Kallio 2017, 1). Exploration of how these diplomatic sensations are experienced at a variety of spatial and temporal registers – and their imbrication with diplomatic fields of rules, norms and behaviours – now needs urgent attention.

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