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Micronations are cool. Irresistibly sweet. Super sexy, to be frank. Bold, handsome and beautiful. Fast and flexible. Micronations are everything that the old bleak, stingy and sticky nation-states which belong to the trash bin of history are not. Micronations are an opportunity. Place and time, here and now. An event you should not – you cannot miss. Micronations. There's the future. Bright, efficient, dynamic. And here today.

A nightmare. A man woke up from a nightmare. He tried desperately to gather his courage to check out what time it was. How long had this horrible torment continued? He felt mistreated. He. A man in his stiff middle-age, the virile and lively Minister of Foreign Affairs of a medium-size nation-state. A symbol of power that was not so plausible anymore. Why was he chosen to be hassled by these nightmarish images? Why could not he and his full dress uniform simply be left alone?

Micronations and nation-states. The individual and the community, nation and nationality. People and power. Movement and restrictions. Boundaries and those who draw them – first and foremost their guards. And what kinds of things these do and create together. Questions, questions, questions.

Micronations and nation-states, the parties that demand and deplore each other. The conversation about the role and significance of nation-states is contentually in a close relation to both the liberalising of societies and advances in information technology. The development is linear. First they removed restrictions for trade, services, and above all, for money transactions. After this, the notion of unlimited growth and the victory of democracy – coloured by technological faith – pervaded both the back and front pages of our collective cortex. We had an

Internet dream which only some miserable fools bothered to question. The money rolled in like never before. The illusion of a continuous and endless growth and freedom of production and efficiency existed and fed itself.

It was believed and claimed that the individual could break away from the patronising grasp of the state. And not only the state but any authority that outrageously limited freedom. The answer was found in the individual, in individualism. In the smallness of units and in mutual networking. The state was given a job that suited it. That was the job of night watchman in which it was essential to stay clear of anything other than maintaining order unnoticed and guarding criminals.

And meanwhile, somewhere else. Artists conceived numerous ideas about states that could avoid the mistakes of Big Bad Wolf – i.e. those of the nation-states. They would not be hierarchic nor hostile but individual and enjoyable. Even entertaining. They would need no territory in order to function. They would exist as ideal attitudes and alternatives.

Let's take an example: the project called Elgaland-Vargaland by the Swedish artists Michael von Hausswolff and Leif Elggren. In its ten years of existence, this micronation has managed to attain almost all the essential and respectable trappings of a nation: they have a national anthem, flag and passport. The only thing missing – which they are still pursuing systematically – is recognition by other nations, and above all, by the United Nations.

The two sympathetic kings of Elgaland-Vargaland have also sought direct dialogue and co-operation with heads of states. The goal they personally feel important is promoting peace in the world and opposing wars. Their weapon is love. In the beginning of the 1990s, in connection with the first Gulf War that the previous

Bush arranged, the kings contacted both the crown princess of Sweden and the Queen of Great Britain. The idea was extremely simple and totally surprisingly feasible. Elgaland-Vargaland's ambassadors of peace and love rented a flat with a huge display window in the centre of London, and put a majestic four-poster bed there – which, of course, was upholstered in red shag. And there these two chaps waited patiently for the visits of the royalties. Well ahead of the time of the proposed visits, formal invitations were sent to the ladies, and this was done according to the correct form of procedure. In the invitation they were asked to come there and have wild and free sex in the name of world peace that unifies and touches us all. Bang, bang, shag-a-lang!

But yes. Perhaps the only place where the king and the queen are alone is not the toilet but the double bed. The bed that yearns for a bed mate, for the partner without whom the sex act is reduced to mere masturbation. Quite logical. But yes. The nights seemed so very empty and lonely. Painfully, they echoed and were lost in the graveyard of lost opportunities.

But what is the level of competence and judgement of micronations' heads of states? Is it enough that artists become a pain in the armpits of the representatives of nation-states? Do micronations have any other significance than questioning, and their warm, ironic approach? And how do micronations view the extreme individualist and neo-liberal ideals of a nation freed of power and taxes that exists but cannot be seen or heard?

Basically, the answer might well be that micronations, outlining the formation of the state and communities, fulfill their purpose by their very existence through artistic premisses. They are automatically being compared to nation-states, and thus the ball is again in the hands of these numerous old gentlemen who continuously wake up from the nightmare between their wrinkled, sweaty sheets. And whose grey

suits somehow, one way or the other, itch and scratch against their skins unpleasantly. As the Cold War subsided, in the fanatical heat of the Velvet Revolution, nation-states seemed as if they had fallen from the tree – and that is good. But will something concrete, something better and more meaningful come of this imaginary match – which the imaginary countries obviously win with flying colours?

Well, of course not, that was not even the point. As a form of art, the micronation is loaded with the assumption that it should fail. Its power lies in its falling and becoming exposed. The notion of a micronation cannot achieve anything but ideally we would be moving towards alternative and imaginative ways of figuring out the whats, wheres and whens. Openly and exposedly. An action and event which – in relation with its singularity and spontaneity – is certainly more than enough in itself.

It is much more difficult to find out and articulate what the long-span and long-term function of micronations' everyday is or should be. We can talk about process-like and performative transformation of a community but its range and sphere of influence is and will be on a personal level. Nation-states are and have their impact somewhere else. They are a part of an event that is called the macro level. It is a steep platform, out of seeing or yelling distance from the micro level.

And yes. In this field of *Realpolitik*, micronations have always been parked into a parking space that is passed without any interest or attention. That is, in the macro level reality. But that is a reality that faces its adversary internally, not externally. The nation-state is its own worst enemy. The question is about the shaky ride on the train of thought which seems familiar to Karl Marx's famous quote that has it that capitalism destroys everything it sees in the mirror. To put it another way, we can only emphasise that reality is always uglier and ruder than fiction. Reality is unbelievable.

Let's take another example. Not surprisingly, the subtext is the events of September 11, 2001 which showed the world how a central icon of an ideology and a nation that had achieved a certain hegemonic status, covered by smoke, came tumbling down and up. We will forever remember those countless broadcasts showing the twin towers of World Trade Center falling down and rising up. Falling down and rising up again. Up and down. Up and down.

As a consequence of the terrorist attack, the US has tried to turn every stone that walks or talks like an Arab or might hide elements which threaten national security. Laws have been changed in disregard of basic individual rights, more money has been allocated for defence, and prisons have been filled with suspects. However, one small yet crucial detail has been neglected. So we are talking about security, and above all, what it costs and who runs it. As we know, privatisation is the only option since the nation-state is ugly, evil and feeble.

It is a sheer fact that in the USA aviation security at the airports is run by private companies which pay their employees a wage smaller than the normative minimum wage. An amount of money far below the wages of people serving customers behind the counter in hamburger chains. On top of that, security personnel get a maximum of one month of training, and surprise, surprise, the employees change so often that the companies that hired them had to build three revolving doors in their facilities instead of one.

But what the heck. The nation-state is devious and deceitful. It can and it should be mocked. Kick it when it is already down. On the other hand, you must be extremely careful not to spill your own milk while kicking. You must be very careful not to support unintentionally a fundamental neo-liberal religion which maintains a version of reality where most of us are kept down and only a few live long and prosper. A reality – as the Palestinian film-maker Elia

Suleiman put it – in which the situation in Ramallah is like a shocking miniature model of the future of the whole global village.

However, being aware of relativity and conceding realism does not eliminate the potential and meaning that micronations have. That's where the power springs from. Not from the level of the system but from personal politics, everyday duties and decisions. These mischievous and parasitic opportunities are captured perfectly in what the German painter Martin Kippenberger views to be his only political act. In 1986, during the Commonwealth's annual meeting in Edinburgh, Kippenberger organised a shadow event in which non-stop "Free Nelson Mandela" was sure to blare out. The dazzlingly informative name of the event reveals everything essential: Anti-Apartheid Drinking Congress.

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