



OUR PROJECT

In the context of debates about constitutional futures, this project uses photography to understand how people think and feel about independence in Wales, Scotland and Catalonia, and how this is shaped by their life experiences.

For these nations, becoming independent would mean leaving the state which they are currently a part of (the UK and Spain) and becoming a state in their own right.

Previous academic work that has studied people's attitudes towards independence has focused on trying to understand why people decide to support or oppose independence. Research trying to explain public opinion on the issue of independence is limited. Most of the work produced draws on survey data, where people have often been asked how they would vote if a referendum on independence were to be held, or asking about individual preferences when offered a list of different constitutional options, for instance whether they would prefer a region with limited powers over a select number of policy areas, a region with significant degree of powers (e.g. over policing or immigration), or an independent state. These studies have focused on how people's characteristics (such as age, gender and social class) or their attitudes (such as which political parties they support, or how they define their identity) shape their views about independence. Such work leads to conclusions about what type

of characteristics make people more likely to support or oppose independence in different cases. However, there is disagreement about the factors that drive popular support for independence. For instance, how important is national identity, grievances, economic or welfare prospects or speaking a regional language? The survey data that is the basis of those analyses don't explain either how the day-to-day lives of citizens affect how they experience and make sense of independence.

This project takes a different approach. It tries to go beyond thinking about independence in terms of whether people would support or oppose it in a referendum, by exploring people's thoughts and feelings about this topic. What matters to people when they think about independence? What aspects of their daily lives and life experiences influence what they think about how their country is governed in the future?

In order to try to develop alternative discussions on the topic and to better understand people's thoughts and influences on their thinking about this issue, the project uses photography as a basis to start conversations about independence. We have collaborated with photography clubs and colleges offering photography in their courses, people with an interest in photography, in Scotland, Catalonia and Wales. In terms of how the groups were involved, participants were first asked to take photos capturing the way in which they think and feel about independence. A group meeting was then held when participants shared their set of 4 pictures and explained why they took those pictures, what they wanted to express and capture. Finally, we invited participants to take part in in-depth individual interviews to further explore the thoughts and life experiences informing the images.

The photographs in this exhibition were taken by Aberystwyth Camera Club. We're very grateful for their willingness to collaborate in the project and consent to show their images in this exhibition.

The project is non-partisan. It welcomes contributions from participants with different perspectives and does not promote a particular position on independence. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, as part of the [ESRC/WISERD Civil Society Research Centre](#).

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