Changing Perceptions of European Identity in the Scottish Independence Movement

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1. Introduction

Following two dividing referendums on Scottish independence and the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union, Scotland is undergoing a tumultuous period in which its identity is widely being debated and (re)negotiated. In particular the EU referendum and the ensuing negotiations on Brexit have resulted in Britain entering a liminal phase of change without a foreseeable ending. Within this transformational context, European identity is being understood in new ways and with new meanings. For some it is a defiant expression of connection: a root and a route to the rest of Europe; for others it is also an expression of disconnection between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom and is incorporated into the support for Scottish independence.

This working paper will present the progress of an ongoing research project in which I aim to explore the function of European identity within the Scottish pro-independence movement, with a particular focus on the relation between European identity and small-state vulnerability. If Scotland became an independent state, it would be considered as a small state in Europe (Bailes, Thorhallsson and Lorna Johnstone, 2013). Small state studies have argued that such states are particularly vulnerable to their external environment (Keohane, 1969; Katzenstein, 1985). This line of study has been based within the political sciences, which have proposed several strategies small states use to counteract their vulnerability (Thorhallsson, 2018). What I aim to study in this research project is what role the narrative construction of European identity plays (1) as a reaction to the liminality caused by Brexit, (2) in the context of separation and differentiation with the rest of the United Kingdom and (3) in the resilience-formation of Scotland as a new, independent small state. By arguing that European identity may also be used to create resilience within small states, I aim to contribute to both ethnology and small state studies. I will first present a literature review on identity, small state studies and the current political situation in Scotland, followed by a methodology and a description of the pilot study which I have already done.

2. Literature review

Identity

I understand identity as being inherently ambiguous with no one correct overarching definition. I will use the following definitions of identity by van Meijl and Simon & Klandermans as starting points to my understanding of the concept: identity is ‘the creation of boundaries to define the self and the other in time and space’ (van Meijl, 2010, p. 71) and ‘in the most basic social psychological sense, identity is a place in the social world (Simon and Klandermans, 2001, p. 320). These definitions contain elements which I will explore throughout this section. I also acknowledge there is a distinction between identity as it is experienced and identity as an analytical concept (Bausinger et al., 1978, p. 204). In
ethnology, these can be understood respectively as conceptualising identity from an *emic* or from an *etic* perspective. The two do not necessarily correspond, as the criteria used in etic analysis might have no relevance to those experience said identity. This follows Durkheim’s argument that a ‘social fact’ is not necessarily connected or related to an empirical fact (Durkheim, 1950; Kantner, 2006, p. 507). Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between the ontological study of the etic analysis of identity and the hermeneutic study of the emic experience of identity (Kantner, 2006, p. 507). In this research I will not regard one perspective more correct than the other.

Although I will explore the concept of identity as an overarching concept, the aim of the section is to move towards an understanding of *European* identity. As with identity in general, much has been written on European identity with different opinions on how it should be understood and whether it exists at all. Within this article I will not present an overview of this whole debate,¹ I will however refer to it throughout this section thereby establishing a link between identity studies in general and the particular study of European identity.

**Why study identity?**

The inherently ambiguous properties of the identity concept has led academics to question its usefulness. In a seminal article published in 2000, Brubaker and Cooper criticised the use of identity in academic literature and even proposed to abandon the term altogether (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). They argued that the presumption of the presence of identity means that some form of essentialism will always be part of conceptualisations of identity, even if it is done from a constructivist perspective. One of these essentialist features is a presumed groupist ontology which excludes forms of non-groupist social life (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Eder, 2009, p. 429).

One of the overall questions coming from these criticisms is then whether we can and should presume the essential presence of identity. This leads me to the discussion on essentialism and constructivism. The rise of post-structuralism in the second half of the 19th century resulted in a change in the way identity was understood. In earlier literature, identity was predominantly thought of as being essentialist, meaning that it was formed by primordial features and that it was described as being ‘relatively fixed in space–time, stable and immutable, a precipitate of the past experiences and expressions of previous generations, picked up in childhood’ (Tilley, 2006, p. 9). The second half of the 20th century saw the development of constructivist thinking on identity, meaning that identities are continuously (re)constructed and changed over time by different actors, which is in start contrast to the essentialist approach. As Tilley writes: ‘That persons and groups ultimately have no stable identity is a logical outcome of a non-essentialist position. Identity is transient, a reflection on where you are now, a fleeting moment in a biography of the self or the group, only partially connected to where you might have come from, and where you might be going’ (Tilley, 2006, p. 9). An essentialist perspective on identity perhaps made more sense in a time in which national borders were more obvious and communication and transport were slower, when it was easier to answer the identity question. For some, essentialism has then also become old-fashioned, insofar that the term is used as an accusation in academics, as is also implied by Brubaker and Cooper (2000).

¹ A good and recent overview of the debate on European identity can be found in Scalise (Scalise, 2015, pp. 596–8).
But I believe that an essentialist approach to elements of identity cannot be discarded. Kockel (2012, p. 67) argues that ‘it actually proves impossible even to think about certain issues without resorting to some kind of essentialism. Identity is one such issue.’ As an example, even the constructivist idea that identity is constantly changing means that constant change is an essential attribute of identity. This is of course similar to Brubaker and Cooper’s initial criticism of identity, the difference being that Kockel does not imply it is necessarily a bad thing, something Eder agrees with (2009, pp. 429–30). These essentialist features is what Kockel refers to as deep essentialism (2012, p. 67). The ensuing question, which relates to Brubaker and Cooper criticism is then whether having an identity is deep essential. This is a fundamental question of identity studies which influences all other studies. I will follow the argumentation of Kantner (2006), who has developed a system of categorising different emic perceptions of identity. This system will be discussed further below, but for now it suffices to mention that her highest level of identity is the universal We1. This is the identity of every human being, as opposed to animals and the dead material world (Kantner, 2006, p. 507). As Greenfeld writes: having an identity is ‘psychological imperative’ as well as a ‘sociological constant’ (Greenfeld, 1999, p. 38). The recognition of being human is in itself an emic conceptualisation of identity, which is a deep essentialist attribute of identity. In other words, having an identity is part of being human. I believe this is enough argument to warrant its study, in particular if increasing our knowledge of it might help us understand extreme human behaviour such as genocide (Moshman, 2007).

A variant of this criticism is also present in the discussion on European identity. Scalise notes that one a strand of the debate on European identity argues that there is no such thing as a European identity (Scalise, 2015, p. 596). This argument does not necessarily question the presence of identity as a whole, but suggests that there is such a large variety of local cultures, traditions and values in Europe that finding one overarching European identity is impossible (Scalise, 2015, p. 596). This argument presumes a universalist approach to European identity, meaning that it is not possible to find one European identity which is similar across the continent (for example: White, 2012). While I agree that finding one common interpretation of European identity across the continent is utopian, I disagree that this is enough reason to disregard the use of the concept. A similar identity can be perceived differently by different people, and this is also the case for European identity. As Bruter argues: ‘when two individuals claim to ‘feel European’, they might mean totally different things in terms of both the intensity of the feeling they describe and the imagined political community they refer to’ (Bruter, 2003, p. 1154). As long as there are people who identify with Europe, we can speak of a European identity. That there are such people has been proven by quantitative research, such as Eurobarometers (European Commission, 2013). While such quantitative studies might confirm the presence of a European identity, they give us little understanding on how these identities are understood or expressed, thereby also giving a false impression that a common European identity is present among different European states.

Identity therefore has both essential and constructed elements. This dual nature of identity can help us understand the ambiguity of the universal, shared and unique properties of the concept. Constructivism implies that identities are created, which makes identity a form of creation, or in other words a creative act. What does that imply for those who partake in this process of creation? German artist Joseph Beuys famously said ‘Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler’ (every man is an artist) (Joachimides and Rosenthal, 1974). As Kockel (2011) and McFadyen (2018) argue, what he meant by this is that it is the birthright of every person to shape society, or in other words the ability to contribute to the shaping of those around us, to constructing their identity. As I will discuss below, at the same time as our identities shaping society, our identities are shaped by society. I interpret this creative back and forth
communication between the self and society (which includes the other(s)) as an essentialist element of identity: we are all artists and we each have (and use) the ability to create and to contribute to the evolution of society in some form. But it is the manner in which we do so which is expressed by (constantly) becoming and being ourselves which is unique. This is the constructed element of identity, constructed by society and by ourselves. I will follow this understanding of identity: that the content of identity is constructed, but the act of construction is essential.

What is identity?

A second argument of Brubaker and Cooper is that identity is used with so many different, sometimes non-compatible, meanings that it has lost its usefulness and become obscure. They add to this that the use of identity within literature is often unnecessary, and that other terms can be used instead (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). This argument has forced academics writing on identity to clearly define their understanding of the term. I believe Brubaker and Cooper’s criticism is justified in the sense that identity’s ambiguity makes it particularly prone to misuse. Several authors agree with this stance as well but add that the solution proposed by Brubaker and Cooper, to abandon the term, is unhelpful. Instead, a clearer definition and understanding of identity is necessary (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Eder, 2009; Kaina and Karolewski, 2009; Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx, 2011). This definition should recognise the inherent multidimensionality of the concept (Côté, 2006; Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx, 2011), which includes at least three levels of analysis: ‘the subjectivity of the individual, behaviour patterns specific to the individual, and the individual’s membership in societal groups’ (Côté, 2006, p. 8). Elsewhere, these have also been described as individual, relational and collective identities (Smith, 1992; Sedikides and Brewer, 2001). Following Eder (2009), the second and third are respectively a psychological and a sociological analysis of identity. I acknowledge that these different levels of identity continuously interact with each other and can therefore never truly be studied separately.

Individual Identity

I understand individual identity as the emic perception of our own identity. Vignoles et al. describe identity foremost as the ‘explicit or implicit response to the question: “who are you?”’ (Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx, 2011, p. 2). I would extend this question to “who or what are you?”. By asking and answering such questions, we emphatically construct identity on emic perspectives. To be able to answer “who or what are you?” we need to have an idea about who or what we are. Therefore, simply the fact of being (or being someone or something) is not enough, a certain awareness of being is required (Kaina and Karolewski, 2009, p. 14). Trying to answer “who am I?” reflexively shines a light on just how big the scope of identity can become. In my case I am a human, a man, a European, a musician, a cyclist, and many more things. If anyone thinks about the question, I am certain he, she or they will have a similarly long list of answers to it, and it will be different for everyone. Following the constructivist perspective, emic perceptions of identity might also evolve over time. As a result, from an etic perspective, answers to the questions posed above will ‘never be more than a snapshot, a freezing of the frame of a continuously moving process’ (Nic Craith, 2003, p. 3). However, from an emic perspective identity might not be perceived as continuously evolving, instead as a continuity in an ever-changing environment (Bausinger et al., 1978, pp. 15, 204). This continuity connects our past to our present and our future, making identity ‘an aspiration as much as an inheritance’ (Kockel, 2017, p. 348). It is therefore possible for us to have different identities at the same time, which evolve, dissolve
and (re)appear over time. Although emically we are aware of some form of identity, we might not be aware of this evolving process.

To better understand different forms of emic perception of identity, I follow Kantner’s (2006) division of qualitative identities. To clarify the term, Kantner breaks down identity into different categories. First she distinguishes between numerical identity and qualitative identity, which she argues is necessary following Durkheim’s argument for ‘social fact’ mentioned above (Durkheim, 1950). Numerical identity is what we can understand from the perspective of a neutral observer: objective criteria, for example: citizenship, ethnic origin, language, etc. In other words, numerical identity is the etic analysis of identity. Qualitative identity may include ‘value judgements and the ethical self-understanding of the individuals concerned’ (Kantner, 2006, p. 507), other words emic experiences of identity. Kantner further divides qualitative identity hierarchically into three different categories. At the top is We1, the universal we of being human, which I mentioned above. Every living human being is part of We1. The universal We1 consists of many particularistic We2 identities which are no longer universal. Kantner notes two sorts of We2 identities: first, the We2/commercium or a ‘weak’ collective identity. Those who identify as being part of We2/commercium recognise that they share an interpretation of their situation with others, but do not share common ethical convictions (Kantner, 2006, p. 511). A similar concept of identity to the commercium has been suggested by Billig in the form of banal nationalism: ‘the metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building’ (Billig, 1995, p. 8). An example would be citizenship of a state, the difference with numerical identity being that the commercium is recognised by the individual whereas numerical identity is observed by a neutral outsider. Another form of We2 identity is the We2/communio (Kantner, 2006, p. 513). It is differs from the commercium because it goes beyond a shared interpretation of situation/environment and includes shared ethical convictions. Examples of such would be shared values or groups which form for a shared purpose. The distinction between commercium and communio identities is useful because it allows for identities where one feels connected to it but not strongly emotionally or morally involved with it.

Following Kantner’s model of categorisation, European identity is a We/2 identity. But is it commercium or communio? Kantner writes that ‘in everyday life, political communities generally resemble a We/2commercium’ (2006, p. 515), but that depends on the emic experience of European identity. Delanty (2002) has presented 5 different models of European identity, which he has observed in the literature on European identity. One could therefore interpret these as originating from an etic perspective of European identity. However, each of them has the potential to be possible emic interpretations of the term. I suspect I will encounter reflections of these models within the results of the project’s forthcoming fieldwork, however I recognise that there might be other interpretations of European identity which do not fit any of the following models.

1. Moral Universalism

The first model presented by Delanty is that of moral universalism. This is a European identity based on its presumed fundamental values: respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law; which several European institutions state as their aims. Etically, this model faces two common criticisms: first, what makes these values particularly European? Delanty notes they could also be interpreted as general Western values (2002, pp. 347–8). The second is that it is questionable whether European states and the European Union really adhere to such
values (Ivic, 2016, pp. 216–27). Considering the importance of shared values I would interpret this model as being We/2communio.

2. European Postnational Universalism

The second model formed around the idea of constitutional patriotism, as presented by Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 2001; Biró-Kaszás, 2010). This suggests Europe should have a constitution that includes the values mentioned in the previous model. By doing so, these would be legitimised as European values and an identity could be built around that. In other words, this is similar to the previous model with added legal weight, which could as a result stop actions leading to the critical argument of European values not being respected. Delanty notes the difficulty of creating a European constitution as ‘constitutional tradition has been based on the nation-state and the EU is neither a state nor a nation, or even a nation-state’ (2002, p. 348). If such a constitution would be successfully formed and a sense of European identity could be formed on its foundation, it implies that EU membership is a necessity for a European identity, a question being put into focus in the current debate on Brexit (May, 2017). I would interpret this model as using a We/2commercium formed round a European constitution as a starting point which might evolve into a We2/communio in due course.

3. Cultural Particularism

The third model bases European identity on a shared European cultural heritage. Common examples of this shared heritage are Christianity or the classical Roman and Greek cultures. This model is similar to the first model. Ethically, this model’s flaws quickly become apparent as it is impossible to find one common culture or heritage at the root of Europe (Ivic, 2016, p. 209). Following the first model, I would interpret this model as being We2/communio.

4. European Pragmatism

The fourth model uses the recent successes and results of the European project as a basis for identity. The European institutions and practices of life are central to it, for example the Euro or ‘the growth of international tourism within Europe, the common market [and] the absence of border controls’ (Delanty, 2002, p. 351). However, Delanty mentions that this model is largely based on consumer capitalism which leads us to a similar criticism as for the first model; that this could also be seen as a general attribute of Western culture. The pragmatism of this model connects it emphatically to a We2/commercium identity, in which being European means partaking in the benefits the EU has brought to daily life, international trade, etc. European pragmatism could also be seen as similar to Cram’s concept of banal Europeanism (Cram, 2009), in which she applies Billig’s aforementioned banal nationalism to Europe.

5. European cosmopolitanism

As an alternative to all previous models, which, as we have seen, all have their flaws, Delanty presents a fifth model: Instead of looking for a shared European cultural heritage, Delanty suggests ‘to define European identity in terms of its conflicts, traumas and fears’ (2002, pp. 353–6) and the successful living together of the European people since the end of the Second World War. This would include elements of all previous models: the pursuit of common values, a common heritage (that of conflict and overcoming it) and the emerging of a cosmopolitan European space. As such, identities shaped around this model could have elements of both We2 identities.
Psychological identity

Eder understands a psychological conceptualisation of identity as ‘a phenomenon of the human mind’ and psychological study of identity as focussing on ‘human needs or motivations for collective identities’ (Eder, 2009, p. 431). The psychological level of identity can therefore be understood to focus on why people identify. Focussing on European identity, Kaina suggests that whether people will develop an identity will depend on the predisposition of individuals (which includes the attitudes, experiences and resources available to them) and contextual factors (which might be exogenous or endogenous) (Kaina and Karolewski, 2009, pp. 16–8). The needs and motivations for the formation of identities is therefore highly context dependent. This is of critical importance because it underlines the importance of the local environment in the development of identity. This also applies to European identity, as Scalise argues that meanings of Europe are based on local experiences (Scalise, 2015, p. 594). It also suggests that changes in the environment in which people live will effect their sense of identity. This leads me to Mercer, who wrote that ‘identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty’ (Mercer, 1990, p. 43). This implies that some identities might always be present but people only become emotionally aware of it once it is threatened in some form. If connected to Kantner’s model, this could suggest that commercium identities might become communio identities under particular circumstances. Or to use Cram’s approach, could banal Europeanism develop over time to become a more emotional connection if a crisis is perceived emically?

Narrative networks as collective identities

Eder defines collective identities as narrative constructions that control the boundaries of a network of actors (2009, p. 427). In other words, the product of a construction formed by narratives. This definition requires an understanding of narrative identity. Cornell writes that people can interact with identity in a multitude of different manners: it can be something ‘that people accept, resist, choose, specify, invent, redefine, reject, actively defend and so forth’ (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007, p. 77). Narratives can be understood as a possibility of how people do all of these interactions, tools we use to shape identity. In this research project I will be using a narrative approach to identity, which assumes that we form identities based on the stories we tell, to each other and to ourselves (Somers, 1994, p. 624). The concept of narrative identity was first developed by McAdams (1985) who suggested seeing individual identities as life stories, which evolves together with the individual over time and includes different chapters. The narrative might just be about the self but could include several different characters as different version of the self as well, which has been referred to as a polynovel (Hermans, 1996, p. 2). Although we think of narratives predominantly as orally transmitted stories, an ethnological interpretation of narrative can also include other forms of expression we use to convey our traditions and sense of belonging, for example music, material culture, play, etc. (Masoni, 2013). Following our starting definition that identity is ‘the creation of boundaries to define the self and the other in time and space’ (van Meijl, 2010, p. 71), these narratives can be understood as the tools which are used to form boundaries of the different spaces we live in.

Narratives can therefore be found throughout the different levels of identity mentioned so far. They are emically experienced and created by individuals, influenced psychologically by the needs and motivations of those concerned and, following Eder’s aforementioned definition, they construct collective identities. Eder suggests that many different narratives of Europe are told and shared across the European space. By sharing these narratives, people state how their
personal and local narratives fit (or do not fit) within the larger European space, resulting in boundaries and a sense of belonging being formed. Instead of trying to find a universalist definition of European identity, Eder proposes to base our understanding of European identity by studying how local narratives are shared and linked with other local narratives across Europe. For this he presents three models: (1) the supra-national model, where different national stories link to each other through a centre point, in Eder’s case the European Union; (2) the post-national model, where national stories are linked to each other directly within a European space which results in that national stories become shared stories; (3) the trans-national model, in which groups within states connect across borders with groups in other states independently of states in which they are based. This third model perhaps comes closest to the common idea of ‘unity in diversity’, as it results in a high level of diversity based on ‘national and non-national levels’ (Eder, 2009, p. 440). While the other models either confirm or try to remove the diversity of the European space, this third model is used to celebrate it and the ‘story of the art of living together’ (Eder, 2009, p. 440), it is also very close to Delanty’s proposed cosmopolitan model of European identity (Delanty, 2002, pp. 353–6). In each of these models, Europe plays a different role in relation to the boundaries of the local actors, in the case of this research the members of the pro-Scottish independence groups. Therefore, by exploring these models, we also learn how Europe interplays with the other identity narratives of the actors: the personal, local, regional and national and any others. The merit of these models of European identity is that they are inclusive to the other ideas of European presented so far because they lean on emic perspectives. By exploring these networks in the field we can gain an understanding of the larger role the idea of Europe plays in the informants’ lives.

**Small state studies**

Although a whole body of literature is devoted to small states, there is no agreed definition of what small states actually are (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2006, p. 8; Wivel, Bailes and Archer, 2014). They are ‘defined by what they are not’ (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2006, p. 5). Based on their lack of power compared to other states in their external environment, I will follow the definition as noted by Wivel et al. (Wivel, Bailes and Archer, 2014, p. 9): small states are ‘the weaker part of an asymmetric system which is unable to change the nature or function of this relationship on its own’. Although this definition is a good starting point, it still leaves unanswered two important questions: the first is what actually makes states the weaker part of an asymmetric relationship? Large (or powerful) states are able to influence asymmetric relationships because they have the capabilities to do so. The presence or lack of resources is what determines the capabilities of the state (Jervis, 1978, pp. 172–173). As will be expanded on below, there are many different types of resources, including economic, human, natural, military, etc. which may result in a lack of capabilities. The second question which follows the definition is what the result is of being the weaker part of an asymmetric relationship means? Small states are less able to influence their external environment, which makes them more dependant on other larger states and more vulnerable to said external environment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000; Wivel and Thorhallsson, 2018). In this research I will therefore follow the assumption that vulnerability is a basic attribute of all small states in some form.

A loose antonym of vulnerability is resilience (Adger, 2000, p. 348), and much of small state studies focusses on how small states might create resilience as a reaction to their vulnerability (Keohane, 1969; Riklin, 1975; Frei, 1977; Vogel, 1979; Katzenstein, 1985; Cooper and Shaw, 2009; Panke, 2012a, 2012b). It is therefore possible to link the study of small states to the literature on resilience. Resilience has been used in several disciplines, and as a result has
several definitions, an overview of which can be found in the Community and Regional Institute’s (CARRI) on definitions of resilience (Community and Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI), 2013). There is not one of these definitions which is ‘more correct’ than others, as CARRI notes it is necessary to pick the definitions which will reflect the way it will be used (Community and Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI), 2013, p. 10). There are three definitions which I would like to present here, all of which are applicable to this project. The first is the most commonly used definition (Rotarangi and Stephenson, 2014) which can be applied to several disciplines, developed by Walker et al. (2004): ‘the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks’. The second is Adger’s definition of social resilience: ‘the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change’ (Adger, 2000, p. 348). The third is a definition of cultural resilience: “the ability to maintain livelihoods that satisfy both material and moral (normative) needs in the face of major stresses and shocks; environmental, political, economic or otherwise” (Crane, 2010, p. 2). These definitions all note that resilience involves ‘disturbances’, ‘stresses’ and ‘shocks’. Small states are less able to influence their external environment and are therefore more prone to such shocks (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000), increasing resilience should therefore be understood as a preparatory measure for when such shocks happen. All of these definitions of resilience point to the multi-disciplinarily of resilience theory and will allow small state studies to be connected to disciplines beyond the political sciences.

Consequences of small size

Because of the asymmetric relationship(s) they are in, small states are vulnerable to their external environment. To ensure their survival, it is therefore necessary for such states to increase their (social) resilience to changes in their environment over which they have little or no influence. Small states literature predominantly acknowledges two particular strategies to accomplish this: an internal strategy of creating a ‘buffer from within’ (Katzenstein, 1985) and an external strategy of creating an ‘alliance shelter’ (Bailes, Thayer and Thorhallsson, 2016).

The internal strategy is primarily based on Peter Katzenstein’s theory, whose ‘Small States in World Markets’ (1985) is key-litterature for small state studies. Katzenstein argued that because of their size, small states have fewer resources, a smaller domestic market and can exert less influence on international politics and economics. Like Thorhallsson, Katzenstein therefore argues that small states experience a heightened vulnerability. However, Katzenstein suggests that their size also provides small states with favourable circumstances to deal with this vulnerability: because of their smaller population, it is easier for these states to limit internal conflicts and thereby form deals and strategies. The ability to make quicker decisions also allows them to be more flexible, a necessity when their influence on international politics and economics is limited and they are ‘at the mercy’ of larger state’s decisions. A perception of vulnerability and the ability to limit internal conflict lead small states to build strong and flexible institutions which dealt with the challenges the state faced. Katzenstein noted that the forming of corporatist institutions is particularly effective, of which he listed three main attributed three main attributes beneficial for small states: (1) an

2 CARRI aims to ‘strengthen any community or region’s ability to prepare for, respond to, and rapidly recover from significant human caused or natural disaster with minimal downtime for the community’ (Community and Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI), 2018)
ideology of social partnership shared by all interest groups, (2) a centralised and concentrated system of interest groups and (3) voluntary and informal coordination of conflicting objectives.

The external strategy is that of alliance shelter, which has been developed by Bailes et al. (2016). It argues that small states will seek shelter with larger states, neighbouring states or international organisations, for example by becoming a member of the European Union. In presenting their theory of alliance shelter, Bailes and Thorhallsson argue that ‘there is an understandable, but nonetheless significant, bias towards great powers in the alliance theory literature’, the main reason for this being that they are the major actors in international politics. Bailes, Thayer and Thorhallsson (2016, pp. 11–12) argue that because of the different capabilities and vulnerabilities of small states, they have different motivations from larger states to form alliances and that as a consequence, it is not possible to apply one alliance theory on all states. Whereas in alliance theory, an alliance can be understood as an agreement between equally-weighted partners, alliance shelter theory can be understood as an asymmetric relationship, where one partner has more capabilities and serves as an enabler or ‘protector’ of the other. It therefore does not change the fundamental feature of small states. However, alliance shelter might provide small states with opportunities to influence their alliance partners, if in a limited capacity (Panke, 2012a, 2012b). This has important implications for the study of international relations, as Keohane notes: ‘If Lilliputians can tie up Gulliver, or make him do their fighting for them, they must be studied as carefully as the giant’ (Keohane, 1969, p. 310). Bailes et al. define six main points of how their theory of alliance shelter differs from traditional alliance theory:

1. Small states are fundamentally different political, economic and social units than large states
2. The foundation of the alliance relationship is distinctly unique for domestic as well as international reasons
3. Small states benefit disproportionately from international cooperation
4. Small states need political, economic and societal shelter to thrive
5. Social and cultural relationships with the outside world are especially important for a small society
6. Shelter may come at a significant cost for the small state

It can therefore be said that alliance shelter is an alliance theory which is ‘tailor-made’ for small states, incorporating their particular situation and needs.

Particularly interesting for this project are point four and five, as they extend alliance shelter to small states’ cultural and societal needs. Bailes et al. argue that ‘external shelter enables small societies to reach their maximum potential by connecting them socially and diplomatically to the outside world’ and that small states rely on ‘cultural relations to avoid isolation and social stagnation’ and to ‘make up for their lack of indigenous knowledge’ (Bailes, Thayer and Thorhallsson, 2016, p. 14). Thorhallsson’s had previously argued that small states, particularly isolated states, need the cultural connections which shelter may provide to keep up with the social standards and level of education present in the more powerful states (Thorhallsson, 2012, p. 31). Bailes and Thorhallsson note (2013, p. 6) that their theory of societal shelter is in line with Rokkan and Urwin’s (1983) centre-periphery

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3 Even within the European Union, asymmetric relationships remain (Griglio and Lupo, 2014). Small states which are independent EU members still need to find strategies to accommodate for their weaker position.
relations model. This adds an important element to the idea of societal shelter: Rokkan and Urwin note that people in peripheral territories might resist the sharing of culture across borders for fear of losing locality to a dominant external culture, arguing that maintaining distinctiveness is critical for peripheral territories. They therefore stress a distinction needs to be made between ‘boundary-opening and boundary-strengthening groups or agencies in peripheries’ (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983, pp. 2–18). Combining both approaches, a balance needs to found between allowing a local culture to maintain its distinctiveness while at the same time averting its isolation, which might increase its vulnerability.

Gaps in small state studies

At several points in the aforementioned literature, there are gaps which suggest sociological study beyond the political sciences may contribute to the small state literature and its studies, in particular the study of identity. I find it surprising that the literature on small states does not refer to identity much. This section aims to highlight gaps in the small states literature to which the study of identity might contribute.

First, by making vulnerability and resilience key elements of small state theory, the study of small states becomes as multi-disciplinary as each of these terms are, and identity becomes an important factor. Let us have another look at Walker et al.’s commonly used definition of resilience: ‘the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks’ (Walker et al., 2004, my italics). Yet another definition of the term states that resilience is ‘the ability of a system to maintain its identity in the face of internal change and external shocks’ (Cumming et al., 2005, p. 976, my italics). Both of these definitions, but particularly the second one, stress the importance of retaining identity to resilience. Rotarangi and Stephenson go as far to interpret from this that the ‘retention of identity is the defining feature of a resilient system’ (Rotarangi and Stephenson, 2014). Considering the fluid character of identity mentioned before, the retention of identity becomes problematic. How can something which is constructed and fundamentally ever-changing be maintained? If identity is as much about creating/imagining a future as it is about remembering a past, and therefore constantly evolving, retaining identity should be seen as retaining the context in which constant creative transformation is possible instead of retaining a fixed, ‘pure’ and imagined object. This constant renegotiation can be understood as a creative process (McFadyen, 2018), which is in line with resilience theory stating that creative transformation is a form of establishing heightened resilience after a crisis (Joakim, Mortsch and Oulahen, 2015, p. 143). Maintaining an environment in which a continuous creative transformation of identity is possible is therefore an important part of a resilient system, suggesting the importance of identity to small state studies.

Second, Väyrynen (1971), Hey (2003) and Thorhallsson (2006) have pointed to the importance of subjective perception of state size. None of them have connected that to identity. Kristjánsson and Cela have suggested that perceptions of identity influence to perceptions of size and that both together influence the creation of policies by the state (the overall direction of which they refer to as political identity). However, as with the other authors, they do not back up their claims with emic perceptions of identity from the

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4 Rokkan and Urwin define peripheries as ‘one element in a spatial archetype in which the periphery is subordinate to the authority of the centre’ (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983, p. 2). This is a similar definition to that of small states used in this research project, the main similarity being dependency to a larger territory.
inhabitants of the state, instead relying on interpretations of identity by the political elite (Kristjánsson and Cela, 2011). I believe a study of perception of identity and size from the emic perspective of the inhabitants of a state would add a valuable element to these theories.

Third, identity plays an important part in Katzenstein’s theory. In his own review of ‘Small States and World Markets’, Katzenstein noted that although his work was widely quoted in small state studies, few scholars picked up on the importance of the ideology of social partnership and that ‘with a few notable exceptions, the impermeability of the field of political economy to considerations of identity persists to date’ (Katzenstein, 2003, p. 11). One of the exceptions is the theory presented by John L. Campbell and John A. Hall (2009, 2017). They argue that it is important to make a clear distinction between objective vulnerability experienced by the state and subjective vulnerability perceived by the nation, noting that it is possible for the state to be in a vulnerable position without the nation being aware of it. They agree with Katzenstein that a state can be made more resilient against its objective vulnerability by the formation of an ideology of social partnership. Basing themselves upon the works of Ernest Gellner (1973, 1983) and Benedict Andersen (1983), Campbell and Hall argue that for an ideology of social partnership, or a ‘national solidarity’ as they name it, a strong national identity must first be present. In turn, they argue a common national identity is more easily formed if citizens perceive to have the same rights across the state, which becomes easier with smaller size: ‘perceptions of vulnerability are more easily translated into a sense of solidarity or “we-ness” uniting people in small countries than in large ones; it is easier to energise and organise a few people in a small country than many, especially if they have diverse backgrounds, in a larger territory’ (2017, p. 5). The degree of resilience within a small state can thus be supported by a strong sense of national identity, which in turn is more easily formed because of the state’s small size (smallness here understood through the population variable and because of its implicit vulnerability).

Amongst the literature on small states, Campbell and Hall (2009, 2017) go the furthest into drawing a connection between the perception of vulnerability, identity and resilience. However, further thought on their theory is necessary. First of all, how do they understand national identity? Campbell and Hall adopt Gellner’s constructivist understanding of identity and define national identity as citizens’ perception of sharing ‘a common culture, values and experience that bind them together as a people’ (2009, p. 548). Later, they state that ‘what matters is how people perceive the similarities and differences [amongst them]; whether they imagine themselves as having things in common with each other or not’ (2017, p. 9, my italics). In other words, they are conceptualising identity as a collective identity based on narratives which connect. Overall, I would agree with such a conceptualisation, but it also points to a critical weakness in their methodology. Fundamental to their understanding of national identity is the perception of cultural homogeneity within a nation. They stress the importance of perception to be able to apply Gellner’s theory, ‘each state should have its own nation, and each nation its own state’ (Gellner, 1983, chap. 3), to a state like Switzerland, which they say has a strong sense of national identity even though it culturally diverse (Campbell and Hall, 2017, p. 9). From a cultural studies perspective, I would agree with this as to avoid a literal application of cultural homogeneity, which I understand as utopian. Campbell and Hall recognise this as well: ‘we fully understand that cultural homogeneity is a very tricky variable. All sorts of differences can be passively present in a society. What matters is the degree to which inhabitants of a nation-state perceive that their differences are salient politically’ (Campbell and Hall, 2017, p. 24). As mentioned a few times before, the perception of inhabitants is an emic variable, but as with other authors in small states literature, Campbell and Hall also do not back their study up with qualitative interviews of inhabitants who are not professionally involved with the issues discussed. The sources they
use are limited to ‘documents, including government reports; official online data sources, such as those from the OECD; secondary literature and histories; and histories with policymakers, central bankers, regulators, academic experts, and other knowledgeable about the cases [they] studied.’ (2017, p. 25). It is perhaps this lack of sources beyond those who are knowledgeable of the issues researched which enables Campbell and Hall to use ‘cultural homogeneity’ so freely, for if they would have, I believe it would become difficult to defend. Still, I suspect that the basic idea holds true: a state with a small geographical area and/or population will tend to be culturally more homogeneous than one with a larger geographical area and/or population. It is however required to emphasise more homogenous as opposed to simply homogenous and to clarify that this applies specifically to the variable of geographical area and/or population, as small states might still have a large area or population, which following the same argument would result in more diversity.

So what can we take from Campbell and Hall’s theory? The most important suggestion for this project is the link between the perception of vulnerability and the formation of identity. This has significant consequences for studies of identity and in particular for the literature on small states. What is lacking from the research done so far is how this process translates into emic perspectives.

A fourth gap in the literature on small states where identity plays a role is shelter alliance theory (see size and its consequences above). The societal aspect of alliance shelter requires small states to remain culturally connected with other states to avoid stagnation (Bailes, Thayer and Thorhallsdson, 2016, p. 14). Connectivity can therefore lead to enhanced resilience of a small state. However, it needs to be considered that this connectivity happens within the context of an asymmetric relationship of small and large states. Cumming et al. have argued that ‘resilience may be highest at intermediate levels of connectivity that break social isolation, without imposing outside interests on local groups’ (Cumming et al., 2005, p. 979, my italics). This is in line with Rokkan and (1983) centre-periphery model. The problem with this model is that it currently concentrates on (and is limited by) national identity in the centre and periphery territories (McCrone, 1984), which translates to national identity in both small states and in the states with which they seek shelter. What remains unstudied is how the identity perceived in small states interacts with European identity, and whether this would allow them to maintain their distinctiveness while also offering societal shelter.

Scotland; a small, stateless nation

The purpose of this section is to fit the case study of post-Brexit Scotland into the literature on identity and small state studies mentioned so far. The first question I am faced with is whether Scotland is a culturally connected small state. This is immediately problematic because Scotland is not a state. According to McCrone, Scotland ‘has a degree of statehood (a devolved parliament, a governing bureaucracy), but it is still best described as a stateless nation, an imagined community with considerable institutional autonomy’ (2001, p. 6). It is however possible to look at Scotland’s status as a stateless nation in a temporary context: Scotland used to be an independent state (until the Treaty of Union was signed in 1707) and it remains a possibility that Scotland would vote to become an independent state again in the future.

Following the definition of small states used in the previous section, a ‘weaker part in an asymmetric relationship, which is unable to change the nature or function of the relationship on its own’ (Wivel, Bailes and Archer, 2014, p. 9), implies that the main feature of a small state is its vulnerability, something which Scotland has experienced throughout its history. The most recent result of this is the EU referendum, which was arguably a confirmation of Scotland’s smallness: even with a large majority voting to remain in the European Union
(62%), those wanting to leave the European Union still won over the whole of the United Kingdom, demonstrating an asymmetric relationship (BBC News, 2016). Therefore, apart from full sovereignty of its parliament, Scotland shares many features with other small states and would be considered a small state if it were to regain independence (Bailes, Thorhallsson and Lorna Johnstone, 2013). Studying Scotland through the lens of small state studies is therefore not unfounded.

**Scottish independence in Europe**

Two recent referendums held in Scotland have shaped the current political climate: one on Scottish independence in 2014 and one on the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union in 2016. The 2014 referendum was the result of a campaign for Scottish independence which is almost a century old. This campaign is closely linked to Scotland’s vulnerability. The first modern political group campaigning for Scottish independence was the Scots National League. It was formed in 1921, inspired by the Irish wars for independence. In 1935, after merging with other groups, it was renamed the Scottish National Party (SNP), which has continued to this day and is the largest party in the Scottish parliament at the time of writing (Mitchell, Bennie and Johns, 2011). It was the discovery of North Sea oil off the coast of Scotland in the seventies marked the first notable increase in support for the SNP, who famously argued that ‘it’s Scotland’s oil!’ (Levy, 1988, p. 62). This argument of course implied that with its newly found resources, Scotland would no longer need the financial support it received from the Union. At the same time, small states in Europe were able to move away from the protection of larger states because new multilateral agreements such as NATO or the European Union offered shelter, which as we have seen also offered small states new opportunities to influence their external environment in ways that were not possible before 1945 (Alesina, 2003, pp. 192–201; Panke, 2012b). This new favourable national and international environment contributed to enabling Scotland to hold a referendum on whether it should become an independent state in 2014 (Hanczewski, 2013, p. 24). In this referendum, 55% of voters chose for Scotland to remain part of the United Kingdom (BBC News, 2014). Crucially, one of the arguments used by anti-independence groups was that if Scotland became independent it would have to leave the European Union and reapply for membership (Kenealy, 2014). This argument was put into a new context two years later, when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. In this referendum, 51.9% of voters in the whole of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, in Scotland 62% of voters chose to remain. In every council area in Scotland, a majority voted to remain (BBC News, 2016). This results in the map below which shows a clear separation between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. At the time of writing, it remains a possibility that both referendums might be held again (McEwen, 2016; Welfens, 2017, pp. 299–304).

The debate on Scottish identity continued after the Independence Referendum (Kockel, 2017), but the EU Referendum added a new element to it: Brexit became an argument for Scottish independence. The result of the EU referendum offered a strong argument for Scottish independence: an externally differentiating, internally uniting fact, confirmed by a vote. Of course, one still cannot apply a universalist approach to the result of the Brexit referendum in Scotland: over a third of the voting population chose to leave the European Union. But I believe the majority was large enough for it be used as an argument for Scotland’s European character, in particular when compared to the significantly lower overall majority of leave in the whole of the United Kingdom. This has been used by the SNP which was re-elected to the Scottish parliament in 2016 on a manifesto which stated that ‘another independence referendum was off the agenda unless there was a material change of’
circumstances such as Scotland being taken out of the European Union against its will’ (Keating, 2017, p. 18). The no-campaign’s promise of the Union being the only way to keep Scotland in the European Union was branded as a ‘broken promise’ (Scottish National Party, 2016) and the map shown above was held up by Scottish MEP Alyn Smith (who is a member of the SNP) while giving the following speech in the European Parliament:

Mr President, I represent Scotland within this House, and whilst I am proudly Scottish, I am also proudly European. *I want my country to be internationalist, cooperative, ecological, fair, European.*

(Smith, 2016, my italics)

Smith’s speech clearly demonstrates the SNP’s political strategy of using the argument of Scotland is being forced out of the European Union against its will as an argument for Scottish independence. This is unsurprising: it is a continuation of an ‘independence in Europe’ strategy which the SNP has been following since the late eighties (Scottish National Party, 1989; Sillars, 1989). What is more interesting to this project is that in his speech, Smith argues that Scotland is European and that that is a feature which differentiates it from the rest of the United Kingdom. He explains this by calling upon Scotland’s ‘internationalist, cooperative [and] ecological’ features, which remind of Delanty’s model of moral universalism. But he also implies that Scotland is more European than the parts of the United Kingdom which voted to leave and that ‘being European’ is an argument for Scottish independence. The following question, and the focus of this research is, how Scotland’s Europeaness is perceived amongst the Scottish population, and whether Brexit has impacted this perception.

**Betwixt and between Brexit**

Brexit has crucial implications for this research project. It puts into focus Scotland’s dependency on the rest of the United Kingdom but also its vulnerability as an independent small state. If we understand Brexit as a crisis, it can be suspected that Brexit will affect many of the topics discussed so far, as sudden crises might influence the perception of identity (Mercer, 1990, p. 43) or test the resilience of a system (Cumming *et al.*, 2005).

In recent publications and theses, several scholars have started to describe Britain since the EU Referendum as being in a liminal state (Popham, 2017; Reeves, 2017; Laurie, 2018). Turner describes liminal entities as being ‘neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial’ (Turner, 1967, p. 95). The first academic use of liminality by van Gennep described it as an attribute of a transitional phase between boyhood and manhood (van Gennep, 1909). Both of these understandings of liminality refer to a *temporary* phase with a clear ending. In the case of Brexit, we could understand this phase as the negotiating period between the EU referendum (or the delivery of Article 50 to the European Union) and the moment when Britain will officially have left the EU. However, at the time of writing the Brexit negotiations do not yet have a clear outcome, and it is also not clear when (or even whether) such an outcome will be achieved, and what shape Britain’s new relationship to the European Union will take. Even if a so-called Brexit deal is achieved before the agreed date of the United Kingdom’s departure, it is likely that certain effects of Brexit will only become apparent over time, long after the UK has left the European Union (Welfens, 2017, p. 354).

Therefore, I suggest that Britain is currently in a state of perpetual liminality, whereby it is clear that it is in a transitional phase, but it is unclear what the next phase will be or when it will be achieved. In an analysis of liminality in organisational studies, Ybema, Beech and
Ellis make a distinction between transitional liminality, a sense of being ‘not-X-anymore-and-not-Y-yet’, and perpetual liminality, a sense of being ‘neither-X-nor-Y’ or ‘both-X-and-Y’ (Ybema, Beech and Ellis, 2011, p. 28). I suspect I will find forms of either one of these perceptions of perpetual liminality during the fieldwork of this project. Following Mercer (Mercer, 1990, p. 43), it can be argued that the liminality caused by Brexit encourages the importance of identity to the individual. Because of the perpetual nature of a liminal Brexit, the individual needs to look elsewhere for stability. This might be found in Scotland’s connection to Europe, because for all the uncertainty that the vote for Brexit has created, the clear majority vote for remain in Scotland offered an undeniable, almost tangible feature for those living in Scotland to connect their identity to. Studies on Brexit so far clearly suggests that the perception of European identity in Scotland has been influenced by Brexit, but at the time of writing this is an apparent gap in the literature.

3. Methodology and pilot study

Methodology

Three forms of data collection will be used as part of the fieldwork: semi-structured interviews, discussion in focus groups and participant observation. To facilitate access to particular independence supporting communities, I will be limiting the research to pro-Scottish independence groups. I will be doing fieldwork with groups which are based in five areas in Scotland: the central belt (Edinburgh), the Moray Firth, the Hebrides (in particular communities in which Gaelic is spoken), the Borders and the Northern Isles. I believe each of these areas will have a different perspective on Brexit and independence.

The interviews are all semi-structured, meaning I have a set line of questions I would like to ask in the interview, but I allow the interviewee the possibility to shape the conversation by adding topics I might not have covered. I explicitly tell the participants this at the start of the interview, and at the end I ask whether there is anything they would like to add which they think I have missed in the questions. This has so far proven to be fruitful: several interviews seemed like they had reached an end but then continued after asking whether the interviewee would like to add anything, often with useful information.

Although ethnography is seen by many as the ‘methodology of ethnology’ (Ugolini, 2013, p. 72), it is not the only approach which can be used in ethnology. As to not overuse the meaning of ethnography (Ingold, 2014), I will describe two other approaches to qualitative enquiry I use to design the interview questions: phenomenology and grounded theory (Creswell, 2007). Both of these approaches use interviews as their primary form of data collection. Creswell describes the type of problem best suited for phenomenological enquiry to be ‘[describing] the essence of a lived phenomenon. (Creswell, 2007, pp. 78–79)’. The phenomenological part of these interviews will therefore focus on the participants’ experience of Brexit and how it influences their daily lives and perceptions of Scotland and Europe. Questions used so far include:

• **What has your personal experience of Brexit been so far?**

  This question aims to uncover not only the participant’s opinion on Brexit, but also any fears or uncertainties he or she might have as a result of it.

• **How has Brexit effected your family and friends?**
I have found this question to be more productive than the previous one, as several participants believed they are not directly effected by Brexit themselves, but knew several close friends and relatives who are.

• *How has Brexit influenced the Scottish independence movement?*

A similar question to the previous two, but focussing on the Scottish independence movement. So far, this question has demonstrated an awareness of different opinion on Europe within the independence movement.

Grounded theory is an important part of this project and my of interpretation of ethnology. With this approach I am particularly focussing on how small state theory elements of vulnerability and resilience interact with the lived experiences and perceived identities of the participants. The questions asked under this line of inquiry include:

• *Is EU-membership important for you, why (not)?*

This question aims to explore whether and how the participant perceives the vulnerability of Scotland within Europe.

• *Would you describe yourself as European, why (not)?*

This question is a less direct way of asking how participants understand European identity than ‘are you European?’ or ‘what does it mean to be European?’

• *Is Scotland European, why (not)?*

This is similar to the previous question but applied to Scotland as a whole. In several interviews I have found it easier to combine both questions into one.

• *How has people’s perception of the Scottish independence movement changed since Brexit (locally, UK-wide, abroad)?*

I decided to include this question after being told by an independence-supporter at a march that he was waving a European flag to demonstrate the civic nature of the Scottish independence movement rest of the world.

Alongside the previous two approaches, I will still be doing ethnographies of the groups studied, focussing in particular on how the group interacts with Brexit. The primary form of data collection in ethnography is of course participant observation (Ingold, 2014), which I will do at the meetings and events organised by pro-independence groups. The observations made are written in field-notes which will form the basis for detailed descriptions. Where possible, I take pictures of the events to add to the descriptions. These observations are to be further explored by questions in the interviews, of which I have already used two:

• *How has Scotland’s Europeanness been used in the Scottish independence movement since Brexit?*

• *Is there a unified opinion on Brexit within the Scottish independence movement?*

The questions presented have been used during the pilot study interviews, the results of which I will present in the next section.
Pilot Study

This section will present some of the first results of the fieldwork I have done so far. The aim is to observe whether the current fieldwork methodology serves to answer the main research questions. At the time of writing, I have done semi-structured interviews with 14 supporters of Scottish independence from different backgrounds. I have also done participant observation at a pro-independence march and at a meeting of Yes Marchmont and Morningside. I have not yet coded the results of the fieldwork, the results presented here are selected excerpts of the interviews which I believe point to relevant information. To be coherent, I have decided to only use the initials of the interviewees in this section.

I did the first participant-observation session of this research during the All Under One Banner (AUOB) March on the 6th of October 2018. AUOB is a pro-Scottish independence organisation which organises regular protest marches and welcomes any supporters of independence, thereby functioning as a form of umbrella organisation of pro-independence groups. The presence of several of such different groups was made clear during the march, where specific group banners were shown, for example from EU Citizens for an Independent Scotland, Women for Independence and English Scots for Yes. The October AUOB march took place in Edinburgh, where it went from in front of Edinburgh Castle, along the Royal Mile to Holyrood Palace, after which it gathered on the Parade Grounds. There, a stage and several stall were set up. MP’s, MSP’s and activists gave speeches and several groups performed music. I joined the march halfway along the Royal Mile and followed it until the end. As is usual during such marches, many were waving flags. The majority of these were St. Andrews’ crosses, but there were also many waving EU-flags and a blend of the two.

I chose to speak to people waving flags symbolising Europe or the EU, asking them for their motivations for doing so. The first man I spoke to said he was deeply afraid of Brexit because he did not know what the results of Brexit would be. He believed that rejoining the EU as an independent country was the best option for Scotland. A couple I spoke to later also said they were afraid, but gave a more specific reason for this: one of them was on permanent medication and her doctor had told her that he was not sure whether he would be able to supply the medication after the UK had left EU. Brexit made them feel neglected and scared for the future, which had pushed them to question parts of their identity. They said that they had only recently begun to actively support Scottish independence and they had applied for Irish citizenship, which may be granted to those who have Irish parents or grandparents (Department of Justice and Equality, no date). Another person I spoke to at the march and then did an in-depth interview with later, a member of EU Citizens for an Independent Scotland (EUCIS), also mentioned that many people she knew had applied for Irish citizenship. In her own words: ‘Brexit has made many realise how foreign they actually are.’

I further encountered this sense of becoming a foreigner during the in-depth interviews. One of the interviewees was an EU-national originally from Germany who has settled in Scotland, identifies as Scottish and is an active supporter of Scottish independence. When talking about the effects of the EU Referendum, she said:

HS: There was [a] woman from Germany, who’s been living in Scotland for several years. She said that since the referendum, she can’t sleep, she has to take sleeping pills, and you hear these stories all around.

I asked her whether she could tell me any other of these stories, to which she replied:
HS: Like, for example, I haven’t registered with GP’s or dentists for a couple of years now, because I heard that they screen […] the NHS information. [...] Most of the horrible things you hear from happened in England, but it happens here too because this is the Home Office. Yeah, so there was a woman and they wanted to deport her, she was not an EU national, she came from somewhere else. And she was pregnant and in a really serious condition. So […] she was in danger and her child too. [...] And at the hospital she didn’t get treatment because they had that information from the home office that they would deport her and that she shouldn’t get any free treatment anymore, she would have to pay. So for weeks this woman was in a serious condition and they didn’t treat her until the GP’s finally said, you know, it’s it’s such a serious situation we just do it.

The woman in her story is not an EU citizen, making her susceptible to a lot more stringent immigration rules than EU citizens experience. The interviewee suggests that leaving the EU might mean that similar rules will apply to her. When I asked the interviewee about whether and why she thought EU membership is important she said:

HS: I think the most important thing about that is really freedom of movement. That’s totally revolutionary. And I think most people, especially from the continent, can really appreciate, other than a lot of people in the UK, especially in England, how revolutionary freedom of movement is.

For this participant, freedom of movement enables her to live abroad without having to face similar rules as non-EU immigrants. Brexit puts that into question. With many of the people I spoke to, the most unnerving element of Brexit seemed to be its unclarity. Stories such as the lack of medication and the forced deportation are not unfounded and have been spread in national media (for example: Kentish, 2017; BBC News, 2018). Judging the accuracy of these stories is however missing point of why the participants are telling them. These examples express a fear which suggests they can no longer be as sure of old certainties, that they have entered a liminal state caused by Brexit.

The meaning of borders is something which I intend to explore further in future interviews, as it seems to be a clear link between the civic nationalism of the Scottish independence movement and conceptions of Europeanism amongst members of the movement. For many of the interviewees, the sense of ‘being European’ was linked to values:

AA: I think [Europeanness] is partly about the values of cooperation and where we see ourselves. [...] Winnie Ewing had this famous phrase: ‘Stop the world, we want to get on’; in ’67, and I think that resonates with an awful lot of people who are in favour of Scottish independence. They feel that Scotland can play a positive role in Europe and the world.

The values most regularly referred to were internationalism and openness towards migration:

PF: [Brexit] offered the opportunity for Scotland to assert a whole set of different values. In particular, it’s the attitude towards migration, migrants and how they’re welcome here. And I think that […] marks out Scotland as a very different kind of place from from the rest of the UK.

In this case, PF contrasts values in Scotland to the rest of the UK. This was also done by IM, who used the ‘hostile environment’ as an example:
IM: There seems to be an attitude of: ‘Oh, look who has moved in next door.’ And I find extraordinary attitudes coming out about ‘we don’t want any refugees.’ Britain has always welcomed refugees, but not any longer it would appear. Theresa May’s hostile environment, all of this stuff. I find that in Scotland, this doesn’t play well. It really doesn’t. I don’t believe the Scottish people as a whole ever believed in this hostile environment. I’ve certainly encountered racism in Scotland. […] But broadly, I believe there is still a community spirit of people looking out for each other.

This was also expressed by another interviewee; a French man who had lived in England for several years. Following Brexit he experienced verbal abuse and decided to look for a new job across the UK. He told me about the first time he had a job interview in Scotland:

JB: I brought with me my passport and everything. And he asked me: ‘Why are you showing your passport? We know you are French. You don’t have to prove it to us.’ That was a completely different attitude. But I think that if you are living in a small cocoon of prejudice, you think that the rest of the country is like that, and you forget that the UK is actually four countries on one island. […] I felt that people [in Scotland] actually didn’t care about my nationality, didn’t care where I’m from. […] The difference between here and south of the border… it is a thousand light years from England to here.

He gave me a different perspective on European identity in Scotland, which I did not hear in any other of the interviews:

JB: European identity [in Scotland]… I don’t need to prove that I am of a European background. But as soon as you cross the border it becomes a problem.

JB had experienced European identity in England as something which differentiated him from the local community, whereas in Scotland this was less obvious to him. This openness to newcomers, or New Scots, was further expressed by other interviewees and was also linked to Scotland’s Europeanness:

PF: I’ve never actually thought of myself as a European until I came to Scotland. It was a very strange eye-opening. I’ve never felt British and I still don’t, certainly not English, not really Irish because although my parents came from Ireland, I have never lived there. I felt partly French but increasingly less so because although I was brought up there, moving away and living in England means that those ties gradually recede. So I never thought did I have any particular national identity. And coming to Scotland, I sort of gradually acquired the sense that I could become, I suppose, a new Scot. I mean, I still wouldn’t call myself Scottish. I think the label new Scot is a convenient one, but it’s a sort of identity through choice really, but with a strong connection to that European dimension.

Beside the openness to migration another difference in values noted was British exceptionalism and patriotism, which was contrasted with Scottish internationalism:

SB: It seems to me that if one had a true deep sense of ambition for good and a wish to play a leadership role, that is incompatible with [British] isolationism and exceptionalism. […] I’m now of the view that even if the UK ends up as part of [the European] project, that Brexit doesn’t happen, the UK contribution, the Westminster contribution […] is not one I want Scotland to make.

A similar opinion was expressed by PF:
PF: in England, you get this constant discourse, ‘British is best’. […] You have this sort of strange chauvinism. You have that to some extent in France as well, I wouldn’t say that the Europe is completely free of that. But it was a particularly strong English thing, in the name of Britain usually, but it’s only really noticeable in in England. […] There was none of that in Scotland and it was quite a relief.

For PF, this chauvinism also applies to how Britain relates to the European Union, and how that is different in Scotland:

PF: On Lewis we came across a stretch of completely newly done road under a big sign saying ‘this has been funded by the European Union’. Which you see everywhere else in Europe. If you go to Spain the acknowledgment is there that this road has been funded by the European Union. […] You will never find that in England. There’s a sort of reluctance to acknowledge anything positive coming from Europe.

For some, expressing these European values functioned directly to improve the reputation of the Scottish independence movement, perhaps making it more accessible to those approaching it from elsewhere. At the AUOB March, I spoke to a man who told me that he was waving a European flag to demonstrate to the rest of world that the Scottish independence movement is open and progressive as opposed to other, more right-wing nationalist independence movements around the world. One of the interviewees, who is frequently abroad for his work, said:

AA: [People abroad] are definitely more sympathetic [towards Scottish independence]. […] The same people who, in the runup to 2014 are going ‘Yes, it’s a nice romantic idea but you’re not serious, are you?’ are now going ‘And this will lead to Scottish independence!’. […] Nobody that I’ve spoken to doesn’t know Scotland strongly voted to stay in.

Although vulnerability and shelter were not directly mentioned by the majority of interviewees, there was some awareness of the vulnerability an independent Scotland would experience:

PF: For us Scottish independence really only makes sense within the EU or closely aligned to the EU. We can’t kid ourselves that a small nation on its own completely without any sort of very strong political alliances is going to find it easy, and the EU provides the obvious sort of home from that point of view.

I got a very different opinion on small state vulnerability when interviewing two Catalans who live in Edinburgh. They were disappointed by the lack of criticism from the EU to the Spanish crackdown during the independence referendum held in Catalonia on the 1st of October 2017.

XO: There were people who took a slightly more aggressive stance, who said: ‘Well if Europe doesn’t care, you know, there are big arteries connecting the Mediterranean ports to Europe through Catalonia, let’s just block them, charge them.’ There’s a number of things you can do to get their attention.

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5 Apart from SB, who Googled me and my research interests before meeting me and read texts on small state theory in advance of the interview.
The possibility of independence leading to becoming isolated within Europe, as expressed by AA, was also not shared by the Catalan participants:

XO: I’m Catalan and I’m European. [...] I cannot conceive Catalonia outside of Europe, like geographically.

LP: But the EU?

XO: well, that’s another thing…

The argument XO makes is that being a member of the EU is not a necessity for being European or remaining in contact with the rest of the continent. For him, Catalonia’s Europeaness is a given because of its geographical location, in-between two large European states. The awareness of Catalonia’s location together with its strong economy means that their perceived need for shelter from the EU, be it societal or economic, is a lot smaller than the Scottish interviewees. With the other interviewees, there seemed to be an awareness of Scotland’s separated geographical location from the rest of Europe, and the need to actively make political and societal connections to avoid isolation:

**First impressions and areas for improvement**

Overall, I believe the fieldwork I have done so far presents useful results on people’s experience of Brexit and how it has influenced their understanding of Europe and Scottish independence, and on what being European means.

The first research question, what role the narrative construction of European identity plays as a reaction to the liminality caused by Brexit was particularly obvious at the AUOB march and in my interviews with the immigrants from Germany and France. The lack of certainty surrounding the provision of necessary medication and the right of residence provided by the EU’s freedom of movement put the vulnerability of these participants in the spotlight, which led some of them to become more active in campaigning for Scottish independence and expressing a European identity. It will be interesting to see how reactions to this topic evolve after the UK leaves the EU, which currently is set to happen during the rest of the fieldwork for this project.

The second question, how a narrative of European identity might serve to differentiate Scotland from the rUK was discussed repeatedly while discussing the meaning of European identity. Almost all of the people I interviewed mentioned that the EU is not perfect in varying degrees and made a distinction between the EU Institutions and being European, which was more value-based. These values were closely linked to their vision for an independent Scotland. It was telling that the answers to ‘Would you describe yourself as European, why?’ were often closely related if not identical to ‘Can you describe me an independent Scotland?’ Many provided examples of why, in their view, these values were not present in the rest of the UK.

Although all of the interviewees identified as European, many still made a distinction between Scotland or the UK and Europe. Often these participants would refer to Europe meaning the rest of Europe without Scotland or the UK. This was particularly obvious when I was observing a meeting of Yes Marchmont and Morningside. Here it was discussed how best to make contact with ‘the Europeans’, which appeared to be particular EU migrant communities, such as a local Polish community. Considering Eder’s models of collective identity (2009, p. 440), the first impressions of my fieldwork suggest to me that for many in the Scottish independence movement, European identity is best represented by the supra-
national model, whereby the European narrative serves as centre point for connecting local narratives to others around the continent. The resemblance of the locality to the European narrative (often surrounding European values) is used to make a distinction between Scotland and the rUK, which resembles the European narrative less. Thereby the narrative of Europe serves a function as to differentiate Scotland from the rUK, but Europe still remains somewhere else (as opposed to the other models presented by Eder, where the narrative of Europe is directly shared between European states (Eder, 2009, p. 440)).

This was very different for the two Catalans I interviewed, who clearly acknowledged that Catalonia was within Europe, and for whom European identity had a different function as the other interviewees. I intend to explore this theme further in future interview by adding questions on the interviewee’s understanding of what, where and who Europe is, not just what European identity means.

The third question, on the role of European identity in the resilience formation in an independent Scotland, was less clear than the other two. The interview questions which relate to this theme need to be developed further, in particular how Europeanness counteracts the vulnerability of an independent Scotland needs more emphasis. To encourage discussion on this, I intend to ask what independence means to the interviewees and what role an independent Scotland will play in Europe, and vice versa. Although I have not asked such questions yet, I did get an answer which covers these themes:

AA: I think that we live in an interdependent world so you have to think a bit about what do you mean by independence in an interdependent world. And I think you want to be in a position where you have some autonomy and some ability to represent yourself in the negotiations about how that interdependent world works. […] I think what Scotland or the cause of independence for Scotland gets from being a member of the EU is the sense that you’re not all on your own. I think [it’s in the interest of] small countries to be banded together.

Although AA does not mention vulnerability, he seems to believe that independence has limits and that EU membership can provide particular benefits to small states. He later added that:

AA: I have always thought, as long as I can remember, that if you’re Scottish, or if you’re somebody who comes from a smaller European country, you’re much happier being part of a European identity than if you’re from a big country.

These answers suggest that his sense of Europeanness is linked to Scotland’s size and vulnerability. I hope that by including questions on the interviewees’ understanding of independence, I will receive more detailed answers on their understanding of Scotland’s vulnerability and how it relates to European identity.

4. Conclusion

In this working paper I have introduced the aims of this project: to explore what role the narrative construction of European identity plays (1) as a reaction to the liminality caused by Brexit, (2) in the context of separation and differentiation with the rest of the United Kingdom and (3) in the resilience-formation of Scotland as a new, independent small state. In the literature review I presented an overview of the literature on identity and on small state studies, and argued that a study of European identity in small states could contribute to filling certain gaps in small state studies. The last part of the literature review explored why Scotland is a particularly suitable place to conduct this research. In the methodology I located
the field and explained the design of the fieldwork. I also presented early results of a pilot study. The results of this study are encouraging but also point to certain areas of the fieldwork design which need to be adapted.

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