



Universiteit  
Leiden

The Netherlands

## Collective Identity in a Microstate: The Sense of National Identity in San Marino

Molinari, Nicole

### Citation

Molinari, N. (2023). Collective Identity in a Microstate: The Sense of National Identity in San Marino. *Leiden Elective Academic Periodical*, (3), 179-197. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3633584>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3633584>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## Collective Identity in a Microstate: The Sense of National Identity in San Marino

Nicole Molinari

---

In this article, I use the case study of San Marino to argue that microstates have national identities with specific attributes that make those identities distinguishable and recognizable despite the restricted dimensions of the states. My analysis draws on the *Istanze d'Arengo* (IdAs), a unique form of direct democracy in San Marino consisting of petitions applications through which citizens can raise issues of public interest to the government. Studies on national identity have yet to examine these petitions, which offer unique insights into citizens' assumptions about the attributes of San Marino's national identity and suggest ways this identity differs from that of its much larger neighbor, Italy.

This article engages with broad debates around concepts of collective and national identity. Following Ohad David and Daniel Bar-Tal's conceptualization, I understand collective identity as belonging to the collective level. The identification process of the individual stands at the basis of the collective level. As the authors explain, the individual must recognize the group to which they belong, show a willingness to be part of the community through emotional attachment, and attribute importance to the community membership. However, the development of collective identity requires more than just individual identification. Further, all individuals in the community must know they share the same identification process. This awareness creates a sense of belonging, an identity whose definition is shared by all that characterizes the whole group as a unique entity.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I will use David and

---

<sup>1</sup> David and Bar-Tal, "A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity," 356-61.

Bar-Tal's model for studying collective identity, specifically national identity, to analyze the IdAs in a structured way.

Studies on national identity in microstates have focused on cases such as Luxembourg, Andorra, and Palau. In the case of Luxembourg, researchers explored the construction of its national identity and inner conflicts, also considering the relevance of language and multiculturalism. A study of Andorra specifically juxtaposed the importance of national identity with regional and territorial identity between individuals. And in the case of Palau, the focus was on how young people structure their identities.<sup>2</sup> Although relevant, these studies mostly explore identity at the individual level. In the case of San Marino, the most representative national identity studies are those of Lisa Gualtieri and the yearbooks published by the Associazione Dante Alighieri di San Marino, titled *Identità Sammarinese*.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, Gualtieri offers a good overview of Sammarinese national identity; however, the author suggests that the characteristics discussed are broad and not very detailed. The author also focuses on the influence of identity on the country's relationship with the European Union.<sup>4</sup> The *Identità Sammarinese* yearbooks, of which there are currently fourteen, provide valuable information about the identity of San Marino through a wide range of written contributions that touch on various themes related to the state and its population. However, the stated intention of the publication is primarily to provide a space where any Sammarinese who wants to contribute can do so without academic training.<sup>5</sup> Despite their limitations, these studies on Sammarinese identity suggest that the Sammarinese population is characterized by a solid national identity despite the territory's small size, its enclosure within another sovereign state's territory, and its many affinities with Italy.

In this study, I rely on the concept of a "sense of national identity," defined by Anthony Smith as "a powerful means of

---

<sup>2</sup> See Fehlen, "Struggling over Luxembourgish Identity;" Rohstock and Lenz, "The Making of the Luxembourger;" Murdock, "Identity and Its Construal;" Monné-Bellmunt *et al.*, "Identitas Inclusives i Complementàries a Andorra;" Agarwal, "Asserting Identity."

<sup>3</sup> Title translates to *Sammarinese identity*.

<sup>4</sup> Gualtieri, "The National Identity of the Republic of San Marino."

<sup>5</sup> Capicchioni, "Presentazione," 12.

defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture.”<sup>6</sup> Drawing on Smith’s definition of the concept, my article offers a new perspective on Sammarinese identity, focusing on the collective level and exploring national identity as shaped by perceptions rather than as a fixed concept. The originality of my approach also extends to the corpus that I study, the IdAs. However, the IdAs can only provide information regarding the interests of those citizens who participate in San Marino’s system of direct democracy. What is expressed in these documents cannot be interpreted as representative of San Marino’s entire population.

I begin by discussing the collective identity model developed by David and Bar-Tal, applying this model to categorize the attributes that inform the petitioners’ sense of national identity. I then investigate the IdAs, present some reflections on their usefulness and limitations, and perform a thematic analysis of the corpus. From this, I draw preliminary conclusions regarding the attributes of petitioners’ sense of national identity. Finally, I end with a short conclusion summarizing the contribution of this study to the extant literature on both San Marino’s and microstates’ national identity, the limitations of the study, and areas for further research.

### **The Analysis of the Istanze d’Arengo**

David and Bar-Tal’s collective identity model can help to examine any collective identity, but the authors specifically apply the framework to national identity (fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> The model is sociopsychological, bridging the individual level with the macro level and treating the individual as part of macro-systems such as nations. In Bar-Tal’s words, “individuals think, feel, and act as society members, and therefore any understanding of the functioning of

---

<sup>6</sup> *National Identity*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> “A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity,” 357.

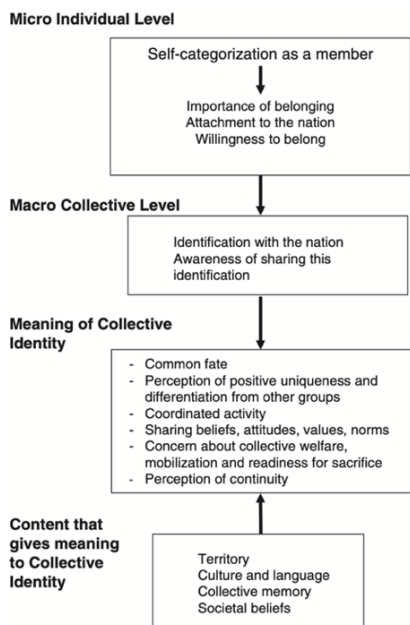


Figure 1. David and Bar-Tal’s “model of national identity.”<sup>10</sup>

social systems must include an analysis that relates between society members and societal system.”<sup>8</sup> The meaning of society can only be understood when considering the cognitive-affective repertoire of society members.<sup>9</sup> With this sociopsychological model, which treats collective identity as a macro-level issue, the relevance of the IdAs petitioners’ perceptions to understanding Sammarinese national identity is clear. Based on this model, the authors argue that national identity at the collective level relies on two pillars. One is

composed of generic features that characterize all national identities. These are features of national identity for citizens regardless of specific national context. The other pillar is formed of characteristics that define the uniqueness of national identities, the contents which give meaning to the first pillar.<sup>11</sup> The model provides a framework for studying the specific attributes that characterize the Sammarinese national identity.

The IdAs can be submitted to the Captains-Regent—San Marino’s two heads of state—by every adult citizen with the right to vote on the first Sunday after every start of the Captains-Regent’s term, once every six months. The distinctive aspect of these petitions is that they must be of public interest. Personal issues are not

<sup>8</sup> “Bridging Between Micro and Macro Perspectives in Social Psychology,” 343–5.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*, 344.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*, 359.

<sup>11</sup> David and Bar-Tal, “A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity,” 361–7.

allowed; issues raised in petitions must involve the collective. The petitions are presented to San Marino's parliament, known as the Great and General Council, and must be treated as a priority during the heads of state's term in office.<sup>12</sup> In the present research, I considered only those IdAs that explicitly refer to the issue of identity by containing the words *identità*,<sup>13</sup> *identitario/a*<sup>14</sup> or *sammарinesità* (a specific term that refers to attitudes, behaviors, and traditions that express a strong sense of belonging and identity within the Republic).<sup>15</sup> I analyzed twenty different IdAs dating from the ten years between 2012 and 2022.<sup>16</sup> Multiple citizens or local associations endorsed most of the IdAs I examined. Even when presented by a single person, these petitions speak as a community using the first-person plural. Hence, these documents suggest collective perceptions of petitioners that form their sense of national identity.

Unfortunately, not much information is available in the Great and General Council archive on the promoters of the different IdAs. However, various studies concerning other countries have found petition writers more educated than the general population. They are mostly older people and retirees with more time and significant socioeconomic resources than the rest of the population, primarily civic skills. In addition, petitioners belong to networks such as civic associations that expose them to more opportunities for participation in direct democracy. In general, they are more active in the political arena.<sup>17</sup> I argue that this is a description of the people whose perceptions I study here. However, given the restricted populace of San Marino, a more significant share of the population probably participates in direct democracy. Citizens, who know each other directly, are linked to their government through personal

---

<sup>12</sup> "Legge 24 maggio 1995."

<sup>13</sup> Translates to *identity*.

<sup>14</sup> Translates to *identitarian*.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe/ERICarts, "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe," 7.

<sup>16</sup> The time scope has been dictated by the availability of the *Istanze d'Arengo* in the official online archive of the Great and General Council.

<sup>17</sup> Sheppard, "Online petitions in Australia," 487-91; Lindner and Riehm, "Broadening Participation Through E-Petitions?," 13-9.

bonds, entailing greater political involvement and awareness of political issues.<sup>18</sup>

The IdAs are more relevant to a study of Sammarinese national identity than similar initiatives (e.g., legislative initiatives and motions to call a referendum) due to their more informal formulation, which can offer a more accurate account of people's real perceptions and genuine convictions.<sup>19</sup> Janne Berg has seen that more informal petitions tend to reveal more about emotions than formal ones. The language is more expressive and affective and better communicates what people feel is valuable to them.<sup>20</sup> The fact that identity is a recurring theme in these informal petitions shows that petitioners perceive identity as a central issue.

I analyzed the IdAs using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis explores social meaning around a topic, including people's views and perspectives. Since it aims to identify shared patterns, thematic analysis helps to understand a collective rather than an individual.<sup>21</sup> As Helene Joffe claims, thematic analysis is an ideal method to understand the "specific nature of a given group's conceptualization of the phenomenon under study" by considering the symbolic meaning and social construction of that phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> Since my analysis is based on the collective identity model of David and Bar-Tal, I adopt a deductive approach, identifying the main attributes that inform the sense of national identity and its subdimensions.

### **The Attributes of the Sense of Sammarinese National Identity**

According to David and Bar-Tal, the attributes that inform the meaning of national identity vary between nations. Depending on the context, some may be more prominent than others.<sup>23</sup> Still, the authors believe some general attributes shared by nations can be identified. I argue that these can be identified in the context of

---

<sup>18</sup> Veenendaal, "Politics of the four European microstates," 157; Erk and Veenendaal, "Is Small Really Beautiful?," 140-1.

<sup>19</sup> Łukaszewski, "When the People's Needs Are Not Listened to," 125-6.

<sup>20</sup> Berg, "Political Participation in the Form of Online Petitions," 23-6.

<sup>21</sup> Clarke and Braun, "Thematic Analysis," 297.

<sup>22</sup> "Thematic Analysis," 212-3.

<sup>23</sup> Bar-Tal, *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, 124-5.

Sammarinese national identity through the analysis of the IdAs, which contain a range of specific aspects that the petitioners perceive as fundamental to their sense of national identity. These attributes are interconnected even if they can each be studied separately. The main characteristics of national identity identified by David and Bar-Tal are shared territory, culture and language, collective memory, and societal beliefs that the community deems crucial for its existence.<sup>24</sup> Building on this framework, I have identified specific subthemes related to the Sammarinese sense of national identity, mainly associated with culture (fig. 2).

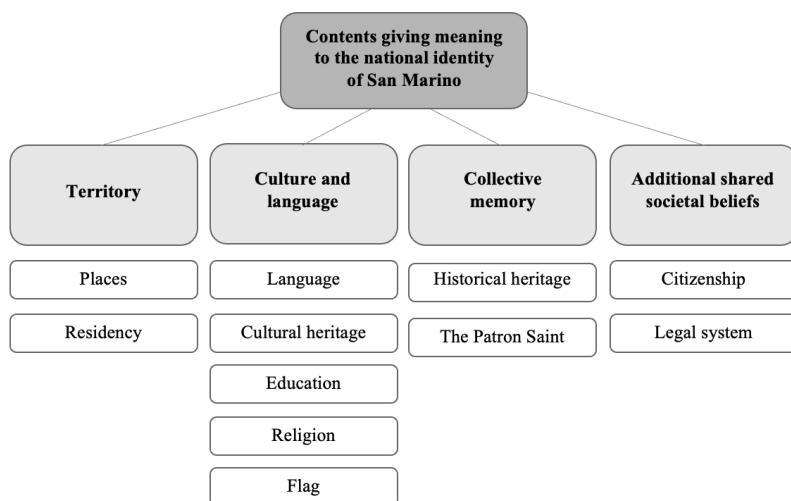


Figure 2: Characteristics of national identity of San Marino.<sup>25</sup>

Attachment of nationals to territories is a fundamental trait of national identity. The authors of many different IdAs highlight certain territory aspects relevant to their national identity. For example, the authors show significant attachment to specific places representing national identity. An IdA from 2017, approved by the Council, concerned the appropriate set off of the decorations and symbols on the exterior side of the Church of St. Francis. Here, the promoters addressed the Church as an important religious

<sup>24</sup> “A Sociopsychological Conceptualisation of Collective Identity,” 367–9.

<sup>25</sup> Author’s own representation.



monument, a precious source of collective memory for the community and its identity.<sup>26</sup> Another relevant IdA, also approved by the Council, concerns maintaining the management and public ownership of the *Casa per Ferie San Marino di Pinarella di Cervia*, the national summer colony. In the petition, which dates from 2014, the authors describe the colony as the holiday destination for a significant share of the Sammarinese community for decades and a symbol that “strengthens the Sammarinese identity and social ties among the territory’s citizens.”<sup>27</sup> They consequently claim that the place must be considered part of the collective heritage.<sup>28</sup> Another place petitioners perceive as prominent is the railway that used to connect the Republic with the Italian territory. An IdA approved in 2021 advocated for the completion of the bicycle path that now stands there, which it deemed a vital task considering “the important historical heritage of the Rimini-San Marino railway, a symbol of identity for Sammarinese citizens, and that the recovery of the Railway can keep its memory and identity alive.”<sup>29</sup>

Other petitioners discuss the capital's historical center and Mount Titan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Petitioners take pride in this designation and care about conserving the places they view as central to the nation. A specific theme related to the historical center concerns the notion of residency. In 2017 the residents’ association *Contiamoci* presented an IdA, later approved by the Council, discussing the value of residency in the historical center of San Marino and the importance of the area’s preservation and conservation. The association deemed the issue important because “over the years, depopulation was followed by the disappearance of essential services and life during night and winter, with a loss of Identity and Community becoming more and more

---

<sup>26</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.21 del 2 aprile 2017.”

<sup>27</sup> Original text: “*rafforza l’identità sammarinese e i legami sociali fra i cittadini del territorio.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.4 del 05-10-2014.” Note that from this moment on, translations are the author’s own.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Original text: “*l’importante patrimonio storico della ferrovia Rimini-San Marino, simbolo di identità per i cittadini sammarinesi e che recuperare la Ferrovia possa tenerne viva la memoria e la storia.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.15 (04-04-2021).”

prominent.”<sup>30</sup> The inhabitants of the historical center declared that “they are in fact in love with their country, which they care about and strongly desire to contribute with their presence to keep alive Community and Identity, their properties, and being together,”<sup>31</sup> which would be lost if they had to leave. Therefore, the residents must be considered an essential defense of the intrinsic value of the Republic and the UNESCO heritage.<sup>32</sup>

Culture is a broad term that, in the context of national identity, refers to all the concrete aspects that define identity as unique and provide an account of its expression.<sup>33</sup> Culture is transmitted across generations and is continuously constructed and reconstructed. Many attributes can be included under the umbrella of culture. Many IdAs relate to the cultural theme, indicating that this is one of the most prominent aspects of petitioners’ national identity.

David and Bar-Tal argue that language is essential to national identity.<sup>34</sup> San Marino’s population does not have a distinct language but speaks Italian. An IdA from 2014, which the Council disapproved, asked the government to support school programs to safeguard and promote the Sammarinese dialect. As seen in the IdA, its promoters are still attached to their dialect. In their words, “the dialect—other than the unique treasure of our 1700 years of history—remains one of the few possibilities to protect our identities.”<sup>35</sup> The authors see preserving their dialect as protecting their national identity, roots, and traditions. In their view, the dialect symbolizes the collective heritage and its historical and civic memory, so the language must be maintained and transmitted to

---

<sup>30</sup> Original text: “*Negli anni, allo spopolamento sono seguite la scomparsa di servizi essenziali e di vitalità nelle ore notturne e invernali, con una perdita di Identità e Comunità sempre più marcata.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.25 dell’8 ottobre 2017.”

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Original text: “*Sono infatti innamorati del loro Paese a cui vogliono bene e desiderano fortemente contribuire con la loro presenza a tenere vive Comunità e Identità, le loro proprietà e lo stare insieme.*”

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Facos and Hirsh, *Art, Culture and National Identity in Fin-De-siècle Europe*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> “A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity,” 368.

<sup>35</sup> Original text: “*Il dialetto—oltre alla ricchezza unica dei nostri 1700 anni di storia—resta una delle pochissime possibilità di salvaguardia di queste identità.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.18 del 06-04-2014.”

future generations. The petitioners proposed to do this by introducing school activities to teach typical expressions, proverbs, and idioms of the Sammarinese dialect.

The petitioners emphasize the role of education in shaping national identity, especially that of young people. In addition to the 2014 IdA discussed above, my research uncovered three other petitions that regard education as a primary tool to teach the Republic's fundamental values, history, and cultural heritage, giving Sammarinese nationals a sense of community.<sup>36</sup> A 2018 IdA, which the Council ultimately disregarded, asked for the introduction of civic education as a school subject. Petitioners stated that “education for citizenship means carrying on a continuous and irreplaceable process directed toward the cultivation of the Sammarinese identity, also with the scope of understanding that we live in an international community with common interests.”<sup>37</sup> Introducing the topic could strengthen students’ national identity development and understanding of the Sammarinese community belonging in the petitioners’ opinion.<sup>38</sup> Another IdA from 2022, not accepted by the Council, proposed that parents give informed consent before their children participate in curricular and extracurricular educational activities. The petition wanted to ensure that the school did not usurp the role of families in children’s education. The consideration of families in the petition is, therefore, that of a relevant shaper of young people’s identities and communicator of the values of the Republic.<sup>39</sup> The other IdA on the topic, also from 2022, contained a request to increase art history education in Sammarinese schools. The Council did not approve the request, which reflects the petitioners’ belief that education makes students aware of their origins and develops a shared identitarian consciousness. Knowledge of the artistic traditions of the community plays a vital role, the petitioners claim:

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Original text: “*Educare alla cittadinanza significherebbe portare avanti un processo continuo ed irrinunciabile teso a coltivare l’identità sammarinese, anche allo scopo di far comprendere che viviamo in una comunità internazionale con interessi comuni.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.2 del 7 ottobre 2018.”

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.3 (02-10-2022).”

Recently, we have seen a more significant commitment to valorizing cultural heritage in our Republic and different countries. This new interest, starting from the knowledge of our history, aims to instill in young generations a critical sensibility and, at the same time, to allow them to rediscover a shared identitarian consciousness—thus making this heritage not only available to the collective, understood in the broadest terms, but also to dedicate it as a means of peaceful union among populations.<sup>40</sup>

This IdA suggests that cultural heritage is perceived as another critical attribute. Cultural heritage includes various cultural manifestations the community views as fundamental to its sense of national identity.<sup>41</sup> A 2017 IdA on the preservation and value of cultural and landscape assets represents San Marino’s archaeological and historical sites as attributes of past communities and, therefore, as a source of collective memory. The authors of this petition write that “the preservation of cultural assets, especially in our country, becomes an identitarian issue to transmit to future generations and make it known to the rest of the world.”<sup>42</sup> Another IdA from 2014 on the ratification of the European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, accepted by the Council, clarifies that the “knowledge, preservation and appreciation of

---

<sup>40</sup> Original text: “*In tempi recenti si assiste, nella nostra Repubblica e nei diversi Paesi, a un crescente impegno volto a valorizzare il patrimonio culturale. Questo nuovo interesse, partendo dalla conoscenza della propria storia, aspira a far nascere nelle giovani generazioni una necessaria sensibilità e, al contempo, permette di ritrovare una comune coscienza identitaria culturale—rendendo così tale patrimonio non solo fruibile alla collettività, intesa nel più ampio senso possibile, ma anche facendolo assurgere a veicolo di unione pacifica tra i popoli.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.20 (03-04-2022).”

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Original text: “*la tutela dei beni culturali, soprattutto nel nostro Paese, diventa un fatto identitario da trasmettere alle generazioni future e far conoscere al resto del mondo.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.6 del 2 aprile 2017.”

historical and archaeological heritage are fundamental for the development of cultural identity.”<sup>43</sup>

The emphasis on cultural heritage also reveals the importance that petitioners attribute to museums. In an IdA from 2020, petitioners called for a museum dedicated to Sammarinese pottery. Although the Council did not welcome the idea, the petition demonstrates that its authors perceive that the artistic field of pottery is integral to national identity. A pottery museum could help display the community’s capabilities and traditions across past centuries. In the minds of the petitioners, these artifacts make the San Marino citizenry unique.<sup>44</sup> Other artistic manifestations of cultural heritage are also perceived to provide meaning to national identity. Stonecutting, an ancient tradition dating from the founding of the Republic, was mentioned in an accepted 2017 IdA that concerned the set off of a master stonecutter’s sculpture representing St. Marinus. The petitioners claimed that stonecutting has a high cultural and identitarian value.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Sammarinese-dialect theater is mentioned in the IdA previously examined concerning the topic.<sup>46</sup>

Another perceived symbol of national identity in petitions is the Republic flag. The Council did not adopt two different IdAs concerning the institution of a national holiday dedicated to the flag, one from 2016 and the other from 2019. Nevertheless, for the authors of these petitions, the flag symbolizes the *sammarinesità*.<sup>47</sup> Religion is the last critical cultural characteristic. The IdA concerning the Church of St. Francis greatly emphasizes the Roman Catholic aspect of national identity.<sup>48</sup> The religious element of national identity is also related to the fact that a saint founded the Republic. A specific IdA from 2019, not approved by the Council,

---

<sup>43</sup> Original text: “*la conoscenza, la tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio storico e archeologico rivestono fondamentale importanza nello sviluppo dell’identità culturale.*” “Istanza d’Arengo n.1 del 06-04-2014.”

<sup>44</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.2 (04-10-2020).”

<sup>45</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.18 del 2 aprile 2017.”

<sup>46</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.18 del 06-04-2014.”

<sup>47</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.22 del 3 aprile 2016;” “Istanza d’Arengo n.29 del 7 aprile 2019.”

<sup>48</sup> “Istanza d’Arengo n.21 del 2 aprile 2017.”

asked for having an image of St. Marinus in every public building to constantly memorialize the figure of the founder, a feature of national identity, and the Catholic path from which he took inspiration. In the authors' opinion, public representations of the saint would help to make everyone aware of the identity and history of the Sammarinese community.<sup>49</sup>

Essential for national identity is collective memory, which involves all memories of the past, critical events, and relevant people that shape the narratives around the nation. These narratives are passed among generations, providing the basis for the development of national identity in the present and future.<sup>50</sup> Petitioners perceive collective memory as associated with its sources in all the IdAs mentioned above and an additional one from 2017 not accepted by the Council regarding the naming of public institutions and buildings. For example, the Church of St. Francis is a *lieu de mémoire*. The material site is invested with a symbolic aura, a repository of history where memory is crystallized.<sup>51</sup> National historical heritage encompasses archaeological and historic sites, ancient buildings, historical figures, religious places, and more. This heritage is a vital attribute to petitioners' sense of national identity. Petitioners believe that conserving and restoring cultural heritage keeps memories of the community's history alive and strengthens the national identity. The petitioners also address the preservation of memory: "the preservation of historical memory is among those actions directed toward strengthening the identitarian factor in our country."<sup>52</sup> These actions allow future generations and the rest of the world to appreciate San Marino's historical memory and understand its peculiarity and relevance to the Sammarinese sense of national identity.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.22 del 6 ottobre 2019."

<sup>50</sup> Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory," 180-2.

<sup>51</sup> Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7-19.

<sup>52</sup> Original text: "*la tutela della memoria storica rientra fra le azioni volte a potenziare il fattore identitario del nostro Paese.*" "Istanza d'Arengo n.7 del 2 aprile 2017."

<sup>53</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.1 del 06-04-2014;" "Istanza d'Arengo n.6 del 2 aprile 2017;" "Istanza d'Arengo n.21 del 2 aprile 2017;" "Istanza d'Arengo n.15 (04-04-2021)."

The myth of the Republic's founding and the figure of its founder and patron saint, Marinus, are essential to forming collective memory. St. Marinus is associated with the nation's Christian roots and the idea that he is the reason for the country's existence; these claims can be seen in the IdA on the value of a sculpture representing the saint, the IdA petitioning for a representation of the saint in every public space, and the IdA concerning the Sammarinese dialect. The authors of these petitions believe that the community should always be grateful for the leadership of St. Marinus. For these authors, the saint represents the value of the wisdom that has always characterized the community, inspired by the honesty and simplicity of the saint. For these reasons, the figure of St. Marinus is crucial to the community's sense of national identity.<sup>54</sup>

David and Bar-Tal theorize that, apart from the shared territory, culture, and collective memory, every national community has its own set of additional shared beliefs essential for its existence. These beliefs shape the perception of reality shared by the collective.<sup>55</sup> In the case of San Marino, citizenship and the legal system support a sense of national identity. Citizenship is perceived as a distinctive element of Sammarinese identity that defines the limits of the community. A 2014 IdA not approved by the Council called for the complete application of the principle of uniqueness of Sammarinese citizenship, as it is not allowed to have multiple citizenships. The authors of this petition claimed that "Sammarinese citizenship is a sign of our identity and should not be degraded to an accessory."<sup>56</sup> According to this petition, citizenship is a precondition for being treated as a community member and sharing its identity. The same theme emerges in another IdA from 2012, not approved by the Council, on the issue of allowing citizens to vote from abroad.<sup>57</sup> The centrality of citizenship to national identity also

---

<sup>54</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.18 del 06-04-2014;" "Istanza d'Arengo n.22 del 6 ottobre 2019;" "Istanza d'Arengo n.18 del 2 aprile 2017."

<sup>55</sup> David and Bar-Tal, "A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity," 369.

<sup>56</sup> Original text: "*La cittadinanza Sammarinese è un segno della nostra identità e non deve essere svilita ad un accessorio.*" "Istanza d'Arengo n.1 del 05-10-2014."

<sup>57</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.7."

explains the importance of teaching civic education previously highlighted. It can help young people understand what it means to be a citizen and a member of a specific community.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, the legal tradition of San Marino is also perceived as a part of the national heritage.<sup>59</sup> A specific IdA from 2020, accepted by the Council, concerning the simplification and reorganization of the judicial apparatus, makes explicit reference to the fact that the petitioners regard the country's legal system as a characteristic of their identity, as this system has regulated and preserved the Sammarinese community over time, guaranteeing a sense of community that, in the petitioners' opinion, must be preserved for future generations. The authors consider the legal system as an element that allowed the state to develop democratically and gain its autonomy, making it an essential attribute of the authors' sense of national identity.<sup>60</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This article identifies specific attributes of Sammarinese national identity that make this identity distinguishable despite the restricted dimensions of the state. Promoters of the IdAs perceive these attributes to inform their sense of national identity. As demonstrated, these attributes are identifiable in San Marino's specific places, notions of residency and citizenship, Sammarinese dialect, culture and heritage, flag, legal system, religion, patron saint, and education system. Thus, my study generally contributes to the literature on national identity in San Marino and microstates. Analyzing the IdAs, through which citizens can submit issues of public interest to the government's attention, has offered valuable insights into collective perceptions. These documents, which have never been previously studied in research on national identity, provide crucial information on how citizen petitioners perceive themselves, their identity, and their nation. This article also represents a concrete application of David and Bar-Tal's collective

---

<sup>58</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.2 del 7 ottobre 2018."

<sup>59</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.2 d'Arengo (04-10-2020)."

<sup>60</sup> "Istanza d'Arengo n.4 del 5 aprile 2020."



identity model, which allowed me to analyze the IdAs in a structured way.

This study has analyzed national identity attributes at the collective level; other pillars and levels of national identity fall beyond its scope. As a result, future investigations of the topic might offer a more comprehensive analysis starting from the level of individual Sammarinese citizens, which is necessary for developing collective identity, and further exploring the pillars of national identity at the macro level. Future efforts could also integrate this analysis with other IdAs that implicitly refer to national identity. This could lead to identifying more themes and adding substance to the study of the subject. The other Sammarinese instruments of direct democracy mentioned earlier could also be considered, expanding the research. The methods of this study could also be applied to analyses of different microstates with direct democracy.

### **Bibliography**

- Agarwal, Rachana. "Asserting Identity: Youth Culture, Education, and Nationalism in Contemporary Palau." Ph.D. diss. Brandeis University, 2013.
- Bar-Tal, Daniel. "Bridging Between Micro and Macro Perspectives in Social Psychology." In *Bridging Social Psychology: The Benefits of Transdisciplinary Approaches*, edited by Paul A.M. Van Lange, 341–6. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006.
- . *Shared Beliefs in a Society: Social Psychological Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000.
- Berg, Janne. "Political Participation in the Form of Online Petitions: A Comparison of Formal and Informal Petitioning." *International Journal of E-Politics* 8, no. 1 (2017): 14–29.
- Clarke, Victoria, and Virginia Braun. "Thematic Analysis." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12, no. 3 (2017): 297–8.
- Capicchioni, Franco. "Presentazione." In *Identità Sammarinese*, 11–4. San Marino: Dante Alighieri Repubblica di San Marino, 2009.
- Council of Europe/ERICarts. "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe." No. 17 (2015).
- David, Ohad, and Daniel Bar-Tal. "A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity: The Case of National Identity as an Example." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 13, no. 4 (2009): 354–79.
- Erk, Jan, and Wouter Veenendaal. "Is Small Really Beautiful? The Microstate Mistake." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 135–48.
- Facos, Michelle, and Sharon L. Hirsh. *Art, Culture and National Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Fehlen, Fernand. "Struggling over Luxembourgish Identity." Diss. Université du Luxembourg, 2009.
- Great and General Council. "Legge 24 maggio 1995, Regolamentazione dell'esercizio del diritto di petizione popolare mediante Istanza d'Arengo." Archivio Leggi, Decreti e Regolamenti, 1995.
- Gualtieri, Lisa. "The National Identity of the Republic of San Marino: The Challenges of a Non-EU Country within the European Union." In *Regional History as Cultural Identity*, edited by Kenneth J. Bindas and Fabrizio Ricciardelli. Rome: Viella, 2017.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.3 (02-10-2022) – Affinché sia introdotto il preventivo consenso informato dei genitori degli alunni e studenti che partecipano ad attività curricolari ed extra-curricolari previste dai vari istituti scolastici di ogni grado." Great and General Council official archive, 2022.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.20 (03-04-2022) – Affinché sia incrementato il monte ore dell'insegnamento di Storia dell'Arte." Great and General Council official archive, 2022.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.15 (04-04-2021) – Per il completamento del percorso ciclopedonale sul tratto dell'ex Ferrovia Dogana – San Marino Città." Great and General Council official archive, 2021.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.2 (04-10-2020) – per la creazione del Museo della ceramica sanmarinese." Great and General Council official archive, 2020.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.4 del 5 aprile 2020 – per l'avvio di procedure atte a semplificare la regolamentazione dell'attività giurisdizionale e per la riorganizzazione dei relativi apparati." Great and General Council official archive, 2020.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.22 del 6 ottobre 2019 – per l'esposizione di un'immagine del Santo Marino in tutte le sedi istituzionali e uffici e/o locali dell'Amministrazione." Great and General Council official archive, 2019.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.29 del 7 aprile 2019 – per l'istituzione della "Festa della Bandiera" il 17 febbraio di ogni anno." Great and Council official archive, 2019.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.2 del 7 ottobre 2018–2. Per l'istituzione di una nuova materia scolastica curricolare denominata 'Educazione Civica'." Great and General Council official archive, 2018.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.25 dell'8 ottobre 2017 – per la tutela, la conservazione e la valorizzazione della residenzialità nel centro Storico del Castello di San Marino." Great and General Council official archive, 2017.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.21 del 2 aprile 2017 – per rendere nuovamente fruibili in modo corretto le decorazioni e i simboli sul muro esterno della Chiesa di San Francesco (San Marino Città)." Great and General Council official archive, 2017.
- "Istanza d'Arengo n.18 del 2 aprile 2017 – per l'apposizione esplicativa del volto del Santo Marino scolpito dal Maestro scalpellino Aldo Volpini sulla roccia della Cava Antica." Great and General Council official archive, 2017.

- “Istanza d’Arengo n.7 del 2 aprile 2017 — per una ridefinizione della denominazione di edifici e istituti pubblici.” Great and General Council official archive, 2017.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.6 del 2 aprile 2017 — per la tutela e la valorizzazione dei beni culturali e paesaggistici.” Great and General Council official archive, 2017.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.22 del 3 aprile 2016—Per l’istituzione della ‘Festa della Bandiera’ in concomitanza alla giornata del 17 febbraio di ogni anno.” Great and General Council official archive, 2016.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.4 del 05-10-2014 per il mantenimento della Casa per ferie di Pinarella di Cervia come patrimonio e risorsa pubblica e/o per recedere da qualunque accordo già in essere per la privatizzazione della gestione della stessa o per la vendita dell’immobile.” Great and General Council official archive, 2014.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.1 del 05-10-2014 per la piena applicazione del principio di unicità della cittadinanza sammarinese.” Great and General Council official archive, 2014.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.18 del 06-04-2014 perché vengano promosse attività in ambito scolastico tese a salvaguardare e valorizzare il dialetto sammarinese e perché vengano previsti interventi normativi a sostegno di iniziative in campo dialettale.” Great and General Council official archive, 2014.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.1 del 06-04-2014 per la ratifica della Convenzione Europea per la Protezione del Patrimonio Archeologico.” Great and General Council official archive, 2014.
- “Istanza d’Arengo n.7 — Cittadini Sammarinesi affinché sia costituito, ai fini elettorali, il collegio estero con l’attribuzione di due seggi in Consiglio Grande e Generale.” Great and General Council official archive, 2012.
- Joffe, Helene. “Thematic Analysis.” In *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners*, edited by David Harper and Andrew R. Thompson, 209–23. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Kansteiner, Wulf. “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies.” *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179–97.
- Lindner, Ralf, and Ulrich Riehm. “Broadening Participation Through E-Petitions? An Empirical Study of Petitions to the German Parliament.” *Policy & Internet* 3, no. 1, (2011): 1–23.
- Łukaszewski, Marcin. “When the People’s Needs Are Not Listened to: Istanza d’Arengo on the Background of Other Forms of Direct Democracy in San Marino.” *Białostockie Studia Prawnicze* 24, no. 1 (2019): 121–36.
- Monné-Bellmunt, Alexandra, Moisès Esteban-Guitard, and Ignasi Vila-Mendiburu. “Identitas Inclusives i Complementàries a Andorra. La Identitat Nacional i La Identitat Regional.” *Annals del Centre d’Estudis Comarcals del Ripollès 2014-15*, no. 27 (2016): 305–21.
- Murdock, Elke. “Identity and Its Construal: Learning from Luxembourg.” *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 51, no. 2 (2017): 261–78.

- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire." *Representations* 26, no. 1 (1989): 7-24.
- Rohstock, Anne, and Thomas Lenz. "The Making of the Luxembourger. Histories of Schooling and National Identity in the Grand Duchy." *Encounters/Encuentros/Rencontres on Education* 12 (2011): 61-76.
- Sheppard, Jill. "Online Petitions in Australia: Information, Opportunity and Gender." *Australian Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2015): 480-95.
- Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Veenendaal, Wouter P. "Politics of the four European Microstates: Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco and San Marino." In *Handbook on the Politics of Small States*, edited by Godfrey Baldacchino and Anders Wivel, 150-67. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020.

**List of images**

- David, Ohad, and Daniel Bar-Tal. "A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity: The Case of National Identity as an Example." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 13, no. 4 (2009): 359.