

Micronational claims and sovereignty in the Minquiers and Écréhous

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the Minquiers and Écréhous in terms of micronational claims; factors such as the public imagination around being part of a Crown Dependency, having Norman heritage, and being on the borderlands between the Bailiwick of Jersey and the French Republic contribute to the micronational claims in the reefs. The ‘invasions’ of the Minquiers by supporters of the Kingdom of Patagonia were seen as a political protest; the use of the Kingdom of Patagonia's flag as a symbol of this protest confirms the validity of the flag as an officially sanctioned symbol. In the case of the hermits living in the Écréhous, the attribution of imagined sovereignty by claiming the title of ‘King of the Écréhous’ is associated with the peculiarities of the sovereignty of the Channel Islands and the Norman heritage that dominates the Channel Islands’ sense of identity. The use of flags in micronationality seeks an element of group cohesiveness, whereas the claims of sovereignty in the Écréhous are more aligned with place attachment and individual initiative.

Keywords: Channel Islands, Écréhous, Minquiers, Jersey, Kingdom of Patagonia, King of the Écréhous, Micronationalism.

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Introduction

*Les îles de la Manche sont des morceaux de France
tombés dans la mer et ramassés par l'Angleterre.*

[The Channel Islands are fragments of France that have
fallen into the sea and have been scooped up by Britain]
(Hugo, 1866, p. 20)

In 1866, Victor Hugo wrote that the Channel Islands are bits of France that fell into the sea and were picked up by England. The various islands and jurisdictions in the Channel Islands are known for their specific peculiarities regarding their sovereignty, and which continue to be debated (Dawes, 2015a, 2015b; Johnson, 2014, 2015, 2021). Such characteristics regarding

their jurisdiction also give way to the public imaginary and allow spurious assertions of sovereignty, often associated with micronational claims.

The purpose of this article is to examine micronational claims and sovereignty in the Minquiers and Écréhous, two groups of islands and rocks forming part of the Bailiwick of Jersey in the Channel Islands. The *performance of micronationality* is represented by the adoption of the trappings of a sovereign country such as titles, flags, and other protocols particular to states, despite a non-recognition from established sovereign countries and a lack of support from international law (Hobbs & Williams, 2022). Micronational claims tend to have a far greater impact than the often small areas represented by micronations because they call into question deep issues of sovereignty and place, challenging society's standard assumptions of sovereignty.

In a political context that has seen the British sovereignty of the Minquiers and Écréhous challenged by France on a national level (Fleury & Johnson, 2015), this article examines both reefs in terms of micronational claims; however, such claims come from distinct origins. Whereas the Minquiers were subject to micronational claims from the Kingdom of Patagonia as retribution for the United Kingdom's occupation of the Falkland Islands, the Écréhous have twice in recent history been regaled with 'sovereigns', more specifically, people who had chosen to live a hermit-like existence within its tiny and isolated boundaries. The use of the flag of the Kingdom of Patagonia in the Minquiers' 'invasions' can be seen as a manifestation of group cohesiveness whereas the attribution of the title of 'King of the Écréhous' is more of a place attachment.

The methodology adopted by this article is documentary and bibliographic research, drawing from documents sourced from public and private archives, including digital sources and media articles. Following this introduction, the next section discusses micronationalism and islands, and is followed by a section about the sovereignty of the Bailiwick of Jersey. A further section provides evidence about the performance of micronationality in the Minquiers and Écréhous. The closing section offers a discussion and conclusions.

Micronationalism and islands

Islands have typically been subject to recurring micronational claims, where a person or group decides to claim imagined sovereignty over an island (i.e., establishing a micronation) (Hayward, 2014a). An island micronation should not be confused with existing island microstates such as Nauru, Tuvalu, or Malta (Taglioni, 2011), or even subnational island jurisdictions, like Jersey itself (Le Rendu, 1999, 2004). This article follows Hobbs & Williams' (2022) understanding that a micronation, and thereby whoever performs micronationality, is not recognised as a nation or sovereign, but nevertheless, mimics acts of sovereignty. Therefore, this article focuses on how micronationalism is performed, understood as the *performance of micronationalism* (Hayward, 2018; 2019a, 2019b; Petermann, 2019).

The imagined sovereignty of an island is usually achieved in one of four different ways (Clanton, 2008; Strauss, 1999):

First, seceding an island from the sovereign country from which the island is under control. Examples of micronational performance on islands which sought secession from a country are Outer Baldonia, on an island in Nova Scotia, Canada (MacKinnon, 2014), the North Dumpling Island, off the coast of Connecticut, USA (Butkus, 2014), the Conch Republic in Key West, Florida, USA (Steinberg & Chapman, 2009), Forvik, in the Shetland islands, Scotland, UK (Grydehøj, 2014), Isonia, off the coast of the Western Scottish Highlands (Hallerton & Leslie, 2015), Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel, UK

(Khamis & Hayward, 2015), Lamb Island (Ngudooroo), in Moreton Bay, South East Queensland, Australia (Hayward, 2014b), and the Gay and Lesbian Kingdom of the Coral Sea Islands, on a group of uninhabited islets east of the Great Barrier Reef, Australia (Lattas, 2014).

Second, claiming an island that is disputed by two or more countries. Examples are Rockall in the North Atlantic Ocean (Royle, 2014, Rutherford, 2019) and the Republic of Morac-Songhrati-Meads in the Spratly Islands (Menefee, 1994).

Third, claiming an island which is regarded as in international waters; however, in modern times, such unclaimed islands are unusual, therefore, micronations claimed in international waters are mostly on reefs or the outcome of human-made structures (i.e., seasteading) (Simpson, 2016, 2021), and with the Principality of Sealand being the most notorious and lasting example of seasteading (Cawley, 2017, Dennis, 2002); Hobbs and Williams (2022) provide a thorough discussion regarding the legal aspects that encouraged micronational claims on reefs in international waters.

Fourth is through conquering, i.e., ‘invading’ an island. A suitable example is what happened in 1990 on the island of Sark, which forms part of the Bailiwick of Guernsey when a French national was arrested for attempting to single-handedly take over the island (Caesar, 2006). Another example, although only temporary and more as an act of protest, was with the French fishers’ ‘invasion’ of the Écréhous in 1993 and 1994 (Fleury & Johnson, 2015).

The sovereignty of the Bailiwick of Jersey

The jurisdictional setting of the Minquiers and Écréhous reefs is entangled in geopolitical complexity and a history of disputes between Jersey (and sometimes the United Kingdom) and France over sovereignty and claims over customary fishing rights. As British possessions, as determined by the International Court of Justice in 1953, in the pre-Brexit era, the islets and rocks existed in overlapping domains of customary fishing rights, offering to the field of island studies examples where ebbs and flows concern not only land and sea, but also the dynamics of power, protest, and personal expression. The shared access to the islets continues to this day, although in a context of political uncertainty and ongoing disputes.

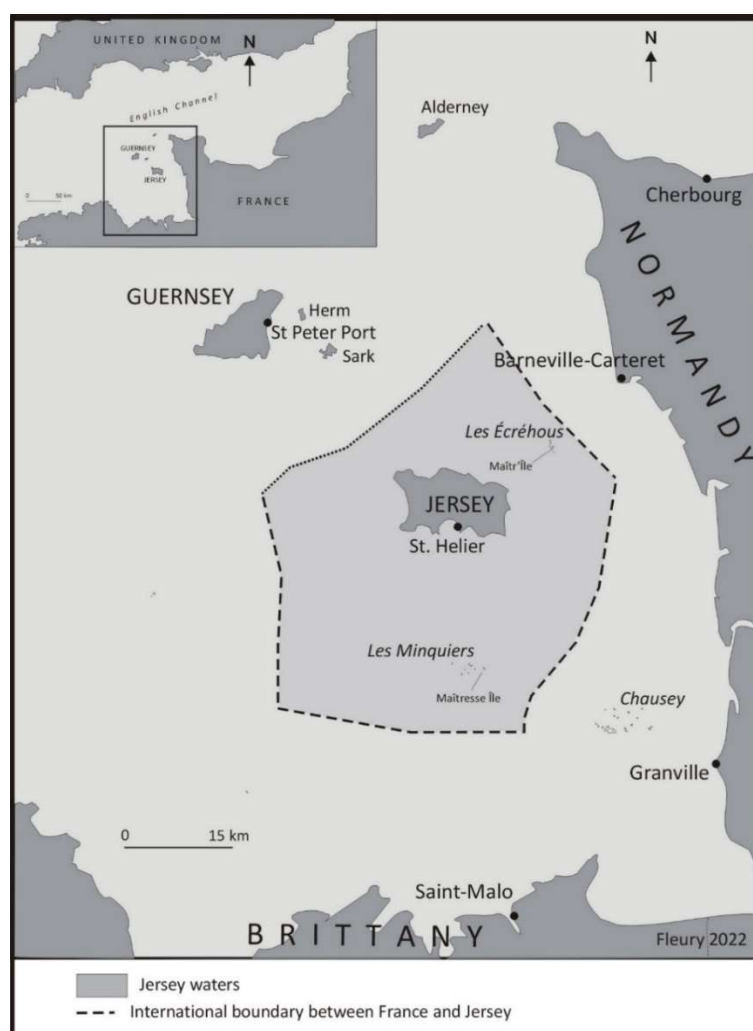
The islets exist as borderlands between the Crown Dependency of the Bailiwick of Jersey and the French Republic, where contested space is played out in the politics of place-making, whether through official diplomatic channels or bottom-up isolated protest in the form of micronational claims, the likes of which extend to the occasional ‘invasion’ and proclamation of nationhood.

From the macro, at least in the context of geographical propinquity, the Minquiers and Écréhous exist within the British Isles (well south of the mainland of Great Britain), the contested term that describes the nations and islands immediately surrounding them. But it is here that the Minquiers and Écréhous, along with the Bailiwick of Guernsey, extend the notion of ‘British’ to shores within sight of the French mainland. Placed in a political context, the reefs are part of the British Islands, as defined by the Interpretation Act 1978, comprising the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands (i.e., the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey, and internal jurisdictions), and the Isle of Man. Hence, the Channel Islands belong to the Crown, as Crown Dependencies, and are not part of the United Kingdom. That is:

The Crown Dependencies are not part of the UK but are self-governing dependencies of the Crown. This means they have their own directly elected legislative assemblies, administrative, fiscal and legal systems and their own courts of law. The Crown Dependencies are not represented in the UK Parliament. ... The Crown, acting through the Privy Council, is ultimately responsible for ensuring their good government. (Ministry of Justice, n.d., p. 1).

Moving to the island (or, rather, archipelagic) setting of Jersey, the Minquiers and Écréhous are administered by the States of Jersey, and more specifically by two of Jersey's twelve parishes, Grouville and St Martin, respectively. In the parish setting, the reefs extend each parish's spatial boundary across the sea and increase their respective land area, which ebbs and flows with massive tidal movement.

Figure 1: Map of the Bailiwick of Jersey and northern France, including the Minquiers and Écréhous reefs.



Source: © 2022, Christian Fleury.

The Minquiers and Écréhous are respectively the most southerly and northerly land territories of the Bailiwick (Figure 1) and currently have no permanent inhabitants. The Minquiers are situated about 15 km south of Jersey and the Écréhous are situated about 10 km northeast of Jersey. Maîtresse Île is the largest island in the Minquiers; the largest of the

Écréhous is Maîtr'Île (several other islets and rocks remain above water at high tide, including Marmotier and Bliantch'Île); various spellings are used for the islets, and include French and Jèrriais variations (Le Maistre, 1986). On the toponymy of the Minquiers and Écréhous, see Société Jersiaise (n.d. a, b). While the Minquiers shoal is about 16 km long and 11 km wide, at high tide only a fragment of the area remains exposed. At high water, the largest islet in the group is about 100 m long and 50 m wide (Godfray, 1928, p. 193). The largest islet in the Écréhous group is about 300 m long and 150 m wide (Coysh, 1985, p. 103).

Since 1204, the jurisdiction of the Minquiers and Écréhous reefs in the Channel Islands (excluding Chausey, which was too close to France to have been the object of any British claim) has been contested from time to time, with one or the other being a site of political protest, personal expression, or the subject of an ownership claim to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague (Fleury & Johnson, 2015). The Minquiers and Écréhous were granted in 1953 to Jersey by a ruling of the ICJ (Porter, 2003). The islets have also attracted attention as sites for shared fisheries between French and Jersey fishers, with different spheres of access agreed upon that cross national sea borders (Johnson & Fleury, 2017), although diplomatic cooperation was severely affected by the United Kingdom leaving the European Union (in which Jersey was never a full member but connected in various ways through Protocol 3 of the UK's 1972 Accession Treaty to the then European Economic Community).

The performance of micronationality in the Minquiers and Écréhous

Indissolubly linked in the dispute that has historically opposed the United Kingdom and France over their sovereignty, the respective cases of the Minquiers and Écréhous are to be distinguished (as said before) regarding their micronationality. The episode concerning the former is due to Jean Raspail (1925-2020) a far-right French novelist whose works often revolved around questions of identity and defence of indigenous peoples in danger of extinction. His interest in the Minquiers crystallized at the conjunction of two events that took place in the early 1980s. The first was in 1981 with the release of his book, *Moi, Antoine de Tounens, roi de Patagonie*, telling the story of Antoine de Tounens (1825-1878) a notary clerk from Dordogne in the southwest of France who sank into a monarchical delirium which led him in 1860 to Chile where he managed to be enthroned by some Mapuche chiefs in the troubled context of the conflicts between these people and the Chilean authorities (Tounens, 1863, Ferrer, 2003). He was born Antoine Orélie Tounein on 12th May 1825. His father's birth name was Tounein but in 1857 a change in the family name was granted by the imperial Court of Bordeaux, which accepted *de Tounens* according to an earlier denomination fallen in disuse. By ordinances dated 17th and 20th November 1860, he gave himself the title of *Orélie-Antoine Ier, King of Araucania and Patagonia* (Gallica, n.d.). He was finally expelled in 1862 and back in France spent the rest of his life maintaining his chimaera by trying to mount improbable expeditions to recover his 'kingdom' (Paganini, 2016; Strauss, 1999). For this article, we adopt the name Kingdom of Patagonia (French: *Royaume de Patagonie*) (Raspail, 1981), but the kingdom is also identified as the Kingdom of Araucanía and Patagonia (French: *Royaume d'Araucanie et de Patagonie*) and Kingdom of New France (French: *Royaume de Nouvelle-France*) (Ferrer, 2003; Paganini, 2016; Strauss, 1999; Tounens, 1863). The second event was the conflicts which surged in 1982 between the United Kingdom and Argentina about the sovereignty of the Falklands archipelago, 400 km off the Patagonian coastline.

By setting up an expedition of 13 people to the Maîtresse Île of the Minquiers on 1st June 1984, during which he cemented a plaque signifying the taking possession of the archipelago on the behalf of "S.M. Orélie Antoine Ier roi de Patagonie" (Figure 2), Raspail, self-proclaimed since 1981 consul of Patagonia, found something to exercise his iconoclastic

verve, combining a taste for provocation, certain bombast and a touch of humour. Raspail was back to Maîtresse Île on 30th August 1998 during which “a light naval unit of the Patagonia Fleet landed on the formerly British Minquiers archipelago and hoisted the royal blue-white-green flag to replace the British flag which can be honourably returned to her British Majesty's embassy in Paris” (BBC News, 1998). Due to the non-aggressive and eventually humoristic nature of the approach, British formalism acquitted itself very well of these gesticulations, even getting into Raspail's game as when a staff member of the British Embassy in Paris received him when he requested an audience to return the Union Jack. In addition to the deposit of the British flag and the raising of that of Patagonia in 1998, a last incursion to the Maîtresse Île in 2019 replaced the original sign on the door of the public toilet room with a message in French stating that the modest building constituted the most northern point of the Kingdom of Patagonia, in contrast to a (more realistic) statement stipulating that it constituted the southernmost British one. The toilet door was also painted in the tricolour colours of the Kingdom of Patagonia's flag (Chambers et al., 2016; Potigny, 2019; Stables, 2022).

Figure 2: The Patagonian flag hoisted on the Minquiers in 1984 with Raspail, in white.



Source: © 1984, Gilbert Hurel.

It is worth noting that, during the 1990s, French nationals also ‘invaded’ the Écréhous and raised the Norman flag. However, such invasions were partly in protest against fishing regulations and partly because they wanted the Écréhous to be recognised as part of France, and were not whatsoever related to the performance of micronationalism (Fleury & Johnson, 2015). In a different register, the Écréhous experienced two situations during which two Jersey characters claimed the status of ‘king’ of these rocks: Philippe Pinel (1820-1896) and Alphonse Le Gastelois (1914-2012).

The Jersey-born Philippe Pinel (Figure 3) settled in 1848 on the tiny islet of Bliantch'Île, in the middle of the Écréhous. Officially a fisher, he was also suspected to be a smuggler, a traditional activity in these favourable surroundings corseted by powerful currents and paved with numerous rocks, allowing only access to seasoned navigators. Midway from the Jersey mainland and France, the Écréhous has always been a very convenient place for practising various traffics, including alcohol and tobacco. Pinel had also other activities from which he could earn some income, including selling burnt seaweed to Jersey farmers or making pots for crustacean fishers.

Figure 3: Philippe Pinel on the Écréhous, c. 1875-1895.



Source: Société Jersiaise - SJPA/035508.

Living with his wife – who alternated staying in Jersey and the Écréhous but eventually ended up leaving the marital home – in an extremely basic stone cabin very sparsely furnished and including a kelp mattress, and renowned for his penchant for whiskey, Pinel saw himself gradually decked out in derision by the title of king by the Jersey or French fishers familiar with this place. No embassy, no consulate, and no flag here, contrary to Raspail's project; but decades of a very primitive life, sometimes marked by episodes during which visitors mimicked formal visits. As in July 1863, when a visiting party including Philippe Nicolle, a Jersey politician, participated in a coronation that was a pretext for binge drinking (Bailiwick Express, 2020; Renaud, 2012). From a contemporary account of Pinel:

Upon these rocks, King Pinel and his Queen had their kingdom: monarchs of all they surveyed, and their royal palace one squalid room. King Pinel I. was a wild, aboriginal Jerseyman, rough of speech and manner, living chiefly by *vraic* gathering. At low tide his special kingdom was some rods in circumference, at high it was scarcely more than the ground covered by his hut. The Queen, his wife, managed to cultivate one or two spots of sand where the tides came but a few times a year, and thus they lived in royal state. He accepted the title given him in jest as his legal and legitimate title, and felt his

royalty such a fact that once he communicated with a sister sovereign, doubtless the only sovereign of whom he ever heard. He or his Queen wove a couple of fancy work work-baskets, which he sent to the Queen of England [Victoria] and Princess Beatrice [her daughter]. In return, the Queen sent him a comfortable coat in which he at once had his photograph taken (Wright, 1897, p. 96).

The Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive (SJPA) contains seven digitalised portraits of Pinel. One is an early portrait dated c. 1866-1875 of the 'King of the Écréhous' with a basket on his shoulder, holding a fish and lobster on his knee (SJPA/013802). There are two portraits dated 27/06/1892 of Pinel standing in a doorway of a cottage on the Écréhous (SJPA/013030 and SJPA/013031). Notably, the description of item SJPA/013031 identifies the serge coat Pinel is wearing as the one sent to him by Queen Victoria for the basket he made for Princess Beatrice. There are three portraits from 1894 of Pinel with (probably a copy of) the same basket (SJPA/013670, SJPA/013671, SJPA/013672). And a portrait dated c. 1875-1895 with Pinel seated on a boat near a small single-storey house on a pebble beach on the Écréhous (Item SJPA/035508, see [Figure 3](#)). It is noteworthy that most of these items are *Carte de Visite* portraits; such items were commonly traded among people and became collectors' items during the Victorian era.

Probably the most interesting account of Pinel's life in the Écréhous is due to the Norman French poet, journalist and novelist Charles Frémine (1841-1906) who visited him with three friends in August 1884. Amidst accurate questions on the conditions of his eremitic life as well as his feelings on it, Pinel was asked about how he considered the end of his life. He then expressed his will to die on his rock (Frémine, 1886). This wish was not completely granted insofar as, found in a very weak state by fishers in early December 1896, he was taken to Jersey where he died on 17th December of the same year.

Figure 4: Alphonse Le Gastelois on the Écréhous, c. 1970.



Source © 2012, Jersey Evening Post.

The hermit experience of Alphonse Le Gastelois (Figure 4) in the Écréhous is far less anecdotal. It began on a dramatic tone when this quite reclusive man was falsely accused of being the ‘Beast of Jersey’, a name given to the hunted author of many offences, rapes and sexual assaults from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Several times worried by the police, and finally exonerated by the arrest of the real culprit in 1971, he decided in 1961 to go into exile in an Écréhous hut made available to him by a Jersey supporter. He then led the simple life inherent in the harshness of the place while benefiting from support both on the French and Jersey sides. Staying on the reef until 1975, even after the capture and sentencing of the actual ‘Beast of Jersey’, “[h]is story became a cause célèbre and the bearded character soon established himself as the ‘King of the Écréhous’ and became an attraction for those visiting the reef” (Jersey Evening Post, 2012). Le Gastelois was the subject of interviews and documentaries (Wilson, 1998).

The case takes another turn when Le Gastelois was made aware of a forgotten provision of Norman law stipulating that anyone who stayed ten years and one day on an uninhabited territory could claim independence (Renaud, 2012). Seeing this as an opportunity for possible revenge, he declared himself ‘King of the Écréhous’ in 1971 (Wilson, 1998). Through a French friend, he sent a letter to Queen Elizabeth II, asking for her recognition; but she did not respond. The correspondence had however apparently been forwarded via the Foreign Office to the States of Jersey (Jersey’s government), which was embarrassed by a request that probably had a legal basis that goes back centuries. There then followed a disturbing episode in which a house next to the hermit’s cabin caught fire, allowing the Jersey authorities to summon him to court. The lack of evidence led to his acquittal, but the court urged him not to return to the Écréhous. Tired of all these episodes, Le Gastelois resolved to return to Jersey, where the authorities granted a pension to the man whose fellow citizens persisted in calling ‘King of the Écréhous’.

Discussion

The performance of micronationality is represented by the adoption of the trappings of a sovereign country such as territory, titles, flags, stamps, passports, and other protocols particular to states. From a survey of micronational claims (Hobbs & Williams, 2021), the ‘invasions’ of the Minquiers can be framed as a political protest; whereas implying sovereignty to hermits living in Écréhous is associated with personal expression.

The ‘invasions’ of the Maîtresse Île on the Minquiers as a payback for the British occupation of the Falkland Islands is an evident use of micronational performance as a protest; the incursions of 1984, 1998, and 2019 to take possession of the archipelago used the Kingdom of Patagonia’s royal blue-white-green flag. The adoption of a flag as a symbol of something that exists by the entity that it symbolises, confirms the validity of the flag as an officially sanctioned and/or definitive symbol of an entity; unsurprising, micronational claims are often supported by flags (Bicudo de Castro & Hayward, 2021; Hayward, 2019b). It should be noted that these ‘invasions’ led by Raspail had a very different character from the above-mentioned frustrated attempt of a French national to single-handedly take over the island of Sark in 1990 (Caesar, 2006). Whereas the French national was armed with a semi-automatic firearm, Raspail had no violent intents, only exercising his iconoclastic verve, combining a taste for provocation, a certain bombast and a touch of humour. Raspail was a self-proclaimed consul of the Kingdom of Patagonia, and there is no evidence that the invasions were under the auspices of the pretenders to the throne of the kingdom at the time, *Philippe Ier* (1951-2014), *Antoine IV* (2014-2017), or *Frédéric Ier* (2018-) (Peregrine, 2019). Therefore, it seems the self-proclaimed consul hijacked the kingdom’s legitimacy for acts of political protest. There is

a risk of micronational claims being hijacked by third parties due to the lack of formal international recognition and uncertainty regarding official channels of communication with the government. For instance, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the ‘Prince Regent’ of the Hutt River Province, Australia, was selling titles of nobility in Queensland without the authority of the ruler of the principality, who lived in the outback in Western Australia (Bicudo de Castro & Kober, 2018; Ryan et al., 2006).

Regarding the Écréhous and its hermit residents, a substantial role of the public imaginary is required for supporting the spurious claim of sovereignty, i.e., being acclaimed as the ‘King of the Écréhous’. Examples from the recent history of people being acclaimed sovereigns within the performance of micronationalism include Denys I of the Kingdom of L’Anse-Saint-Jean in the late 1990s (Gardinetti & Vézina, 2021) and Boleslav I of the Kingdom of Wallachia in the 1990s and 2000s (Hobbs & Williams, 2022). However, both acclamations were purported to attract attention to their areas, namely, the municipality of L’Anse-Saint-Jean in Québec, Canada, and a south-east corner of Czechia, respectively. Considering the geographical location of the Écréhous, one can conclude that Pinel and Le Gastelois were not proclaimed kings for attracting tourism to the Écréhous. For the sake of contrast, despite Australia having one of the largest numbers of micronations in the world (Judd, 2020), people who have isolated themselves in Australian islands (e.g., David Glasheen, Gerald Kingsland, Lucy Irvine, and E. J. Banfield) have never claimed sovereignty or title (Bicudo de Castro & Muskat, 2020).

Therefore, the attribution of imagined sovereignty to hermits living on the Écréhous might be associated with peculiarities regarding the convoluted sovereignty of the Channel Islands, and perhaps the ignorance of ‘foreigners’. The British monarch – regardless of gender – is (still) addressed as the ‘Duke of Normandy’ in the Channel Islands, and the Duchy of Normandy still inhabits the imagination of people in the region (Matthews, 1999). In Norman law, the king owns the land, against the custom of being a king of his people, e.g., the King of England and the King of Scots. Therefore, the attribution of ‘King of the Écréhous’ would follow this Norman tradition of ownership of the land; little wonder Le Gastelois invoked a Norman law for claiming squatter’s rights of the island (Gardiner, 1997), and henceforth the right of being acclaimed ‘king’. Norman heritage in the form of history, language and other cultural spheres dominates the islands’ sense of identity *vis-à-vis* their Britishness. The main island of Jersey, for example, being just 22 km from the French mainland (versus 137 km from the English coast), enjoys numerous French connections in the form of cultural associations, festivals, tourism, cuisine, and trade.

The use of the flag of the Kingdom of Patagonia for the ‘invasion’ of the Maîtresse Île in the Minquiers can be associated with the reiteration of a flag as a symbol of something that exists and represents a cohesive group of people (i.e., the kingdom in exile), confirming the validity of the flag as the officially sanctioned symbol (Hayward, 2019b; Bicudo de Castro & Hayward, 2021). However, group cohesiveness does not apply to the claims of sovereignty over the Écréhous because life in the Écréhous was notoriously isolated from any community. Therefore, seeking the imaginary title of sovereign (i.e., the performance of micronationality) from both Pinel and Le Gastelois is more aligned with an acknowledgement of *place attachment* (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Lewicka, 2011), meaning the intent of evidencing how the identity of these people is so closely intertwined with the island on which they chose to live. Place attachment reflects a long-term affective bond to a particular geographic area that develops a sense of belonging in people, and makes a particular place an anchor of their identity (Hay, 1998). The *Carte de Visite* portraying Pinel as the King of Écréhous and the interviews

and documentaries about Le Gastelois are evidence of how these hermits' identities are closely intertwined with the Écréhous.

Conclusion

This article provides evidence as to how the public imagination and peculiarities regarding sovereignty and jurisdiction in the Channel Islands may concoct spurious insular micronational claims. The public imagination around being a 'Crown Dependency' and the Norman heritage might contribute to the micronational claims towards the Minquiers and Écréhous. Being on the borderlands between the Crown Dependency of the Bailiwick of Jersey and the French Republic might as well be another contributing factor leading to occasional 'invasions' and micronational claims on the small, contested island space.

Disclaimer

This paper did not benefit from research funding. The authors do not identify any conflicts of interest.

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