Micronations are outliers of the world. These self-proclaimed sovereign states are constantly battling adversity in the process of gaining public recognition and global accreditation. Micronations must be diplomatic and form a government and economy in order to become a more legitimate state. Furthermore, micronations must find ways to continually gain publicity and revenue in order to sustain themselves. This paper aims to explore micronations in their entirety as well as stories of both their successes and failures. In order to understand everything that a micronation is in its totality, one must first understand what it takes to start and maintain one.

According to the Republic of Pontus, “Micronations are entities that may claim to be independent nations or states or attempt to simulate ‘real world’ politics but which are not recognised by world governments, nation-states or major international organizations.” Physical micronations are most often formed on isolated islands or barren land that is uninhabited. Many micronations have created a declaration of independence and sought diplomatic recognition. Many also exist solely on the Internet as a virtual community with active members from around the world claiming to belong. Interestingly, many areas that people tend to think are micronations are actually “microstates,” meaning they own sovereign land and are recognized by at least one world power. The bulk of physical micronations, however, exist as a compromise between world powers and people wanting their own nation, without any legitimate sovereignty.

Creating a micronation typically starts out as a simple idea, and then grows from there. There are many different things that spark the creation of a micronation; from personal entertainment, to social protest, to economic and business related reasons. With starting a micronation often comes an effort to legitimize an internal government. Through ‘micronational’ government, often an economy of sorts must be outlined (i.e. separate currency, trade rules, etc.).
Successful founders of micronations will base decisions off of what resources are most readily available and what services/goods can add the most value to their new nation.

Another key aspect of a successful micronation is effective international diplomacy. Once a micronation has been established, it would be beneficial to create formal diplomatic relations with as many other micronations as possible, because it’s a meaningful way to build a sense of community between various micronations. Diplomats of a micronation, as with any legitimate sovereign nation, must keep the interests and goals of their nation in mind always to ensure a successful future for the nation. One can look at the journey of The Conch Republic as a quality example of a successful and thriving micro-nation.

The Conch Republic was established in Key West, Florida in 1982 in response to a United States Border Patrol blockade on highway U.S.1. Citizens had claimed the “roadblock portrayed Keys residents as non-U.S. citizens who had to prove their citizenship in order to drive on Florida mainland.” The Keys mayor, Dennis Wardlow, announced the secession. Ironically, a few minutes later they had to ask the United States for aid, as they were not yet able to sustain themselves.

To enforce the secession of the Conch Republic, the Monroe County Commission unanimously voted in 1994 to pass a County Resolution recognizing Wardlow’s actions as actions for the people of the Florida Keys. Today, the Conch Republic citizens claim to be both proud Conchs and Americans and hold a dual citizenship by an act of Congress.

The Conch Republic has recently developed and created Official Conch Republic Citizen Passports and Diplomat Passports that are accepted in 13 Caribbean Nations as well as Germany, Sweden, Havana, Mexico, France, Spain, Ireland and Russia. The Conch Republic also brings a significant amount of tourism to the Florida Keys, which helps the surrounding areas prosper.
Micronations like The Conch Republic are so successful because they conduct themselves in a way very similar to recognized sovereign nations. However, there are many micronations -- virtual micronations -- that do things a little differently. Virtual micronations are odd things for many people to understand. They can exist solely in the minds of their creators as a whimsical fantasy, or they could be established online with no limit to the number or physical location of their citizens.

One example of a virtual micro-nation is Wirtland, founded in 2008 on the internet. It was formed as an experiment to test how a country can sustain itself even without any physical land. The most interesting part about this micronation style is that it can stretch across physical national borders and still not cause any dispute over sovereignty/jurisdiction.

Many virtual micronations make it easy for people to acquire citizenship so that their population grows more quickly. For example, Wirtland requires only a letter of intent mailed to the government for a person to acquire citizenship. This is happening more and more, as virtual micronations gain popularity. Some researchers think this is because access to Internet and technology is increasing exponentially and there are always new abilities one has at his/her fingertips through such technology.

Whether they’re on an island, in outer space, or in the mind of the beholder, there’s no denying the presence of micronations in today’s world. They exist in a special niche in society and bridge a gap between the seriousness of international government and the exciting minds of the creative people of this world. As history has shown, they persevere through even the toughest situations, so expect to see them around for years to come.
- Some micronations (like The Principality of the Pontinha) have attempted to register bitcoins, a virtual legitimate (and often used in the black market) currency, as their official currency.
- When Renato Barros founded Poutinha, he didn’t have the money to buy it (basically a big rock in the ocean), so he sold his possessions. Family & friends thought he was crazy.
- Many physical micronations exist because of some governmental “loophole” (i.e. land not registered in official documents, land never claimed after war, etc.)
- Many micronations, like Poutinha, opt into generating energy through methods such as a solar panel or a wind turbine, as to avoid relying on another government.
- Having effective diplomacy is especially important for physical micronations but good for virtual ones to also keep in mind. Physical micronations, especially, exist without much law/power backing up their existence. So they must be careful not to step on the toes of other existing entities too much.
- Micro-nations like the Conch Republic can be considered a somewhat sovereign nation where the citizens are also citizens of the country they’re located in.
- The Conch Republic fought off an “invasion” by the United States Battalion in 1995. The Battalion was doing a practice drill and the Conchs believed them to be attacking them so they shot water cannons at them and hit them with stale Cuban bread. The U.S. apologized.
- The Conch Republic also remains open during government shutdowns so they can act as a refuge for people during that time.
References

Personal:

Linkedin profile of Renato Barros, founder of Principality of Poutinha (contacted through message, but unable to talk because he could not speak english).

https://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=AAkAAACky1EBj3CeMRLRd7keN7EHxyv3j2nK3zU&authType=NAME_SEARCH&authToken=0VDl&locale=en_US&trk=tyah&trkInfo=clickedVertical%3Aamynetwork%2CclickedEntityId%3A10799953%2CauthType%3ANAMESEARCH%2Cidx%3A1-1%2CtarId%3A1441831135142%2Ctas%3Abbaros

Facebook Profile of Renato Barros


Books:


Web:

Tampa Bay Times

http://www.sptimes.com/2006/01/14/State/Conchs_roar_to_bridge.shtml

Conch Republic Website

http://www.conchrepublic.com/

Fodor’s Travel

http://www.fodors.com/world/

Micronation.org

http://micronation.org

Business Insider: Most Interesting Micronations in the World


Micronations News Network

https://micronations.wordpress.com/resources/how/

How To Start Your Own Micronation

http://micronations.webs.com

TopTenz.net

http://www.toptenz.net/top-10-most-famous-micronations.php

CNN


Business Insider: Inside the Strange and Wonderful World of Micronations

5world.net

http://5world.net/micronation-def.html

WikiDot: A New Land

http://anewland.wikidot.com/legitimacy-of-micronations

Novaroma.org

http://www.novaroma.org/cursus_honorum/micronations.html

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wirtland_(micronation)

i09: How to Start Your Own Micronation

http://io9.com/how-to-start-your-own-micronation-1675358897

Start A Micronation

http://www.startamicronation.info/

Wikia: Principality of the Poutinha

http://fifthworld.wikia.com/wiki/Principality_of_the_Pontinha

Wikipedia: Principado da Poutinha

https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principado_da_Pontinha

Oddity Central: Portuguese Man Buys Tiny Island…


The Guardian: I Founded My Own Country
http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/nov/14/experience-i-founded-my-own-country

Crypto Coins News: What if a micronation adopts bitcoin…?

**Very interesting example of how someone can casually apply for citizenship**

Erin Elquinn  
May 3 at 4:43pm 🎉

Your Majesty, I would like to become a citizen of your country and apply for a passport - Is this possible? Sincerely, Your's in peace and good will.

Like · Comment

D. Renato Barros, Príncipe da Pontinha  
Please contact my prime-minister at my governamental web site: www.principality-pontinha.com

Principality of Pontinha

Like · Reply · 1 · May 10 at 11:40pm

1 Reply

Write a comment...