

Seeing Ghosts: Media Infrastructures and Built Space in Post-Crisis Ireland

Ireland's landscape is dotted with the remnants of its financial crisis in the form of "ghost estates," empty or unfinished housing developments abandoned after the burst of the housing bubble. Despite the mobilization of these estates as the primary symbol and visible evidence of the crisis, other built spaces provide insight into the foreclosed futures, ruins, and residues of Irish economic development during the Celtic Tiger (1990s-2000s). Ireland's landscape, highly colonized by imaginations and aspirations of both an idyllic (colonial) past and (European) modernity, encloses these ruins of financialization and media investment in its built environment. However, rather than releasing the potential of the outmoded, in the Benjaminian sense, their (re)development enacts neoliberal violence against the obsolete, the unnecessary, and the unprofitable. In particular, the use of Irish space for media production (both visual media and the tech industries) transforms spatial formations in visible and invisible ways. The simultaneous reestablishment of the Irish Film Board (1993) and the emergence of the Celtic Tiger is significant—in the same way that the built environment was opened for foreign investment, media production used the same spaces for different circulations. I argue that the visualization and study of these spaces, especially in post-crisis Ireland, renders their operations (and breakdowns) detectable and to a certain extent comprehensible. Discussing the built environment and media production and circulation under the purview of State initiatives, especially in terms of the construction of the ideal "creative city," redeveloped neighborhoods, and the free-zoning of Irish space, we can conclude how to resist State privileging of private development by looking at such policies through media production within (sub)urban environments.