

Trieste Ethnographies in the Eyes of Contemporary Observers in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

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The paper examines how contemporary observers portrayed the ethnography of Trieste in the 19th and early 20th centuries, specifically focusing on their understanding of cultural diversity and interethnic relations. The emphasis is on nationalizing narratives from authors living in various historical contexts, offering insights into Trieste's ethnic and national realities during a period characterized by the rise of national ideologies and polarization.

▪ **Keywords:** Trieste, eastern Adriatic, Italian-Slavic relations, nationalizing narratives, multicultural identities

Avtor obravnava, kako so sodobniki portretirali etnografijo Trsta v 19. in zgodnjem 20. stoletju, s posebno pozornostjo na njihovem razumevanju kulturne raznovrstnosti in medetničnih razmerij. Pozornost na nacionalizacijske pripovedi piscev, ki so živeli v različnih zgodovinskih kontekstih, omogoča pogled na etnične in narodnostne realnosti Trsta v času, za katerega je bil značilen vzpon nacionalnih ideologij in polarizacij.

▪ **Ključne besede:** Trst, vzhodni Jadran, italijansko-slovenska razmerja, nacionalizacijske pripovedi, večkulturne identitete

Trieste/Trst/Triest as a case

Trieste is a city known by many epithets, the most frequent being “the city on the frontier” (*città di frontiera*). This title relates to Trieste's physical location at the crossroads of the Roman and Slavic worlds and reflects the geopolitical shifts that have seen Trieste transition between states throughout the 20th century. Additionally, Trieste's coastal location, its economic role as a port in the Danube Monarchy, and Mediterranean cultural influences have earned it the epithets of a “Mediterranean city” and “Central European city” (Ara, Magris: 1982; Gombač, 1993: 15; Biondi, 1995).

The presence of a diverse population comprising different ethnic groups, languages, and cultural features has led to Trieste being referred to as a “multi-ethnic/multinational city” and a “multilingual city”, or more broadly, a “plural city” (Finzi, Panjek, 2001). This diversity also includes the description of Trieste as a “multi-confessional city” or a “city of religious tolerance”. Trieste earned this reputation due to its status as a free port, even before the issuance of Joseph II's Religious Tolerance Patent in the 1780s.

Trieste is also described as a “cosmopolitan city”, a term referring to its mercantile bourgeoisie, which originated from a wide international area and notably influenced the city's social fabric and cultural orientation (Ara, Magris, 1982: 12; Millo, 2007). Simultaneously, Trieste is known as a city of national conflict and as a disputed city,

traits that have marked its history in the second half of the 19th century and a significant portion of the 20th century. In Italian consciousness and nationalist rhetoric, which emphasized its Italian civilization and claimed it as inherently belonging to Italy, Trieste acquired the appellations “unredeemed city” (*città irredenta*) and “very Italian city” (*città italianissima*) (Bufon, 2023).

On the other hand, Slovenian national thought symbolically defined Trieste, which was the largest Slovenian-speaking urban community before the First World War, as the “Slovenian lungs”, meaning the lifeblood of the entire Slovenian national space (Cankar, 1976 [1918]: 121; Pirjevec, 2008; Bufon, 2023). Trieste was certainly a city of diversity, a meeting point and a crossroads of cultures, both in its origins and due to the influx of immigrants from ethnically and culturally diverse areas. However, it was also a city of deep contradictions. As Ara and Magris note, while the individual national communities coexisted and interacted in practical everyday life, they often largely ignored each other, practicing a kind of mutual isolation in national terms (Ara, Magris, 1982: 4, 16).

This paper aims to discuss the ethnography¹ of Trieste during the long 19th century, specifically examining how some contemporary observers perceived the city’s ethnic and cultural diversity. Many ethnographies and records were written by numerous researchers and observers, including Girolamo Agapito, Domenico Rossetti, Cesare de Franceschi, Carlo Combi, Simon Rutar, Scipio Slataper, Fran Cegnar, Ivan Tavčar, Ivan Cankar and many others who with their discourses participated in the debate on the social, national, and cultural character and belonging of the city. My focus is on five authors whose works span different decades, reflecting the evolving socio-economic and political processes of Trieste. The selected authors are Pietro Kandler, Pacifico Valussi, Josip Godina Verdelski, Ruggero Fauro Timeus, and Angelo Vivante. These authors, each nationally identified and presenting views from clearly defined positions, lived in different historical moments with varying worldviews and political stances. Consequently, their works reflect diverse perspectives on the socio-economic and political processes, as well as Trieste’s ethnic/national reality, during a century marked by the emergence of national ideas and polarization.

Pietro Kandler (Trieste 1804-1872), a lawyer, politician, civil servant, municipal administrator, and President of the Trieste Municipal Council, was a man of Italian sentiments and a firm supporter of Trieste’s loyalty to the Danube Monarchy. He was also a distinguished historian, geographer, and archaeologist (Šah, 1982; Schingo, 2004). Among his extensive historiographical output, the monographic work *Notizie storiche di Trieste e guida per la città*, published in 1851 under the pseudonym Giovannina Bandelli, will be discussed in this essay. Additionally, some articles from the journal *L’Istria*, which he published and primarily authored between 1846 and 1852, will also be analyzed.

¹ Ethnography in this text refers to ethnic and cultural specificities, ethnic and national composition, and inter-ethnic relations.

Pacifico Valussi (Talmassons 1813-Udine 1893) was the editor of the journal *La Favilla* (1836–1847), which from 1838 to 1846 highlighted Trieste’s multicultural character. Influenced by the ideas of Niccolò Tommaseo, Valussi viewed the Italian and Slavic communities on the eastern Adriatic as a laboratory for national relations, advocating for a peaceful coexistence between free peoples. After the revolutionary year of 1848, he supported the emancipation of the Habsburg nationalities. In the pamphlet *Trieste e l’Istria e le loro ragioni nella questione italiana* (1861), discussed here, he argued Italy’s claims on Trieste and Istria and presented arguments for negotiated Italian-Slavic national relations (Marušič, 1990; Micelli, 2020).

Josip Godina Verdelski (Trieste 1808-1884) was a representative of the emerging Slovenian nationally conscious middle class. As a Triestine (more precisely, a native of Trieste’s rural environs), he presented a depiction of Trieste’s past in his 1872 work *Opis in zgodovina Tersta in njegove okolice*, with a particular focus on the indigenous Slovenian population (Jevnikar, 1978).

Ruggero Fauro Timeus (Trieste 1892-Pal Piccolo 1915) was associated with the circle of intransigent Italian nationalism and extreme irredentism. This ideology intertwined the struggle for Trieste’s redemption from Austrian rule and its unification with the Italian homeland with the notion of Italian imperialistic ambitions. In 1914, in his book *Trieste, italiani e slavi, il governo austriaco, l’irredentismo*, he outlined his convictions about the history and future of Trieste. A year later, he sacrificed his young life as an Italian volunteer in the Great War against Austria-Hungary, in the name of these beliefs (Redivo, 1995).

Angelo Vivante (Trieste 1869-1915), a member of Trieste’s wealthy bourgeoisie, was committed to Austro-Marxist socialism. He opposed all forms of irredentism and advocated an internationalist vision of Trieste as a multiethnic and multicultural city. With *Irredentismo adriatico* (1912), he presented an alternative, non-nationalist interpretation against the political manipulation of Trieste’s history by Italian national liberals and irredentists at a time of increasing national conflicts and international tensions (Cattaruzza, 1998; Millo, 1998; Zorzenon, 2017).

By examining the representations of Trieste’s ethnography by the aforementioned authors and their perspectives on social and inter-ethnic relations, two assumptions are noteworthy. The first relates to the spatial structure and administrative division of the Trieste municipality, which included the urban settlement, or *Città* (city), and the surrounding rural area, known as *Territorio* (territory) in Italian and *Okolica* (environs) in Slovenian. The territory, divided into karstic villages and rural neighbourhoods spreading over the area between the city and the karstic plateau, was populated almost exclusively by Slovenian speakers. In contrast, the city itself was characterized by prevailing Italian linguistic and cultural traditions despite its ethnic diversity. Italian served as the official municipal administrative language, the predominant spoken language and commercial “lingua franca”, and the language of written communication and culture.

The early modern perception of the city as advanced and civilized, in contrast to the backward rural countryside – a perception that modernization continued to reinforce – was thus reflected in Trieste in terms of ethnic identification with space and population. The city was regarded as Italian and Italianizing, while the countryside was seen as Slavic and the Slavic population as rural. This socio-economic and ethnic Italian-Slavic dichotomy became, in the second half of the 19th century, a “trench in defence of national space” in the discourse of Italian national liberals across the Adriatic Italian-Slavic national contact zone. It also became a central concept in the political relationship between Trieste (and other cities in the north-eastern Adriatic) and the broader Slavic hinterland, as well as a paradigm used in Italian historiography to explain Italian-Slavic national relations (Verginella, 2003, 2017; Toncich, 2017).

The second assumption concerns demography, specifically immigration. Immigration, which was a driving force behind demographic growth and the economic development of Trieste, also shaped the city’s social fabric and ethnic physiognomy (Cattaruzza, 1979, 2002; Breschi et al. 2001). Immigrants contributed to the cosmopolitan and multicultural character of Trieste. However, in the second half of the 19th century, with the rise of national ideas and nationalizing processes, immigration became a subject of national-political contention and a battleground for national identification and political dominance. The main actors in these dynamics were immigrants from the immediate Slovenian and broader Slavic hinterland on one hand, and those from the Kingdom of Italy on the other. Unlike other immigrant groups, which remained numerically modest and separated from their national spaces of origin, Slovenian and Italian immigrants directly influenced relations between the two nations in Trieste, each vying for its status and national interests.

An erudite-conservative view of Trieste ethnography

In his time, in the 1840s and 1850s, Pietro Kandler was regarded as the foremost expert on the history of Trieste. As a politician, he championed the cultural and administrative Italianization of the city, yet he perceived the Habsburg Empire to be a source and guardian of the development of Trieste, as both an Austrian hub and the northernmost Adriatic city. His influence waned when a new, national-liberal Italian bourgeois elite emerged in the 1850s, dominating both the municipal and provincial councils. This new elite rejected Kandler’s belief that Trieste’s connection with the Habsburg Empire was crucial for the city’s historical and future prosperity (Cervani, 1993; Gombač, 1993: 40–44).

Kandler’s scientific and journalistic works are characterized by an erudite and rationalist style, devoid of emotional or other embellishments. He employs an academic and empirically documented methodological approach typical of legal and historiographical

scholarship. This approach is evident in his descriptions of Trieste ethnography, which often form part of larger monographic works or specific studies on selected topics.

Kandler presents Trieste's multiethnicity as a defining historical characteristic, detailing its territorial, social, and cultural articulations. He notes the ethnic homogeneity of the *Territorio*, highlighting the Slovenian colonization of the Karst area that began during the Lombard Kingdom and expanded towards the town in the Triestine ager areas during the early modern period. As mercantile Trieste developed, and the "urban peasantry" declined, the Slovenian peasantry extended up to the city walls, leading to the *Territorio* becoming predominantly Slavic. Over the centuries, the inhabitants of the village of Škedenj, originally from Cremona, also assimilated and became Slovenians (Kandler, 1846; Bandelli, 1851: 192).

Kandler observed that Slovenian inhabitants had adopted new socio-economic habits by settling in the immediate areas around the town, which had served as a source of agricultural products for centuries. The Slovenian settlers in these areas had become arable farmers, shifting away from their traditional pastoral livestock farming, which remained prevalent in the Karst, including within the Trieste municipality. This pastoral heritage was still evident in the term *mandrieri*, used to refer to these inhabitants of the part of *Territorio* close to the city.

Kandler did not hold a favourable view of the Triestine Slovenian territorials and Slovenians in general, describing them as backward and ignorant. He attributed to them the disappearance of the once-thriving olive cultivation, noting that they had cut down the olive trees, positing they had ceased and never replanted them because "this plant was so foreign to the Slavs" (Kandler, 1846: 181; Bandelli, 1851: 192). However, he acknowledged that they had improved over time and suggested that by attending agrarian Sunday schools for youth and adults, they could make adequate progress in modern farming practices.

The city was ethnically and religiously diverse, with Greek, Helvetian, Serbian, and Protestant communities enjoying religious and administrative autonomy, while preserving their respective languages and cultural practices. Despite significant immigration, the urban population remained predominantly Italian, as new, non-Italian arrivals typically adopted the Italian language. However, Kandler noted that these newcomers were easily identifiable because Trieste's social reality did not develop into a homogeneous fabric. As an emporium, the city naturally became and remains an agglomerate of people from various origins (Bandelli, 1851: 192).

Kandler relied on governmental censuses to describe the demographic and ethno-linguistic composition of the city and its territory. In 1842, he himself commissioned a census to investigate the languages people used within their families and in prayer ("in conversation with God") (Kandler, 1848a: 176). Using these statistics, he challenged claims made by Viennese newspapers during the politically charged atmosphere of 1848 that Trieste was a German city. Kandler demonstrated that the Italian population was by

far the majority, with the Slovenian community being the second largest, present both in the countryside and the city. He particularly emphasized that the Italian language dominated all levels of socio-economic and institutional life in Trieste, while German was confined to state administration circles. According to Kandler, German was the language of the administrators, not the administered people.

Kandler emphasized the necessity of Trieste's multiethnic and polyphonic character, highlighting the dynamic interactions among its various communities. He associated language shifts in the second and subsequent generations of immigrants with different national "temperaments". According to Kandler, Germans were the most likely to retain their native language, with some never learning Italian. In contrast, the "pliable" Slavs, especially Slovenians, were more inclined to adopt the Italian language. In the city, the linguistic landscape was also shaped by national/linguistic exogamy, which people readily embraced. In the *Territorio*, however, there was little intermarriage across linguistic lines, not due to opposition, but simply because the peasantry was predominantly of Slovenian lineage.

Children of foreign parents in Trieste typically learned their parents' native language at home and picked up Italian from their peers on the street. Mothers played a crucial role in preserving and passing on the family's language. In mixed families with an Italian mother, the use of the father's language often diminished. Despite these efforts, the second generation of immigrants frequently denied or rejected their original language during their formative years, and by the third generation, the non-Italian language typically disappeared from daily use. Among Italian immigrants, however, such a process of linguistic abandonment did not occur, even when their formal education was in another language.

Kandler emphasized the unique identity of Trieste, rooted in its cultural, historical, and legal distinctiveness, to argue for the primacy of Italian ethnicity and culture in the region. He portrayed this spiritual and civilizing characteristic of Trieste, and the broader Austrian Littoral, as aligned with Austrian statehood and loyalty to the monarchy, reflecting shared interests. Kandler dismissed claims that Trieste was a German city, asserting that the city's identity, anchored in its natural language, could not be separated from its role as the capital of the Austrian Littoral and a key mercantile hub on the Adriatic. Similarly, he refuted the notion of Trieste as a Slavic city, considering such views irrelevant and misguided. He argued that Slavic languages had never attained the status of cultural or educational languages in Trieste, existing instead as vernacular dialects among the Slavic population. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that Slovenian had some influence in Trieste, evidenced by its presence in administrative terminology; for instance, the term *suppano*, derived from the Slovenian *župan* (meaning 'mayor') was used for the heads of village communities.

From a multicultural to a nationalistic and irredentistic narrative

In the 1840s, Pacifico Valussi, the editor of *La Favilla*, advocated for Trieste's autonomy. The newspaper promoted Italian culture, science, and literature while respecting other nations. *La Favilla* portrayed Trieste as a city where diverse cultural and linguistic groups coexisted harmoniously, with families preserving their customs without facing opposition or ridicule (Vivante, 1945: 25). The publication celebrated the city's national and cultural diversity. Valussi expressed admiration for the whole Slavic world and called for friendly relations among different communities. However, during the revolutionary year of 1848, Valussi began to lean towards separatism (Gombač, 1993: 4). Valussi envisioned a "Svizzera marittima" (Adriatic Switzerland), with Trieste serving as its port. This entity, emerging from the dissolution of the doomed Habsburg Monarchy, was to act as an intermediary state between Italy and the Slavic world within a new Danube confederation.

By the time he published *Trieste e l'Istria e loro ragioni nella quistione italiana* in 1861, this idea had long been forgotten because Valussi, influenced by the Italian unification movement, had become an advocate for Italian national interests and irredentism (Pirjevec, 1977; Marušič, 1990; Lazarević Di Giacomo, 2009). This work marked the first formal proposal for Trieste's separation from Austria and was considered a manifesto of Adriatic irredentism, as noted by Vivante (Vivante, 1945: 68).

Valussi defended the Italian identity of Trieste and Istria, advocating for the right of Italians to liberate themselves from Austrian rule. He distinguished between the peoples of the region based on their levels of cultural and civilizational development, categorizing some as fully formed and others as still evolving. Valussi argued that these territories rightfully belonged to Italy, citing natural geography, ethnography, language, and historical ties. He emphasized that the aspirations of the people and the broader Italian national interests were paramount in justifying this claim (Valussi, 1861: 7–8).

Valussi portrayed Trieste and Istria as inherently Italian, emphasizing the predominance of the Italian population and language in the region. In contrast to his earlier stance in 1849, where he acknowledged the Slavs as indigenous and advocated for Italian-Slavic fraternity within a neutral area, Valussi later described the Slavs as "invaders" of Italian national territory. He depicted them as uncultured and lacking a "true" language, suggesting that they were destined for non-violent assimilation into the predominantly Italian culture (Valussi, 1861: 21; Vivante, 1945: 69). Valussi argued that in Trieste, all newcomers eventually became part of the "Italian element" due to the prevailing cultural dynamics. He claimed that even the Slovenian dialect spoken in the Trieste countryside was being Italianized and fading away wherever it encountered civilization. According to Valussi, the local Slavs, whom he referred to as "ours" to differentiate them from Slavs with no contact with Italians, retained their Slavic identity only as long as they remained "barbarians". He believed that as soon

as they aspired to social mobility and emancipation, they would inevitably assimilate into Italian culture, losing their distinct identity. Valussi argued that the Triestines were fundamentally Italian, and he considered the government's efforts to Germanize education and administration futile because the city's Italian character was both necessary and inevitable. He also noted that even the children of Trieste's cosmopolitan merchant community were growing up with a strong Italian identity (Valussi, 1861: 22–23).

Valussi categorized the Slavs in Trieste and Istria, referred to by him as “Piemonte Orientale” (Eastern Piedmont), into two groups: the “pure” and those who had already been Italianized. He noted that the number of Italianized Slavs was steadily increasing, despite government efforts to incite other nationalities against the Italians. According to Valussi, Slavs predominantly lived in rural areas, while Italians resided in towns and in areas of the countryside that exhibited “any sign of culture” (Valussi, 1861: 62). He further divided the Slavs into two distinct clans, the Slovenian and the Serbian, which he described as physically and spiritually very different. Valussi suggested that the Slovenian language and customs had been contaminated, indicating an earlier settlement in the region, while the Serbs, having arrived later, had maintained more of their original national characteristics. Despite these differences, Valussi asserted that both groups lacked institutions, civilization, and any resemblance to the Italian people. Consequently, he believed they were destined to disappear in the face of what he considered the inevitable and progressive influence of Italian culture (Valussi, 1861: 62).

Valussi emphasized that the defining characteristic that made Triestines (and Istrians) Italians was their *volontà* (will), which he saw as the crucial element distinguishing nations from mere groups of people. He argued, “A nation exists when it does not vegetate without self-consciousness, like a herd that lets itself be led by dogs or wanders like a troop of wild animals”. According to Valussi, a nation could only truly exist through a collective will, manifesting in a shared material and spiritual life (Valussi, 1861: 25). He noted that the Triestine people's will and national consciousness emerged after the revolutionary events of 1848. Before this period, Triestines identified themselves as local in their economic interests and habits, and as Italians in their cultural and spiritual identity. Valussi suggested that Trieste might have continued as a kind of “Adriatic Hamburg”, maintaining a unique cultural and administrative identity within the Austrian Empire, if not for the central Austrian government's imposition of its own rules. This shift disturbed the traditional political relationship with Vienna and threatened Trieste's Italian cultural and administrative freedoms. That is why post-1848, a significant change occurred with the rise of a new, purely Italian generation in Trieste, characterized by an intolerance for subjugation and persecution. This generation demanded separation from what they saw as despotic Austrian rule and sought unification with their cultural motherland, Italy (Valussi, 1861: 26–28).

Valussi envisioned a promising future for the Adriatic Slavs outside Trieste and Istria, encouraging them to liberate themselves from Austrian and Ottoman domination

and to establish their own state, where Slavic civilization and national interests could flourish. He acknowledged the historical presence of Italians in these regions but suggested that the Italian community was willing to concede the Dalmatian/Dinaric part of the eastern Adriatic to a Slavic state, in the spirit of fostering good relations between the Italian and Slavic nations. Valussi asserted that the Slavs should respect the Italian character and the natural Italianization of Trieste and Istria. This perspective was part of a broader argument that while Italians were open to Slavic autonomy and statehood in other areas, the Italian nature of Trieste and Istria was indisputable and should not be challenged (Valussi, 1861: 15–17).

Trieste ethnography in the views of a Slovenian national activist

Josip Godina Verdelski, a native of the Trieste countryside portrayed by Italian authors as uncultivated and underdeveloped, emerged as one of the early advocates of the Slovenian national movement in Trieste. Among the actors engaging and sensitizing the Slovenian population in and around Trieste about their ethnicity or nationality, such as Simon Rutar, Fran Cegnar, and institutions like the Slovenian Reading Room in Trieste, Godina held a special status. Encouraged by Ivan Nabergoj, a Slovenian representative in the city council, Godina wrote his *Opis in zgodovina Tersta in njegovih okolice* to educate Slovenian Triestines and the broader Slovenian population about the historical presence of Slovenians in Trieste. His work aimed to counter the narratives presented by Kandler and other Italian historians, who had downplayed, misrepresented, or ignored the Slovenian presence in the city (Godina, 1872: 126). Godina argued that the Slovenian influence in Trieste was far more significant and visible in the city's history, daily life, public image, and cultural diversity than depicted by Italian authors. Through his writings, he sought to provide an alternative narrative that highlighted the substantial and diverse contributions of Slovenians to the fabric of Trieste.

The work, notable as the first Trieste history in the Slovenian language, was written during a sensitive phase of the Slovenian nationalization process, influenced by the evolving Slovenian-Italian relations of the time. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the Italian middle class in Trieste was consolidating its identity on a national basis, with Italian national liberals increasingly reinforcing ideological influence against the old, cosmopolitan ruling elite. Concurrently, Slovenians, or Slavs, were also making significant strides towards national awareness and asserting their identity. The late 1860s saw the onset of conflicts, with Italians striving to maintain political and cultural dominance, while Slovenians sought recognition and equal participation in governing the city and its surroundings. A notable incident in this period was the 1868 street fight linked with the opening of a *čitalnica* (Slovenian reading room), which resulted in the death of an Italian youth, allegedly shot by the Okoličanski Bataljon (the Slovenian militia

battalion) (Gombač, 1993: 47–49; Merku, 2002). After this incident, which led to the disbanding of the militia battalion under pressure from Italian national liberals, further episodes hindered the path of the Slovenian national movement. In 1869 the government prohibited the establishment of the local branch of the gymnastic organization Južni Sokol (Southern Sokol) to prevent escalating national polarization and confrontation (Rupel, 1981; Dorigo, 2021). The *čitalniško gibanje* (the movement for establishing Slovenian reading rooms), which initially had been a significant part of the Slovenian national movement, began to lose momentum in the early 1870s (Sturman, 1996).

Godina's description bears in its title the historical administrative articulation of the Trieste municipality between the city and the countryside, for which he uses the term *Okolica* (environs). In doing so, he challenges the social and national dichotomic distinguishing between these two areas and emphasizes their complementarity and coexistence. According to Godina, both the diverse merchants and newcomers, including Slovenians and Slavs, as well as the indigenous inhabitants of the city and countryside, contributed to Trieste's prosperity and development. Godina's central thesis is that Trieste was "a city standing on Slavic soil" because it was initially inhabited by people "of our" (Slavic) tribe. He opposed the Roman origin of the city by linking the Carni, whom Italian historians such as Agapito and Kandler had identified as the earliest inhabitants, to the Carnioli or Carniolians. He supported this theory also with evidence from the migration history of Slavic tribes (Godina, 1872: 292).

Godina described Trieste's multiethnicity by emphasizing the contributions of various ethnic and national groups to the city's development. His focus was particularly on the Slovenian Trieste. He drew attention to Slovenian toponomastics, which had been overlooked in Italian narratives, and highlighted the topographical markers of Slovenian presence through the many churches in the city where Slovenian masses and sermons were conducted (Godina, 1872: 61). Godina also noted the increasing presence of Slovenian craftsmen and merchants in Trieste, as well as the expanding job opportunities for Slovenian speakers. He argued that members of this burgeoning middle class were the most devoted representatives of "our nation" and constituted the foundational core of the organized Slovenian movement (Godina, 1872: 97).

Godina portrayed the inhabitants of the *Okolica* with a blend of admiration and critique, reflecting his personal connection to the area. On one hand, he idealized them as exemplary individuals in various trades such as farming, vine-growing, gardening, masonry, stonemasonry, and fishing (Godina, 1872: 108). He credited the Slovenians of the *Okolica* and Slovenian immigrant workers with contributing significantly to both public and private construction projects in Trieste (Godina, 1872: 31). Despite their lack of formal education, many self-taught peasants from the *Okolica* displayed a keen interest in literature and newspapers, and a traditional love for music was widespread among them. Slovenians in the city were also known for their dedication and skill as church singers (Godina, 1872: 107). At the same time, Godina expressed concern over

the educational shortcomings of the *Okolica* inhabitants. He noted that families in the countryside showed little interest in their children's education, preferring to involve them in farm work instead of sending them to school. Consequently, these young people had limited access to well-paying jobs in the city labour market, often being relegated to difficult and poorly compensated occupations.

Godina devotes significant attention to the economic and social conditions of the *Okolica*, highlighting a decline from past prosperity. Contrary to Kandler's attribution of agricultural decline to the supposed backwardness of the Slavs, Godina ascribes the increasing poverty of the area to the detrimental effects of urbanization on the traditional peasant lifestyle that had persisted into the 18th century. In earlier times, the Triestine peasantry benefited from a favourable relationship with the smaller, less wasteful town. However, as the city expanded, this relationship deteriorated, leading to negative consequences for the countryside. Urban growth encroached on cultivated land, reduced the landholding class, and fragmented land ownership, which, in turn, contributed to the rise of a marginalized proletariat. Moreover, urbanization brought about changes in living habits, introducing new consumer desires, demands, and expenses that the traditional peasant was ill-prepared to handle. The peasant, once content and accustomed to enduring daily hardships, now faced increased economic pressures and social stratification. This shift led to the observation that "the peasant near the city has all the vices of both the peasant and the bourgeois" (Godina, 1872: 99). Godina also pointed to the negligence of the municipal administration of Trieste, which, driven by nationalistic motives, failed to address even the basic infrastructure needs of the *Okolica*. This deliberate neglect further exacerbated the challenges faced by the rural population (Godina, 1872: 105).

The second major issue directly arising from urbanization was Italianization. Despite the growing Italian influence, the inhabitants of the *Okolica* remained fundamentally loyal to their Slovenian language and nationality. They only abandoned these aspects in their interactions with Italians when faced with social dependence or a subordinate social position. This observation challenged the Italian authors' thesis that Slovenians were ethnically unstable and readily succumbed to Italianization. Godina argued that the Slovenians' sense of identity and self-esteem began to strengthen with the rise of the national movement, the circulation of Slovenian newspapers, and the publications of the St. Mohor Society. However, progress in national sentiment was insufficient, as the Slavs lagged in educational and cultural development due to what Godina described as their "too long sleep" in developing written languages and higher culture. This lack of advancement left them vulnerable in interactions with other peoples. The original proto-Slovenians in Trieste had disappeared in such a way, and contemporary Slovenians in the city faced a similar threat. Godina criticized the effects of the revolutionary year 1848, noting that while Italianism thrived and secured political dominance in the Trieste municipality, the Slovenian national spirit failed to gain substantial traction.

This was largely due to the social and economic subordination of the Slovenians and their increasing dependence on Italians. As a result, Godina concluded with a pessimistic outlook on the future of Triestine Slovenians, emphasizing that their prospects would remain bleak without a strong alliance with their compatriots in Carniola.

Trieste ethnography from the perspective of an extreme irredentist

Just before the First World War, a book titled *Trieste, italiani e slavi, il governo austriaco, l'irredentismo* was published by a young 22-year-old named Ruggero Fauro Timeus. Timeus's work is a political pamphlet written under the influence of significant transformation in Trieste from the 1880s onwards. This era saw the Slovenians evolve into a well-structured national community and one of the outposts of the consolidating Slavism in Austria. Concurrently, socialism emerged as a new political force, advocating for internationalism and presenting an alternative vision of national relations that challenged the dominance of the Italian national liberals. Timeus observed that the multiethnic nature of Trieste, including its Slovenian community, did not pose a significant issue as long as the socialists, which attracted a lot of Slovenian voters, challenged Italian national-liberal hegemony.

Timeus portrays Trieste as an embattled Italian enclave under siege from foreign, specifically German and Slavic elements, whom he identifies as enemies of the Italian nation (Timeus, 1914: 9). He argues that the conflict is not merely about the relationship between the city and its countryside, but centres on the broader struggle between Italianness and Slavicness, particularly concerning Austrian Slavic influence. In this context, the Slovenians, as representatives of the immediate hinterland, are seen as instruments of Austrian-German centralism, used to undermine Italian cultural and political dominance in Trieste. This depiction reflects a narrative of cultural and national conflict, emphasizing a perceived threat to Italian identity from external and internal Slavic forces.

Timeus expresses the perceived superiority of Italian civilization and asserts the right to dominate other nationalities in starkly radical terms. This viewpoint is encapsulated in his metaphor of Trieste as an Italian city that has always assimilated newcomers with the “calm omnipotence of the sea, which takes in the waters of a thousand rivers” (Timeus, 1914: 77). He claims that Slovenian workers, upon encountering the urban Italian environment, quickly realized their “despicable national origin” and sought to shed it. Similarly, German officials, initially carrying derogatory stereotypes, supposedly developed a genuine interest in and sympathy for Italian culture. However, Timeus argues that the newer, nationally conscious immigrants of the last few decades resisted assimilation. Even if these immigrants severed their national roots, they would remain intrinsically foreign, akin to “a false note in harmony”. According to Timeus, their

descendants could be fully assimilated, drawn by the allure of the Italian environment and eventually learning to think and feel Italian. He concludes that Italian identity is a victorious ideal, one that even made German culture appear pale and mediocre by comparison (Timeus, 1914: 78–81).

According to Timeus, the Austrian Slavs were ethnically and politically passive, lacking unity and consequently subjected to various fates. He likened them to sand, which “is shaped, moved, and stirred by the waters”, suggesting they were a mobile, pliable substance easily influenced without impacting the purity of the sea (Timeus, 1914: 98). Timeus argued that no Slavic nation in Austria, apart from the Polish, had a significant history. They were late in developing national self-awareness, facing the harsh reality of having to create their history, language, alphabet, and grammar from scratch.

Timeus claimed that the Austrian Slavs had never independently developed an advanced economy or culture, always relying on others. He described them as historically conquered and subjugated, leaving no lasting mark. In Dalmatia, he noted, the Croats supposedly adopted ideas of progress, a sense of freedom, and resistance to German policies from their interactions with Italians, leading some in Zagreb to label them “*Italijanci*” (Timeus, 1914: 103). In Bohemia, where Germans had established a significant industrial base, Slavs allegedly took political control and sought economic dominance through rural immigration. According to Timeus, Jews were becoming Czechs, poor workers were rising to become entrepreneurs, and the formerly German bourgeoisie was acquiring Czech characteristics.

A similar Slavic conquest march was underway in Trieste, Dalmatia, and Istria. Timeus viewed this not as the rise of a distinguished race or innovative culture, but as a mere appropriation of what Italians and Germans had established. He argued that the Slavs were incapable of absorbing others into their culture, framing their ascendancy as a substitution rather than a true cultural or civilizational development (Timeus, 1914: 105).

The Slovenians, lacking a traditional nobility and bourgeoisie, were unfamiliar with social stratification and class struggle. Consequently, they were easily recruited by socialists into a struggle against Italian and German industrialists, a conflict they framed as a national struggle. The two major Slovenian national parties, the Liberal and the Clerical, were also engaged in this struggle against Germans and Italians while remaining staunchly loyal to the monarchy (Timeus, 1914: 111). These parties adhered to the doctrine of trialism, which aimed to establish a more inclusive and balanced structure within the Habsburg Empire. Trialists were fervent advocates for the Slavicization of Trieste, envisioning it as the maritime capital of the Habsburg Slavs. Their strategy included promoting the influx of Slovenian working masses, preventing immigration from the Kingdom of Italy, Slavicizing civil service positions, expanding Slovenian schools, and fostering a Slavic economy. In response to these efforts, Timeus argued that Italians needed to combat trialism and support the Serbian national movement. He suggested that the political project of Greater Serbia, which included the Austrian

southern Slavs, would negate their aspirations over Trieste. Under this plan, Split would emerge as the Serbian national port (Timeus, 1914: 117).

In a chapter aptly titled ‘The Slavic Assault on Trieste’, Timeus asserts that the Slovenians in Trieste were solely focused on their national struggle against the Italians, and that this struggle was actively supported by the Austrian government. He contends that the well-developed Slovenian socio-economic, political, and cultural organizations were merely tools in this nationalistic effort. The Narodni Dom (National Home), along with other Slavic national homes in Austria, functioned as a fortress in a hostile environment, financially sustained by the broader Austrian Slavic community (Timeus, 1914: 122). The Narodna Delavska Organizacija (National Workers’ Organisation), was established to mobilize Slovenian labourers from impoverished Carniola, who were perceived as a means to displace Italian workers by accepting lower wages (Timeus, 1914: 122). Additionally, Timeus accuses banks, supported by capital from within the Monarchy, of exploiting financial difficulties faced by Italian companies through unscrupulous methods (Timeus, 1914: 129–130).

The anti-Italian Slovenian clergy, bolstered by the Italo-phobic diocese of Trieste, also played a significant role as national actors. Slovenian priests viewed Italians as cursed by God and framed the struggle against the Italian presence as a holy war. This perspective imbued the conflict with a religious fervour rather than purely nationalistic motivations. Consequently, pious Slovenian peasants nurtured a form of religious animosity toward the Italians, perceiving their priests as leaders and champions in the anti-Italian struggle (Timeus, 1914: 131).

The transformation in Trieste’s ethnography, achieved through socio-economic means, set the stage for a Slavic political offensive against the city. This offensive began in the countryside of Trieste, where the Slovenian community emerged as the first electoral stronghold and the only modest Slavic national opposition within the city council. As the urban Slovenian national presence grew, strategically established in key districts and legitimized by misleading census data from the Italo-phobic Austrian state, the conflict’s focus shifted from the periphery to the heart of the city. The Slavs were not so far concerned with the expansion of the Italian population into their former strongholds now, because the spoils were no longer the stony Karst but the city’s wealth and grandeur (Timeus, 1914: 134).

Socialists played a significant role in these ethnic changes. By promoting internationalism and undermining national consciousness, they attracted and accelerated the growth of Slovenian immigrants in the city, who, despite their socialist affiliations, remained staunch nationalists. This contributed to the weakening of Italian national consciousness and laid the groundwork for Slavic ethnic dominance (Timeus, 1914: 138–141). The Austrian government further facilitated this shift by assigning Slovenian civil servants to Trieste, thereby bolstering the Slovenian bourgeoisie and enhancing their influence in the city (Timeus, 1914: 147–149).

Timeus made a sharp racial distinction between Italians and Slavs, viewing the latter with inherent contempt and hostility. This animosity was evident even among Italian children, who displayed a natural aversion when seated next to Slavic classmates (Timeus, 1914: 67). He also differentiated between various types of Italians. The “timid Italian element”, which included those loyal to Austria and those not aligned with the Italian National Liberal Party, were deemed unworthy Italians and considered collaborators with the Slavic enemies (Timeus, 1914: 157). Regarding the *Regnicoli*, immigrants from the Kingdom of Italy, Timeus believed that, as foreign citizens without voting rights, they contributed minimally to the defence of Italianness. Their presence was noted mainly for occupying positions that might otherwise have been filled by Slavs (Timeus, 1914: 167).

From passive to active: In between ideology that overcomes nationalities and nationalism

Angelo Vivante, a Marxist and socialist thinker, stood out as a unique figure in the context of Trieste’s turbulent national and ethnic dynamics. His ideology transcended nationalities and nationalism, advocating for class solidarity and social justice over ethnic divisions.

His *Iredentismo adriatico* is a historical study that aims to analyze national relations in the Upper Adriatic, focusing on the genesis of irredentism. Vivante approaches this topic with a commitment to objective facts, deliberately avoiding the influence of national sentiments and mythologized values. Rather than advocating for the rights of one ethnic or national group over another, Vivante preferred to discuss the underlying forces and conflicts at play. As a declared internationalist, he stood in stark contrast to national ideologies and nationalism, embodying the antithesis of such perspectives. Despite this, Vivante remained an Italian, albeit one who was “lukewarm” in his national allegiance.

Vivante highlights the conceptual shift that occurred among the Italians of Trieste during the creation of the Italian nation-state. As late as the 1850s, Trieste still believed in its historical economic ties to Austria and its symbiosis with the natural Slavic hinterland. The Italian national consciousness, which began to form and consolidate from 1848 onwards, was not initially separatist. The desire to belong to Italy emerged only after Italian unification in 1861 and the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy.

Unlike the other Italian authors considered, Vivante did not discuss the nature and cultural values of ethnic or national groups in emotional or political terms. Grounded in a Marxist dialectic, he focused on the structural aspects and socio-economic dynamics that characterized inter-ethnic relations in Trieste and the wider north-eastern Adriatic region, known as “Julia”. He countered the “phraseology of Italian liberal nationalist

writers” with objective evidence, explaining the emergence of irredentism and its ideological foundations. To understand these developments and inter-ethnic relations, Vivante emphasized the need to wipe out the binary division between Italianness and Slaviness as two well-defined and culturally antithetical concepts. He challenged the narrative that portrayed Italians as a homogeneous, clearly formed national community – direct successors of Rome and Venice – and Slavs as recent foreigners incited by German Vienna to oppose Italianness (Vivante, 1945: 128). He noted that few Italians in Trieste and the Julia were descendants of the Roman tradition, referencing Kandler’s and Facchinetti’s theses on the presence of Slavic elements in Istria before Roman times, and the Slavs as native to the region. The social fabric of the Julia region was a result of the mixing of two linguistic groups that had coexisted for centuries. Italians, being more economically and culturally advanced, dominated the cities, while the Slavs were the majority in the countryside. In urban settings, the Italians assimilated the Slavs, keeping them “lulled” in rural areas until the Slavs began resisting assimilation and subordination. The national conflict thus became a struggle to either maintain or dismantle this centuries-old hierarchy of Italian dominance over the Slavs (Vivante, 1945: 129–132).

This conflict began in the 1860s. Vivante highlights how, in 1848 and 1849, even the most liberal Italians in Trieste viewed the Slavs with sympathy, affection, and approval of their national awakening. He describes how the first Slavic association could be founded in the Tergesteo Palace – the symbol of Trieste’s liberalism – without Slavic national symbols evoking feelings of threat or offense to Italian national sensibilities. The Slovenian language and culture were accepted without reservation, with plans to establish a chair of Slovenian language at the newly proposed law faculty, reflecting the idea of the Julia region as a shared Italian-Slavic space resisting Austrian-German centralism. In short, the seeds of future national conflict were not yet visible then (Vivante, 1945: 137–141).

However, the absolutism of Bach buried these ideas. By the 1860s, as the Slovenian/Slav national movement began to consolidate, the space for coexistence disappeared, and the national struggle commenced. Vivante argues that the Slavic national awakening was not the result of artificial agitation or German politics, as Italian nationalists “cholericly” and “one-sidedly” claimed. Instead, its real and deep causes lay in capitalist development and related socio-economic processes, particularly urbanization and mass migration from the countryside to the cities (Vivante, 1945: 147).

In his analysis of these processes, Vivante provides an overview of the history of the Slovenians as a nation of peasants and shepherds, without nobility, who had lived for centuries under foreign rule. German feudalism and the Roman Catholic Church had stifled every germ of Slovenian national life after the Counter-Reformation had dispersed the Trubar heresy, which might have led to the development of a Slovenian nation based on a single language. Only during the French period, and later through the

work of figures like Bleiweis, Kopitar, and Miklošič – who standardized the Slovenian language and demonstrated its ancient historical and cultural roots – did Slovenian national consciousness begin to consolidate and resist national assimilation (Vivante, 1945: 150).

This elite national movement in Carniola, however, could not fully tame Slovenian nationalism among the peasant population. Vivante notes that in Trieste, the first and most powerful centre of capitalist development, Slovenian immigrants were rapidly becoming Italianized by the mid-19th century and beyond. This spontaneous assimilation was also at work in other urban environments in the Julia region. However, in the latter half of the century, capitalist processes intensified in Slovenian territories, with Slovenians entering “capitalist civilization” earlier than other southern Slavs. This shift was reflected in economic indicators such as the growth of capital, banking institutions, and deposits, as well as the decline in illiteracy, the rise of education, and the emergence of an intelligentsia. It was also evident in increasing migration to cities, especially Trieste. The growing attraction of Trieste for the hinterland and the mass influx of immigrants led to the breakdown of the assimilation system. The mass of immigrants gave rise to a Slovenian bourgeoisie that led the national movement and spurred resistance to assimilation. Thus, the Slovenian national awakening and upsurge, both in Trieste and elsewhere, were the result of changing socio-economic structures and relations, which in turn determined the reversal of assimilation (Vivante, 1945: 156). In Istria however, Vivante noted different mechanisms at play. There, the Slavic national awakening was linked to peasant indebtedness and dependence on the Italian bourgeois financial and political elite. Slavic propagandists exploited this, portraying themselves as saviours from subordination, with the Slavic peasants becoming nationally conscious and emancipated (e.g. through credit institutions) under economic influences even before developing a national identity (Vivante, 1945: 157).

Vivante also analyzes the role of administrative systems and institutions in the national struggle, particularly census statistics and schools. From the 1880s onward, the concept of the colloquial language (*Umgangssprache*) was especially useful for the Italian liberal-national elite who, after the decline of spontaneous assimilation, sought to prove Italian national superiority through statistical assimilation. However, this manipulation was challenged by other indicators (e.g. electoral results) and in 1910 by the revision of the census at the request of Slovenian political organizations. Schools were another instrument used by Italians to attempt to override spontaneous assimilation, as only Italian primary schools were permitted in the city. The Slovenian response was to open a private school. Both schools targeted Slovenian children, but while the Italian school aimed to maintain assimilation, the Slovenian school sought to educate children in the Slovenian national spirit. Vivante warned that Italian school policy in Trieste did not have the desired effect, as the introduction of Slovenian private education narrowed the circle of its recipients (Vivante, 1945:

164–167). He also emphasized that schooling did not guarantee assimilation. In Istria for example, Italian schools initially Italianized Slovenian children, as evidenced by census results. However, when a Slovenian private school opened in town, it quickly attracted most of the children. Simultaneously, the Slovenian National Party achieved unprecedented electoral success (Vivante, 1945: 172).

Vivante addressed accusations that the government was artificially encouraging Slavic immigration at the expense of Italians with socio-economic arguments and evidence. There was simply a shortage of Italian workers, who were unwilling to accept lower-paid jobs and positions in public service. The state employed more Slavs than Italians because the former learned Italian, while the latter did not learn Slovenian. This was also true for senior civil service positions, which Italians tended not to apply for. However, public institutions and private firms with Italian nationalist management often employed many Slovenians because they were seen as good and reliable workers or because of economic considerations. Vivante also pointed out that the conflict was not driven solely by material or national reasons. Other factors were also at play, including the atavistic conflict between town and countryside and the town's disdainful attitude towards villagers who, moreover, spoke a different language (Vivante, 1945: 184).

The Italian petty bourgeoisie, Vivante observed, was driven to conflict by frustration over the rapidly developing Slavic community and the perceived threat to their social position and sense of being surrounded. The Slavic middle class, on the other hand, was motivated by the enthusiasm for all-around development and emancipation, which was challenging the existing national relations. The national conflict spread from the middle classes down to the lower classes and up to the higher social strata. However, the higher social classes were less enthusiastic about the national cause and ethnic antagonisms. The petty-bourgeois conflict also had two faces: competition among small merchants was marked by national struggle, while when it came to defending common class interests, national divisions were put aside. (Vivante, 1945: 186–187).

Vivante pays special attention to the complex national differences and relationships within the proletariat, distinguishing between the “amorphous” (those without class and often national awareness) and those organized under the banner of internationalism. In Trieste, the Italian and Slovenian proletariats were not in economic competition, because the former was predominantly skilled labour, while the latter constituted the lower working classes. Initially, the Italian-speaking proletariat of Trieste identified itself as *Triestine*, expressing anti-Slavic sentiments rooted in urban pride and a sense of superiority over the peasantry. Meanwhile, the Slovenian proletariat, which also exhibited regionalist tendencies, became increasingly nationally unified during the second half of the 19th century. The church played a significant role in fostering national consciousness among the Slovenians, whereas the Italian clergy found itself in a more ambivalent position on this issue. For the Slovenian proletariat, the national struggle was closely intertwined with the class struggle against exploitation.

As class consciousness grew and workers' internationalism gained strength, the organized Italian-speaking proletariat in Trieste came to recognize its Italian national identity. Simultaneously, it found common class interests and ideological alignment with the Slovenian proletariat, supporting its efforts against national assimilation. This alliance, and the fact that workers' reformism implicitly contributed to the betterment of the state, provoked the ire of Italian liberal-nationalists. They accused socialism of being pro-Austrian, anti-separatist, and supportive of the Slavic national movement and of the Slavicization of the city (Vivante, 1945: 188–191).

Vivante also examined the internal divisions within both the Italian liberal-nationalist and Slovenian bourgeois camps, each of which played a role in exacerbating the national conflict. He highlighted the contradictions that undermined nationalist rhetoric and demonstrated the utopian nature of resolving the national question in Trieste and the entire Julia region by asserting the dominance of one nationality over the other.

Some concluding notes and considerations

The texts reveal the predominant contextual and formal elements used by the authors to describe the ethnography of Trieste, highlighting differences and perceptions of the “self” and the “other”. Italian authors, save Vivante, emphasize the primacy of the Italian language and culture, considering them as markers of historical continuity and civilization, rooted in ancient Rome. They use these criteria to classify national and cultural subjects, evaluating their hierarchical positions. In Kandler's work, the Italian character of Trieste is portrayed as a dominant feature of local (and regional) particularism. This particularism includes a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-cultural fabric, which emerged naturally from the city's mercantile cosmopolitanism and was crucial for its role as a Central European seaport.

Valussi emphasizes the gap between a well-established nation with a unified ethnography, civilizational elements and an emancipatory drive, and the diverse, heterogeneous Slavic peoples who were just beginning to form their national identities. He argues that the residents of Trieste were Italians by culture and by choice, suggesting that both the older and newer non-Italian inhabitants were gradually assimilating into this dominant civilization according to what he describes as the natural laws of cultural dominance.

Timeus's ethnography of Trieste, situated within an overtly political and national conflict, depicts a defence of Italian identity against the perceived Slavic threat. The Slavic enemy is characterized as inferior and incapable of independent advancement. He has forsaken the assimilation into a civilization deemed otherwise unattainable and undertaken an offensive to displace and conquer Italian cultural positions.

Vivante also observes the ethnography of Trieste and the wider Julia region in the context of the national conflict, but presents it in the light of the complex structural

changes and dynamics associated with the emergence of “capitalist civilization”. He treats national characteristics and relations with the distance of a rational internationalist thinker, who is concerned with objective facts and with understanding the positions and also the interests and sentiments of all the players in the socio-economic, political, and cultural-national field of confrontation.

Godina’s ethnography, focusing primarily on the Slovenian community in Trieste, examines a group in the early stages of ideological and organizational nationalistic mobilization. This ethnography highlights the dilemmas and contradictions faced by the community in defining its identity amidst the inevitable processes of modernization.

In all the narratives examined, a central theme is the assimilation – or Italianization – and the preservation of the original ethnic and cultural identities of both indigenous and immigrant communities. In this respect, authors also discuss behaviours that diverge from or transcend the norms of the original identity groups or the emerging national identities.

Kandler’s portrayal of Trieste depicts a city with a cosmopolitan polyphony where, despite the dominance of the Italian language, various ethnic and religious communities maintained their original linguistic and cultural practices. Kandler suggests that this diversity prevented the cultural homogenization of Triestine society. However, he notes that younger generations of immigrants tended to Italianize. He identifies this process as resulting in linguistic hybridity, a temporary phase where the original languages spoken at home and Italian used in public spaces merged into a grammatical and cultural blend (Kandler, 1848a). Kandler views the family and public spaces of the city as the primary arenas where identity preservation and negotiation occurred, through either conservative adherence to traditional practices or innovative adaptations.

Valussi’s pamphlet, while not specifically addressing practical behaviours in social interactions, presents multilingualism as a necessary and contemporary means of everyday communication. As for cosmopolitanism, defined as prioritizing materialistic concerns over national values, he regards it as an outdated concept associated primarily with a small, elite circle of immigrants. *Timeus* focuses on the divergence from original roots and the transformation of ethnic and national identities, emphasizing the social context and hierarchical relations present in daily life. He uses abstract illustrative examples to describe the assimilation process as a linear mechanism functioning through everyday interactions. On a theoretical and political level, *Timeus* indicates internationalism as a social and ideological space that ambiguously operates to the detriment of Italian and in favour of the Slavic identity.

Josip Godina provides more detailed descriptions of practical behaviours that reflect attitudes toward ethnic and national values and identification. Drawing from direct observation and his extensive knowledge of the Slovenian population in both urban and rural settings, Godina identifies these behaviours as problematic, hindering

the Slovenian community in Trieste from fully emerging as a distinct national entity. He places the core of the Slovenian identity in Trieste within the middle class, comprising both natives and immigrants, who remain committed to their Slovenian nationality despite close contact with the Italian environment. However, Godina notes that there were significant social spaces and situations where Slovenian identity was either weakening or failing to develop into a strong national consciousness. A critical area of concern was the interface between the city and its rural surroundings, particularly where urbanization extends to the *Okolica*. In these areas, Godina observes a disconnect from national traditions, exemplified by men adopting urban attire similar to that of the lowest urban proletariat, instead of traditional clothing. While women tended to maintain traditional costumes, they often abandoned the Slovenian language, even in their homes, in favour of the Italian dialect. Godina also points to villages further from the city, such as Križ, where a shift towards Italian cultural influences is evident. For instance, when asked about their reading habits, locals remarked, “Our people have turned more towards the Italian ones” (Godina, 1872: 289).

Godina lamented that many Slovenians in Trieste, despite the advancement of the national idea, remained “lukewarm”, or indifferent, to national feelings. This apathy extended even to those who engaged with the initiatives of national activists. One clear indication of this indifference was the decline in the number of reading rooms. At the time of Godina’s writing, only one *čitalnica* remained active in the *Okolica*, down from seven previously. Godina also noted a lack of interest in his book as a further sign of this indifference, not only in Trieste but among the Slovenian population more broadly. He had distributed the book in bundles to encourage its dissemination, but most of these were returned, including those sent to the reading rooms. Reflecting on this situation, Godina concluded, “the Slovenian nationality has awakened, but few felt and loved it yet” (Godina, 1872: 478).

In Vivante’s analysis, assimilation and nationalization emerge as central themes. He frequently mentions the social spaces and circumstances in which assimilation occurred, as well as the factors and situations that facilitated both assimilation and the awakening of national identity. The author highlights the existence of significant segments of society with weak, unstable, or non-existent national identities – groups that national activists targeted and sought to incorporate into their respective national spheres. Vivante also addresses the concept of “in-betweenness”, particularly the phenomenon of hybridism in Istria, which Kandler had also noted. Unlike the urban hybridism of Trieste, Istrian hybridism was “rural” in nature, occurring among the Slavic population living near towns. This hybridism arose from daily interactions with Italian towns but was more enduring than urban hybridism, which often led more quickly to Italian assimilation (Vivante, 1945: 171). The fluidity and instability of national identification in Vivante’s work is implicitly or explicitly evident across all contexts of national confrontation he discusses, from economics and society to education and politics.

To conclude, we can observe that the nationalistic narratives presuppose ethnic or national communities as clearly defined entities. This perspective limits their utility in observing so-called in-between practices and spaces, i.e. situations and behaviours that occur outside formally defined ethnocultural codes, whether these behaviours are conscious-unconscious or deliberate-unintentional. Nonetheless, all the works implicitly and explicitly highlight the significant presence of such spaces, which played a crucial role in everyday life. The discussions also resonate with the aforementioned Angelo Vivante's argument about inconsistency and misconception of rigid concepts of Italianness and Slovenianness (or Slavicness) as clearly defined national categories (Vivante, 1945: 128). To achieve an objective understanding of the multiethnic landscape of Trieste and the north-eastern Adriatic, it is essential to move beyond mythologized images and values, embracing a more nuanced view of identity and cultural interaction.

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Pogledi sodobnikov na tržaško etnografijo v 19. in zgodnjem 20. stoletju

V prispevku je predstavljena analiza, kako so nekateri pisci v 19. in na začetku 20. stoletja opisovali večetnični Trst in opredeljevali njegove jezikovne ter kulturne sestavine. Štirje italijanski in en slovenski pisec izražajo različna razumevanja narodnih razmerij in družbeno-ekonomskih ter političnih procesov v času uveljavljanja nacionalnih idej. V središču teh razmerij sta vprašanje izvora, oblikovanja in utemeljevanja narodnih identifikacij ter vprašanje narodnega in kulturnega nasprotovanja oziroma asimilacije.

Narodno oziroma nacionalistično usmerjeni italijanski avtorji poudarjajo prvenstvo italijanskega jezika in kulture kot civilizacijski nasledek starega Rima in Benetk. S tega stališča postavljajo posameznike »druge« narodne in kulturne pripadnosti na hierarhično lestvico omike. Znameniti tržaški zgodovinar Pietro Kandler je sredi 19. stoletja opisoval italijanski značaj Trsta kot prevladujočo značilnost sicer kozmopolitskega mesta in trgovskega središča habsburškega cesarstva. Pacifico Valussi, ki je še leta 1849 sanjal o italijansko-slovanski Švici na vzhodnem Jadranu, je leta 1861 v manifestu iredentizma opredeljeval civilizacijsko razdaljo med izoblikovanim italijanskim narodom in komaj prebujajočim se slovanstvom, ki naj bi bilo v Trstu in Istri obsojeno na italijanizacijo. Imperialistično usmerjeni iredentist Timeus je leta 1914 Trst slikal kot italijansko kulturno trdnjavo pod udarom nacionalističnega nasilja manjvrednega slovenstva

(slovanstva). To je zaradi nesposobnosti samostojnega razvoja izrinjalo italijanstvo in si prilaščalo njegovo civilizacijo. Slovenski narodnjak Josip Godina Verdelski se je osredinil na slovenski Trst, ki so ga italijanski pisci zamolčevali oziroma ga istili z nazadnjaškim in kulturno nedoraslim kmetstvom. Poudarjal je zgodovinski prispevek slovenskega prebivalstva k razvoju mesta, opozarjal pa je na omahljiv narodni čut v začetni fazi uveljavljanja slovenskega narodnega gibanja. Od vseh se razlikuje socialistično usmerjeni Angelo Vivante, ki je medetnične odnose in nacionalne spore opazoval z racionalnimi očmi internacionalističnega misleca in jih s stališča marksistične dialektike razlagal kot sestavni del uveljavljanja »kapitalistične civilizacije«.

V razpravi o oblikovanju, ohranjanju in spreminjanju družbenih, kulturnih in etničnih/narodnih identitet pisci opisujejo okoliščine in mehanizme teh dinamik. Kandler, Godina in Vivante poročajo tudi o vsakdanjih ravnanjih in okoliščinah, ki kažejo na odmik od izvornih identitet oziroma programsko opredeljenih vzorcev kulturne in narodne identifikacije. Tak primer je jezikovna hibridnost, ki jo Kandler in Vivante opredeljujeta kot prehodni pojav vgrajevanja prišlekov v prevladujočo italijansko jezikovno in kulturno tržaško okolje, v Istri pa kot trajnejšo značilnost obmestnih kmečkih območij. Godina piše o oblačilni kulturi in jezikovnih praksah prebivalstva slovenske okolice, ki se spreminjajo pod pritiskom družbeno-ekonomskih dejavnikov, a tudi zaradi pomanjkanja narodnega čuta.

Besedila, ki izražajo stališča pripovedi o narodu in predpostavljajo etnične oziroma narodne skupnosti kot jasno opredeljene entitete, so le delno primerna za opazovanje odmikov od formalno opredeljenih narodno-kulturnih kod. Vsa upoštevana besedila pa eksplicitno in implicitno opozarjajo na pogostnost takšnih položajev, ki jih je treba vrednotiti z upoštevanjem specifičnih okoliščin in zgodovinskih dejavnikov.