



MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Triest(e): A Small Vienna by the Sea?
An Ethnographic Depiction of the Idealised Image of Trieste in
Vienna

verfasst von | submitted by

Martina Husu

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2024

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 656

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium CREOLE-Cultural Differences and
Transnational Processes

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Dr. Agnieszka Pasieka

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the many people who supported me throughout this research journey, both personally and academically.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mag. Dr. Agnieszka Pasięka, my supervisor, whose guidance and insights were instrumental in shaping this research.

I am profoundly thankful to all my research partners, interlocutors, and everyone I encountered during my fieldwork who generously shared their stories, making this study possible. Special thanks go to Irene Strobl for her time, invaluable assistance in connecting me with research participants and her unwavering support.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my colleague and friend Lana Ruppaner for her valuable advice and assistance with German translations.

To my parents, Petra Luksa and Sergij Husu, I owe immense gratitude for their support - financial, practical, and emotional - during all these years.

Lastly, I would like to thank my partner, Claudia Esposito, for her constant encouragement and support throughout this challenging journey.

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Introduction



Figure 1: Piazza Unità/Veliki Trg in Triest(e)/Trst

Every time I stroll on Piazza Unità, I observe the beautiful buildings that surround it. The square is probably the most photographed part of Trieste and represents a microcosm of the city's rich and layered historical narratives: on one side the sea, on the other Viennese-style buildings with a hint of Mediterranean aesthetic with Italian flags on top. In fact, this central square, enveloped by buildings erected during the Habsburg rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, embodies a fusion of architectural styles that reflect the intricate interplay between local traditions and imperial influences. Piazza Unità is embraced on three sides by structures resonating with Central European aesthetics, while the fourth side opens up to the vast expanse of the Adriatic Sea. The square's physical orientation symbolises Trieste's position as a gateway between continental Europe and the maritime world. Looking out to sea, in the

distance stands Miramar Castle, one of the most prominent sites associated with the Habsburg past in the city.

The sea, a constant presence in the city's history, not only shaped its economic fortunes through the bustling port but also served as a conduit for cultural exchange and cosmopolitan encounters. The architectural landscape of the square itself speaks volumes about Trieste's past, with the imposing presence of the Austrian Lloyd building. The once nerve centre of maritime trade under the Habsburg Empire stands as a tangible reminder of the city's mercantile heritage.

On a sunny day the square is packed with people, both Triestini who enjoy their city and tourists who discover its beauty for the first time. The historic Caffè degli Specchi emerges as a social hub where locals and visitors converge to partake in a fundamental ritual of the Triestine urban life: the coffee or aperitivo. The sole square's evolution in nomenclature shows the shifting political and cultural currents that have shaped the city's identity over the centuries. Originally it was named as Piazza San Pietro, then was designed as Piazza Grande during imperial times, and finally asserted the Italian identity as Piazza Unità d'Italia. Urban landscapes are not simply a remnant of history. Maura Hametz (2014, 133) writes: "Their significance lies in their survival and preservation through decades of construction, redesign, redevelopment, and rebuilding in and around the piazza." This piazza reflects "the collective memory of local commitment to international commerce and the sea, to cosmopolitanism at the crossroads of Europe, and to European grandeur and prosperity" (Hametz 2014, 133).

Ever since I was a child and I used to walk around around Triest(e)/Trst¹ with my mum, I perceived the city as possessing multiple histories, faces and identities. There was the prominent Italian Trieste, striving for dominance, alongside the somewhat hidden Slovenian city of Trst, to which I felt to belong, and the nostalgic Habsburg Triest, evoking memories of a bygone era that influenced the city's cultural,

¹ Triest(e)/Trst - The name of the city in Italian is Trieste, in Slovene (and Croatian, Serbian, etc.) it is Trst, in German it is Triest. The different names reflect the multi-ethnic and transnational nature of the city. I decided to write the name for the first time like that as I want to acknowledge it, and also because each name brings different images and understandings. In the thesis the city is after this point referred to as Trieste as it became the standard English name. However, when using a place-name for the first time, I give both the Italian and Slovene variant of it. When citing from interviews I use the place-name that the Interviewee used. In fact, even if the interviews were conducted in German, some interviewees decided to use the Italian place-name and not the German. As I think they used it for a reason, being this wanting to show their knowledge, or wanting to please me, or other.

architectural, and economic landscape. And then there were others, hidden and cut out as those of the refugees arriving via the Balkan route².

Over the years, I gradually came to understand which was the preferred version of Trieste among the people I was talking to, and I learned to adapt the language I used to align with their preferences, or deliberately highlight the beauty of the version they hated the most. Growing up, the city seemed too narrow, stuck in outdated political debates, provincial and bigoted. And above all, boring and too caught up in dead-end identity crises.

Upon my arrival in Vienna in 2020, I experienced a strong sense of familiarity and belonging, as though I had previously known the city. Contrary to what I have been told by other immigrants, the Viennese welcomed me immediately. I was taken aback by the profusion of praise for my home city, Trieste, a city I had always considered unremarkable. I never thought the city was ugly, but neither was it so beautiful or interesting that it deserved all this attention. In every bookshop in Vienna I saw pictures of my hometown on the covers of books. Much to my surprise, I started to take pictures of them and save them in a folder entitled: "Trst-obsession, zakaj?" (Trieste-obsession, why?). The 'Why?' was not so much a desire to go deep into the question, but more of disbelief. On occasional visits to my hometown, however, I began to dwell on its beauty. What I have also noticed is that in recent years, particularly after the end of COVID-19, German is frequently heard in the city centre. Tourism has significantly increased, and tourists are predominantly Austrian and German.

² The Balkan Route "ends" in Trieste. Refugees find shelter inside the 'Silos', a ruined building behind the railway station that was built between 1860 and 1865 as a grandary under the Habsburg Empire (Milan 2024). The state and the city fail to provide an accommodation for the asylum seekers who find themselves sleeping in the street, with the degraded Silos as only shelter. It is not the first time that the Silos is home of refugees, after WWII refugees from Istria, Fiume and Dalmatia stayed there. These lives represent a striking contrast to the focus of this thesis. The focus here is on the privileged transnational mobile population, tourist or second home buyers.



Figure 2: “Trst obsession”, books about Trieste in a Viennese bookshop

In literature and film, Trieste is frequently depicted as a unique and enchanting city, characterised as “a melancholic theatre of decline, the embodiment of the memory of a malevolent imperial project whose echoes still resonate in the city's identity discourses” (Minca 2009, 257). This portrayal highlights the city's longing for its imperial grandeur, materialised in the preservation of Habsburg aesthetics. Positioned on the ethnic boundary between Latin and Slavic settlers, Trieste was under Habsburg rule for over five centuries. The 20th century was marked by tumultuous changes for the city, including shifts in borders, statehoods, fascism, and the horrors associated with World War II. Following the collapse of the Habsburg empire in World War I, Trieste became part of Italy, experiencing then periods of Liberal Italian, Italian Fascist, Nazi, Yugoslav, and Anglo-American Allied Military rule before rejoining Italy in 1954. Each transition has left its mark, both on the psyche of Trieste's inhabitants and visitors, and in tangible historical manifestations, such as in urban spaces. This intricate mix reflects the city's unique history and the shifting geopolitical boundaries that have shaped its identity. Trieste was described as a city “where the past remains remarkably present” (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1). Architecture serves as a tangible reminder of the past, offering multiple interpretations and meanings. The city's history is recounted in various ways, one of which is Habsburg nostalgia. In this narrative, history is not rejected but rather selectively remembered. Specifically, this narrative is perpetuated by tourists, who are drawn to the city through various place marketing strategies tailored to

distinct categories. The nostalgic Habsburg atmosphere and the city's Central European identity are frequently emphasised to attract tourists. Conversely, other tourists are captivated by the Italian character of the city. My research seeks to explore the multifaceted presence of Trieste beyond the city's boundaries, specifically in Vienna. The city of Trieste is manifested in various forms within Vienna, including through antiquarians who sell paintings depicting the city, newspapers that publish articles about Trieste, and individuals who share their travel experiences with friends or on social media. The book market in Austria reflects this interest, with an abundance of tourist guidebooks published annually that perpetuate an idealised image of Trieste, recipe books that highlight a shared Mitteleuropean culinary heritage, and novels set in the city. These writings construct a distinct Trieste that is not physically present within the city itself. The ties between the two cities lie back in the past. Austrians know Trieste, if nothing else from school history lessons as the city was under Habsburg rule for more than 500 years and represented its principal commercial port. My research aims to investigate the narratives of Trieste as constructed and understood within the context of Vienna. Through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I have endeavoured to examine how Austrians perceive the city and how they articulate their perspectives, with the goal of illuminating the multifaceted construction of a city's image.

The thesis explores the complex interplay between Habsburg nostalgia, the Italian tourist myth, and urban development in Trieste. The study is divided into two parts that mirror themselves: the first part is of a more theoretical nature and the second part analyses the data gathered during the fieldwork in the light of the theoretical part. The first part is divided into three theoretical chapters and one methodological chapter. The first chapter, *Triest(e)/Trst*, sets the stage by examining the city's complex identity and its relationship to its past(s). This chapter provides a historical context for the study, highlighting the significance of Trieste's cultural heritage and its role as a crossroads between Europe and the Mediterranean. The second and third chapters provide the theoretical background and delve into the theoretical frameworks that inform this study. This includes an examination of Habsburg nostalgia and its relationship to the concept of *Mitteleuropa* in the second chapter and the analysis of the touristic myth of Italy and its implications for gentrification, touristification, and overtourism. The fourth chapter, *Methodology and Reflection on Methodology*, outlines the research methods used to

gather and analyse data. This chapter provides a transparent account of the research process. Here the second part of the thesis starts. This part, the research analysis, presents the findings of the study, exploring the intersections of Habsburg nostalgia, tourist myth of Italy, and urban development in Trieste. This section is divided into three chapters that mirror the first part, each examining a different aspect of the study. The fifth chapter recollects personal histories of the first “discovery” of Trieste. The sixth chapter examines the Habsburg Nostalgia in my ethnographic research and the seventh chapter analyses the myth of Italy. Finally, the Conclusion synthesises the key findings and implications of the study, offering insights into the complex dynamics of Trieste's urban transformation.



Figure 3: Molo Audace on a gloomy December day

I. Part - History, Theory, and Methodology

1. Triest(e)/Trst

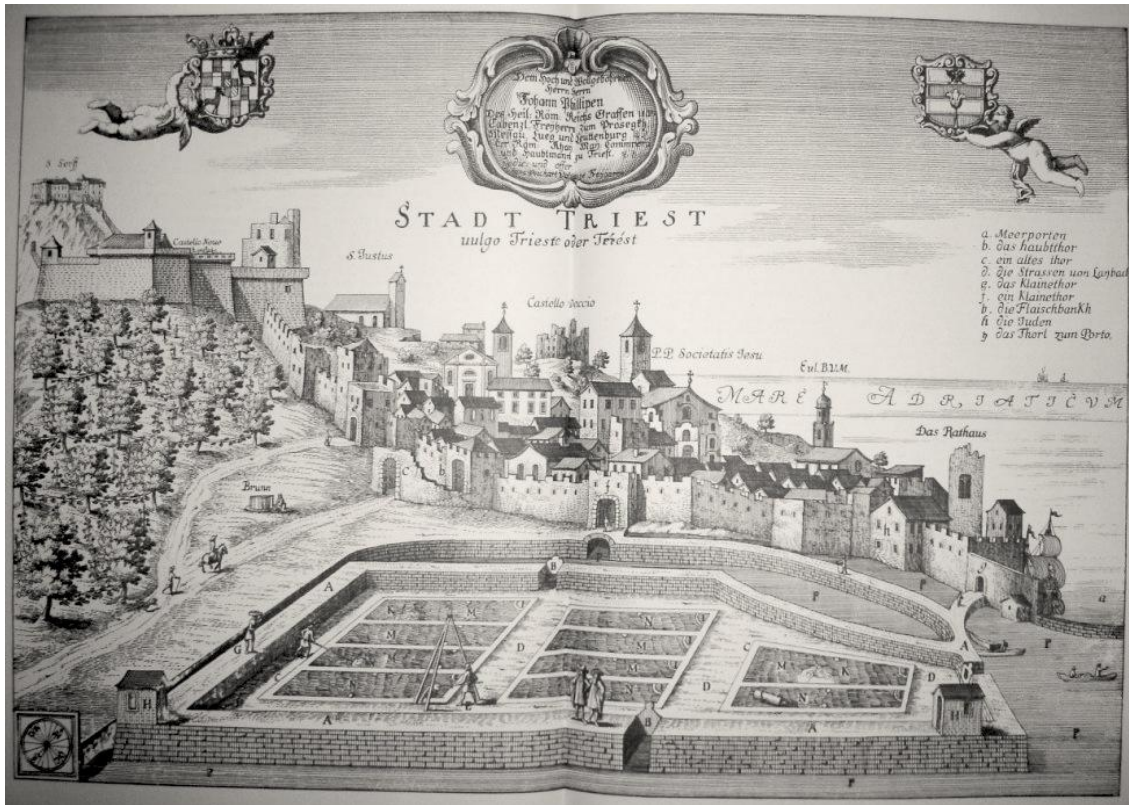


Figure 4: Engraving of Trieste (Valvasor 1689)

The image of Trieste in Vienna is significantly influenced by the city's presentation and historical context. The historical trajectory of Trieste is marked by its location on the Adriatic Sea and at the crossroads of Latin and Slavic cultures. The city's evolution from a Roman colony to a free port under the Habsburg Monarchy and its eventual incorporation into the Italian Republic has left an indelible mark on its urban fabric and cultural identity. Presently serving as the capital of the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trieste has a population of approximately 200,635 inhabitants as of December 2023 (URL 1). However, the history of Trieste is not solely defined by the five hundred years long Habsburg rule. The tumultuous twentieth century brought profound changes and scars to the city. Shifting geopolitical boundaries and the horrors of two world wars left lasting impacts on both Trieste and its residents.

The forthcoming chapter provides a concise overview of the city's history starting with the Habsburg period. Historical events shape current narratives dominant in the city. However, history is not a static entity but a dynamic narrative that evolves over time. Memory, too, plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the past, as narratives are continually reinterpreted and reexamined.

Habsburger Triest



Figure 5: Triest, Canal Grande (Wehrli 1910)

Upon coming under Habsburg dominion in 1382, Trieste, was initially a modest fishing village trying to remain independent from the Venetian State. For the initial centuries under an Austria that showed little interest in dominating the Adriatic, the city remained modest. As a matter of fact, it was not until 1719 that the city assumed a pivotal role within the Habsburg Empire when Karl VI granted Trieste trading privileges (Pizzi 2016). The city was in a favourable geographical position being the only seaport together with Rijeka/Fiume (Pizzi 2004). The reign of Maria Theresia marked a turning point for the city, bringing it to prominence as one of the Empire's primary commercial centres. This era witnessed an exponential population growth

driven by immigration accompanied by the erection of new urban quarters designed in accordance with progressive urban planning principles (Pizzi 2004). At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Trieste's population numbered a mere 6,000 inhabitants. However, with the acquisition of new trading privileges, the city experienced rapid growth, reaching a remarkable 240,000 residents by 1914 (Ličen 2018, 40). This demographic expansion not only accentuated Trieste's burgeoning economic importance but also accelerated its evolution into a vibrant and cosmopolitan hub within the Habsburg Empire.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Trieste was integrated into the empire via an efficient shipping network and a robust railway system with a direct connection to Vienna. During this period the Habsburg Empire emerged as one of Europe's Great Powers, with Trieste ranking as its fourth largest city following Vienna, Budapest, and Prague. In an article written in 1857 and published by the New York Daily Tribune, Karl Marx observed that Trieste had grown to such an extent that it 'eclipsed' all other Austrian ports, including its historic rival, Venice (Marx 1857). According to Marx, the city gained its rising position as it "shared the privilege of the United States of having no past at all" in contrast to Venice, a city "fettered by traditions" and "reminiscences". This perspective highlighted the city's ability to adapt and innovate in response to the demands of the modern era. In 1896 the English travel writer Robert Howard Russel described Trieste as a "very modern, new, and smart-looking city" that was "one of the busiest-looking places you came across on the continent" (in Ballinger 2003a, 28). At the end of the nineteenth century, the city emerged as a Habsburg cosmopolis characterised by a mix of confessions and peoples beside the Italian, Slovene and German-Austrian communities. This multiculturalism was facilitated by the patents of 1719 and 1725, which extended invitations to individuals of any nationality and religion to settle in the city (Ballinger 2003b, 90). In subsequent years, religious groups, including Jews, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Uniates, and later Serbian Orthodox, Lutherans and Calvinists, were granted permission to establish themselves as corporate entities, thereby fostering a sense of communal identity (Ballinger 2003, 90). This cosmopolitanism was manifested in the urban landscape, with the construction of houses of worship and cemeteries in the city centre, serving as tangible symbols of religious and cultural diversity. However, it is crucial to note that the extension of

privileges to various religious and ethnic groups was motivated by pragmatic considerations rather than a commitment to contemporary notions of tolerance. The Habsburg rulers viewed these accommodations as a means of promoting utilitarian service to the state, thereby enhancing the city's economic and cultural vitality (Ballinger 2003, 90).

The following century and the two World Wars brought Trieste in a fluctuating geo-political position of a border city. The city transitioned from its status as a prominent commercial centre with a pivotal role in Mediterranean trade to a marginalised peripheral urban place. However, already in the second half of the nineteenth century the emergence of nationalistic sentiments and ethnic tensions began to surface. Nationalist sentiments characterised the strive for domination in politic, socioeconomic and cultural spheres. In an Italian dominated environment, in the 1870s, the Slovene political leadership in Trieste believed that an ethnically organised economy was crucial for the political and cultural emancipation of large parts of the Slovene population (Verginella 2014). The leaders believed that an economy organised along ethnic lines would provide a necessary foundation for the community's growth and self-determination. By the onset of World War I, Trieste found itself polarised along Italian and Slovene lines (Ličen 2018, 40).

The regions surrounding Trieste have often been interpreted as either fiercely contested borderlands or as fertile crossroads of diverse cultures, languages, and ethnic groups (Ballinger 2003a, 19). This area has been characterised as a meeting point where three significant European racial groups - Mediterranean, Germanic, and Slavic - converge, owing to its historical identity as a frontier region and a locus of tension (Ballinger 2003a, 20).

Trieste Italiana



Figure 6: Disembarking of Italian troops in Trieste on 3 November 1918

In the aftermath of World War I and the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, Trieste became part of the Kingdom of Italy. The Italian irredentist narrative framed this incorporation as a 'return' to Italy, liberating the city from the perceived tyranny of the Habsburg monarchy (Ballinger 2003, 84). Upon their arrival, Italian soldiers expected to encounter an antiquated and decaying Habsburg city, only to discover a more modern and cultured urban centre characterised as 'more European' and diverse (Ballinger 2003, 84).

The Treaty of Rapallo in 1920 saw the Italian government commit to protect the 'Yugoslavian' minority on the border (Verginella 2014, 153). Count Sforza, the Foreign Minister, emphasised that respecting the freedom of language and culture along the border was both a matter of honour and political prudence (Verginella 2014, 153). The events of the same year, however, contradicted these assurances made by the Italian government. The burning of the 'Narodni dom' on July 13, 1920, by fascist blackshirts

marked the start of a series of persecutory events targeting the Slovenian and Croatian populations in Venezia Giulia.

The role of the city became progressively weighted down by the ethnic conflict and border issues of the nationalistic rhetoric (Pizzi 2004). This progression culminated during the era of the fascist regime, which dictated a policy of forced Italianization aimed at eliminating any remaining traces of diversity and cosmopolitanism, leading to Trieste being described as "the most Fascist of Italian cities" (Pizzi, 2004). With the rise of fascism in the early 1920s, Italian became gradually the sole official language in Venezia Giulia and the prohibition on using Slovene and Croatian was extended to all public and private spaces, from public offices, schools and churches to workplaces, factories, private companies, trattorias and shops, punishable by dismissal, admonition or withdrawal of the authorisation to operate (Verginella 2014). Under fascist rule, the Slovene population and other ethnic groups were heavily marginalised, criminalised, forced to emigrate, and subjected to persecution and killings. In the urban landscape, monuments and symbols representing ethnic and national diversity were systematically eradicated. If for fascist Italy Trieste represented the most Fascist of Italian cities (Pizzi, 2004), in the eyes of the Slovene (and Yugoslavian) resistance Trieste represented the symbol of the national movement and Slovenian irredentism (Pupo 2014, 165).

In June 1940 Italy joined the war as one of the Axis Powers when Mussolini declared war on Britain and France with the plan to concentrate the major forces against the British Empire in Africa and the Middle East. Its initial attacks on France were quickly repelled, and its invasion of Greece, Albania and in North Africa led to a disastrous campaign that forced German intervention. The entry into the war led to a series of military disasters and in September 1943 the country signed an armistice. As other parts of North Italy, the city of Trieste was occupied by the German military forces, namely the Wehrmacht, and subsequently annexed by the Third Reich within the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral. In response to this occupation, the Slovenian and Italian Partisans, the Osvobodilna Fronta and the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, initiated an uprising on April 30th, 1945, against the Nazi presence. The following day, the Yugoslav army joined forces with the Partisans, leading to the capture and subsequent control of the city. This military control persisted until June 12th, when the Yugoslav army withdrew and the city fell under a combined British and

American military administration. The contentious issue of sovereignty over Trieste remained unresolved, leading to what is referred to as the 'Trieste Question.' The establishment of the Free Territory of Trieste was formalised through the Paris Peace Treaty in September 1947, and the city, along with its surrounding areas, remained under the jurisdiction of the Allied military government until 1954, when Trieste was officially ceded to Italy. Trieste became a new home for many Italians who fled from Dalmatian Zara and Istrian between 1943 and 1954. A substantial portion of the Istrian refugees, estimated at around one third, chose to establish permanent residence in Trieste, thereby effecting a notable demographic shift that imbued the city with a more pronounced Italian character (Ballinger, 2003a).

In 1954 Trieste embarked on a new chapter as an Italian city, although this transition was not officially recognized until the signing of the Osimo Treaty in 1975. The city's strategic location along the seaside had ensured its economic prosperity during the Habsburg era, but its positioning at the periphery of 'the West' following the new political landscape presented a challenge. Trieste lacked a clear role in the Italian state due to its geographical location. The new borders resulted in the loss of its historical hinterland (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 176). The imposition of new political boundaries prohibited interactions with the East, compelling Trieste to pivot towards the west and the neighbouring provinces of Gorizia/Gorica and Udine/Udin/Videm. In 1964; the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Udine and Pordenone formed the new Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. Despite becoming the regional capital, Trieste and its surroundings that could be identified with the name Venezia Giulia, maintained a distinct and separate identity from the other provinces, or Friuli, as the two regions pursued independent development trajectories (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 177).

During the Cold War era, Trieste's identity became closely intertwined with its status as a frontier city, serving as the final outpost of the 'Free World' before the Iron Curtain and the Communist East. This unique positioning transformed Trieste into a showcase of the West for Yugoslavian consumers, who came to the city in large numbers to purchase goods such as jeans and coffee, thereby fueling an underground economy that contributed to the city's ranking among the fifteen wealthiest in Italy (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 177). The dissolution of Yugoslavia led to the decline of this economic phase. At the dawn of the new millennium, Trieste experienced a period of

stagnation within the trading network due to the absence of a robust manufacturing sector and diminished harbour activity (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 176). Nevertheless, geopolitical shifts presented Trieste with a fresh opportunity for a central role. The expansion of the European Union provided the city with favourable international conditions, and the border with Slovenia, which remained intact since 1991, gradually opened even further, culminating in Slovenia's inclusion in the Schengen area in 2007.

In an effort to stimulate growth, boost tourism, and attract investors, the local administration embarked on a mission to craft a compelling image of Trieste. A significant milestone in this endeavour was the renovation of Cavana, the city's historical and geographical heart, in 1996 with the support of European Union funding (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 178). In the following years the city centre, spanning from the railway station to Cavana and via Torino, underwent a transformation through redevelopment plans and the pedestrianisation of commercial areas. The infusion of both private and public investment in recent years has enabled Trieste to achieve economic upscaling, launch new commercial ventures, and enhance accommodation capacity. This revitalised tourist industry has forged new regional affiliations and identities linked to the mythos of the Habsburg era (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1). The strategic use of Habsburg narratives in place-branding has opened up promising opportunities. The city's historic coffee houses, which evoke the turn-of-the-century Central European way of life, are emblematic of strategy. Coffee and coffeehouses serve as a connecting thread between Habsburg Trieste and its modern-day counterpart. The city's port played a significant role in coffee trade during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ranking as the second-largest coffee exchange port in Europe at the onset of the First World War (Hametz 2014, 145). Although the trade diminished during the interwar period, it experienced a gradual resurgence in the post-war era. In the 2000s, the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region actively promoted coffee trade, attracting investments and organising local initiatives that emphasised its historical significance, thereby underscoring the city's centuries-long role in this thriving industry naming the city '*la città del caffè*.' Moreover, in 2018, Trieste successfully re-established its presence in the international trade network, emerging as one of the initial eleven European ports in terms of tonnage, marking a notable achievement in the city's economic resurgence (Zilli, Modaffari, 2020, 179).

Another name is '*la città dei venti*' (the city of wind) due the emblematic Bora (or Burja in slovene), a strong and cold wind that blows in the Adriatic. Trieste has garnered national and international attention also through the annual regatta known as Barcolana, a significant event that has propelled the city into the spotlight. This regatta receives extensive coverage from both national and international media outlets and is directly broadcasted by RAI, the Italian national television network (Zilli, Modaffari, 2020).

2. Habsburg Nostalgia



Figure 7: Advertising poster depicting Sisi, Vienna

Wandering through Vienna, one cannot help but notice the prevalent presence of historical figures such as Empress Elisabeth, Emperor Franz Joseph, and Maria Theresa. These figures are not only confined to the walls of museums, but are also prominently featured on packages of pralines, in souvenir shops, and in commercial advertisements. The use of these popular historical figures represents much more than a trivial aesthetic or superficial marketing choice. In a modern world marked by contradictions and contingencies, the figure of Emperor Franz Joseph serves as a familiar and comforting symbol of a time when Vienna was a dominant cultural and political force. Vienna appears nostalgic for the Habsburg past. Such nostalgia, however, whether aspiring to restore historical, social, cultural and political forms or driven by economic benefits of memory, remains truly contemporary (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1). In fact, Habsburg nostalgia reflects current values and ongoing concerns with identity, as it

interprets the realities of imperial ethnic, religious, and linguistic plurality through the contemporary lenses of cosmopolitanism and tolerance. Nostalgia reshapes, emphasises, or obscures monuments, sculptures, statues, and consequently, history and urban spaces.

Nostalgia, as a sentiment, is characterised by a longing for an idealised past in contrast to an unsatisfactory present, and is therefore grounded in a juxtaposition of diverse temporalities and emotions (Schlipphacke 2014, 14). In the case of Habsburg nostalgia, it is not merely an individual anxiety, but rather a collective yearning for a past that may not have actually existed, which serves to expose the contradictions inherent in modernity (Schlipphacke 2014, 3). Nostalgia, as a cultural phenomenon, has been defined by Arjun Appadurai (1996, 78) as “armchair nostalgia,” which refers to a feeling of loss for a time that was never actually experienced. Furthermore, nostalgia is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing a hybrid and ambivalent nature (Carabelli 2019, 9). It has the ability to unite multiple and seemingly contradictory histories, and its manifestation varies according to different geopolitical and cultural contexts.

The forthcoming chapter is structured into three distinct sections. The initial segment delineates the concept of Habsburg nostalgia, providing a comprehensive understanding of its nuances and implications. Subsequently, the second part entails an examination of existing literature pertaining to this term in the context of Trieste or Vienna. Finally, the third section scrutinises the manifestation of Habsburg Nostalgia specifically within the context of Trieste, exploring its socio-cultural significance and impact on the local community. This comprehensive approach aims to provide a thorough exploration of Habsburg nostalgia, shedding light on its multifaceted nature and contextual relevance.



Figure 8: “Good night, Franz!” photograph of a room in The Niu hotel in Vienna

Habsburg Nostalgia and Mitteleuropa

In the last decades, intense scholarly research in many disciplines as history, political sciences, and other social sciences, focused on empires and their aftermaths. Anthropological studies have particularly delved into the realms of memories and nostalgia surrounding empires, as well as the legacies left by imperial powers (Baskar 2007, 46). The phenomenon of empire nostalgia is widespread, with empires being remembered in diverse cultural practices, identity construction strategies, and political ideologies (Baskar 2007, 46).

Within regions that were once under the dominion of the Habsburg empire, sentiments of Habsburg nostalgia and recollections of the empire persist, despite the dwindling number of individuals who directly experienced that era. A seminal contribution to scholarly discourse on this subject was made by Claudio Magris through his work “The Habsburg Mythos in Modern Austrian Literature” (1963). This Triestine scholar introduced the term ‘Habsburg mythos’ to describe the political myth prevalent in the historiography and literature of former Habsburg territories, portraying the monarchy as a period of prosperity. This 'supranational' literature and historiography evolved alongside national narratives, which were often confined to the perspectives of authors and scholars from specific national groups.

In recent decades, a significant body of research has been dedicated to exploring the multifaceted dimensions of Habsburg imperial nostalgia, as evidenced by works such as those by Ballinger (2003), Baskar (2002, 2007), Arens (2014), Schlipphacke (2014), and Jovanović (2019). Heidi Schlipphacke posits nostalgia as a “disease of the modern age,” attributing this characterization to the contemporary environment shaped by rapid technological advancements and governed by principles of utility, productivity, and efficiency (Schlipphacke 2014, 4). Consequently, individuals find themselves grappling with the need to adapt to swift changes, constantly striving to keep pace with the evolving landscape. This societal dynamic has resulted in a departure from the leisurely rhythms of childhood, as the relaxed tempos of that era have become increasingly elusive (Schlipphacke 2014). In the context of Austria, the onset of modernity is symbolically linked to the demise of the Habsburg Empire and the outbreak of World War I. The war led to new forms of technologically rationalised

advancements and novel concepts of power through interactions among nation-states (Schlipphacke 2014, 4). Nostalgia, far from being a simplistic conservative reaction to change, is characterised as a critical and at times ironic engagement with both the past and envisioned futures. Schlipphacke writes:

“The nostalgic, it seems, has given up on a reconciliation between fantasy and reality, between the idealised past and the disappointing present or the utopian future. The nostalgic plays with time in a most sophisticated manner, telling us a great deal about the limitations of our contemporary institutions of community” (Schlipphacke 2014, 10).

In other words, Schlipphacke’s nostalgic did not give up the notion of harmonising the idealised past with the contemporary or future contexts; rather, they engage in a manipulation of time that serves to expose the deficiencies inherent in existing institutions.

The concept of Habsburg nostalgia is not monolithic as it evolves and transforms over time and space, influenced by cultural and historical contexts. This sentiment is not confined to Vienna or Austria but is also present in the former Habsburg territories that are now part of different countries. The term ‘Habsburg nostalgia’ itself is diverse, reflecting the empire’s various names and the lack of an official name for the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian empire. Furthermore, the Habsburg myth refers to the entire monarchical period, although certain periods and sovereigns stand out more than others. The ruler Maria Theresa (1717-1780) or the emperor Franz Joseph I (1830-1916) and his consort Elisabeth ‘Sisi’ (1837-1898) are the most mentioned and known. Within the regions that were once under the dominion of the Habsburg Empire, the imperial administration is frequently romanticised as a paragon of order, characterised by diligent and responsible officials who upheld the safety and propriety of life, enforced fair and equitable taxation policies, and respected diverse languages and faiths (Baskar 2007, 47-48). Moreover, the figure of Emperor Franz Joseph is often revered as a wise and compassionate ruler, akin to a paternal figure. In these regions, the Habsburg myth is often intertwined or synonymous with discourses surrounding the concept of ‘Mitteleuropa’. This thesis examines the cultural and social significance of Habsburg

nostalgia, rather than evaluating the historical accuracy of the nostalgic narratives. The emphasis is on how nostalgia narratives affect the image of a place and how people use, propagate and craft historical narratives and if there is a reason behind it.

Habsburg nostalgia, whether perceived as a marketing strategy or a project to revive bygone socio-political and cultural forms, remains a contemporary force, shaping and transforming the past, present, and future. Nostalgic reminiscences have tangible effects on urban renovation and restoration, manifesting in various forms, such as the (re)construction of statues and monuments and the naming of places. The erection of new monuments by state or local authorities endorses the past that influences the present. The meanings of monuments are not static but can be “disremembered and re-membered” to create new narratives of continuity and coherence (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1).

Schlipphacke (2014) characterises Habsburg nostalgia as “a longing for a feeling of home that traverses cultural and ethnic spaces” (2014: 6). The concept of the 'emotional pull of empire' is interpreted as the longing to be part of a cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, and prosperous supra-national entity (Schlipphacke 2014). Furthermore, cities like Trieste, with a history of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, are particularly susceptible to narratives of this nature (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1). Within the Habsburg empire, Trieste was renowned as an “urban crossroad, a bridge between the east and west, and an outlet to the Mediterranean and overseas worlds” (Hametz 2014, 136). Pamela Ballinger (2003) observes that the resurgence of interest in Habsburg Nostalgia reflects contemporary concerns with issues of identity and nationhood, often stemming from a reinterpretation of historical realities through the lens of modern concepts such as cosmopolitanism and tolerance. Through an analysis of three English-language publications from the turn of the millennium, Ballinger illustrates how the authors express a longing for a social and political model characterised by religious and ethnic diversity that transcends the confines of the nation-state framework (Ballinger 2003, 84). This form of Habsburg nostalgia is described as a ‘prospective nostalgia,’ where reflections on the past inform visions of the future and political possibilities. For instance, in the context of Trieste, this nostalgia envisions the city as a cosmopolitan hub aspiring to assume a more central role in Central Europe (Ballinger 2003).

Maura Hametz (2014) analysed Habsburg nostalgia in Trieste and came to the conclusion that it holds multiple temporalities and spaces. Habsburg nostalgia does not represent a rejection of history, rather is a selective remembrance of it (Hamez 2014, 131). Habsburg rule brought many cities “political, cultural, and economic development” and “into the modern age” (Hametz 2014, 134). Therefore, the nostalgia for the final decades of the empire “provides the key to the gate connecting the lessons of the past and the needs of the present” offering a model for crafting the future (Wilson in Hametz 2014, 134). Hamez writes that such nostalgia in Trieste can provide means to “transcend the hostility and trauma associated with the decades of ethnic and nationalist conflict and violence that have marred civic, regional, and national relations in the northern Adriatic territory” (2014, 134).

Habsburg nostalgia can serve as a political project that informs future developments, as demonstrated in Trieste, where Habsburg narratives are intertwined with the ambition of elevating the city to a prominent position as a central hub in Central Europe, known as Mitteleuropa. This term transcends its geographical connotations as underlines and sums up a shared culture derived from a common Habsburg past.

The concept of Mitteleuropa largely relies on Austrian cultural discourse (Vidmar-Horvat and Delanty 2008). Initially, in the early twentieth century, this term emphasised a pan-German unity; however, by the 1980s, it transitioned to represent a Habsburg Central Europe with Vienna at its core, in opposition to Germany (Vidmar-Horvat and Delanty, 2008). Patterson (2003, 113) suggests that the concept gained popularity as intellectuals and policymakers sought an alternative to the traditional Cold War division of Europe into eastern and western blocs.

Vidmar-Horvat and Delanty (2008, 212) write that Mitteleuropa is not a sovereign state, but rather “a culture or a fate”, an intangible cultural entity or destiny, characterised by fluid and imaginary borders that necessitate continuous redefinition in response to evolving historical contexts and the evolving perception of Europe or European civilization. The interpretation of Mitteleuropa varies across the Habsburg lands. In former Habsburg territories situated within the former Soviet-controlled region of Central Europe, the concept of Mitteleuropa became inextricably linked with the legacy of ‘Habsburg civilisation’ (Baskar 2007, 48). This notion served to culturally

distinguish the area from the perceived backwardness and orientalism of communist Russia or the barbarism of the Balkans (Baskar 2007, 48). The legitimacy of this concept was derived from the legacy of Habsburg civilisation, and it nostalgically praised "old Austrian ways and values" (Baskar 2007, 48). Patterson (2003, 122) asserts that in Austrian conceptualizations of Mitteleuropa, the Habsburg empire is perceived as the "standard-bearer" or even the "very embodiment" of Western civilization, which is "explicitly or implicitly juxtaposed against an alien Eastern culture associated with the Russian and Ottoman empires and their successors".

In other words, narratives on Mitteleuropa are akin to a double-edged sword, simultaneously celebrating multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism while simultaneously excluding groups devoid of a shared Habsburg past (Baskar, 2007; Jovanović, 2019; Vidmar-Horvat and Delanty, 2008). This dichotomy is frequently highlighted by critics of Mitteleuropa. Patterson (2003, 111) posits that these narratives are underpinned by an imagined superiority of European values and presumed traditions, such as democracy, pluralism, and multiculturalism (Patterson 2003, 116).

Literature Review

The study of Habsburg nostalgia has been particularly prominent in cities such as Vienna (e.g. Arens 2014; Jovanovic 2019), Trieste (e.g. Ballinger 2003; Hametz 2014; Klabjan 2018; Ličen 2018), and regions as Galicia (Wolff 2012), Istria (Baskar 2002; Kappus 2002), the Balkans (Baskar 2002) and many others. As the concept of Habsburg nostalgia varies in the distinct geographical contexts and diverse socio-cultural dynamics, this research wants to delve on Trieste, its historic hinterland and Vienna.

Bojan Baskar, a Slovenian anthropologist, has conducted in-depth examinations of the concept of Habsburg Nostalgia and related concepts, with a particular focus on the historical Slovene ethnic territory. In a 2002 article published in Slovene, Baskar analysed and compared memories of the Habsburg Empire, or *Kakania*, in the Slovene-Italian borderland regions. He further expanded his research in a 2007 article, comparing *Austronostalgia* and *Yugonostalgia* in the Western Balkans. Additionally, Baskar (2010) explored Habsburg patronage of tourism in the Eastern Adriatic,

providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of Habsburg nostalgia.

Baskar's research (2002) reveals that memories of the Habsburg Empire exhibit regional and conceptual variations within the Slovene-Italian borderland context. Concepts such as Mitteleuropa, the Habsburg myth, multiculturalism, multilingualism, peaceful coexistence, and tolerance in a multiethnic region, transnationality, cross-border regions, and regionalism carry diverse meanings and significance contingent upon the prevailing socio-political context. In northern Istria's villages, the Empire, particularly under Franz Joseph, is perceived favourably, with tax policies viewed as judicious and humane. In Italian Gorizia, Habsburg nostalgia is prevalent, manifesting in the re-erection of monuments, and the term Mitteleuropa is integrated into daily life, used in festivals and initiatives to promote and market regional products. The concept of Mitteleuropa transcends cultural boundaries, encompassing economic and geopolitical dimensions. Conversely, in Nova Gorica, situated mere metres away, the Habsburg myth elicits indifference. The musealization of the Isonzo/Soča Front has transformed the former Empire into a crucial element of local identity in the Soča Valley. Similarly, the Kanal Valley's four-lingual natives attribute central importance to the Empire. Baskar's (2002) analysis of Trieste highlights a linguistic divide between the Italian-speaking majority and the Slovene-speaking minority. The Italian-speaking Triestines employ terms like Hinterland, Mitteleuropa, and the Danube basin in discussions about Trieste's future, emphasising the diminished relevance of borders and nationalism in Europe. In this context, nostalgia is not directed towards the Empire per se, but rather for the myth of Trieste's golden age, characterised by economic prosperity and peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious groups. The Slovenian minority in Trieste does not share this nostalgia. In fact, discourses on Mitteleuropa are particularly pronounced among Italian-speaking Triestines, who often overlook or dismiss the Slovene minority's role in the city's multicultural history. This contention was challenged by Slovene anthropologist Daša Ličen (2018), who conducted fieldwork focusing on the culinary manifestations of Habsburg nostalgia in Trieste. She did not encounter differences in narratives between Italian-speaking and Slovene-speaking Triestines.

In his comparative analysis of Austronostalgia and Yugonostalgia within the Slovenian context, Baskar (2007) identifies several commonalities between the two phenomena. Primarily, both Austronostalgia and Yugonostalgia exhibit a shared sentiment of nostalgia towards ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as a yearning for a supranational identity. However, a notable aspect that emerges is the potential for an exclusionary tendency inherent in both nostalgias, where each may inadvertently exclude or marginalise those who were not part of the former state.

In her ethnographic research, the US-American anthropologist Pamela Ballinger (2003a) delved into the narratives surrounding the Istrian exile in Trieste and Istria. While her study does not primarily focus on Habsburg nostalgia, she provides a comprehensive explanation of the broader historical and geographical context of the region. This contextual understanding allows for a nuanced perspective on the transformation of Trieste's identity, as she elucidates how the city evolved from a cosmopolitan hub of the Habsburg imperial centre at the end of the nineteenth century to a provincial, nationalistic periphery of the Italian centre by the end of the twentieth century (Ballinger, 2003a, 29).

In an article published in 2003, Ballinger (2003b) observed a resurgence of the Habsburg myth in Trieste, extending beyond its regional boundaries at the turn of the millennium. This revitalised interest was exemplified by various English literary works, such as Lois Dubin's "The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste" (1999), John McCourt's "The Years of Bloom" (2000), and Jan Morris' "Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere" (2001) (Ballinger 2003b, 85). These authors contributed to or reinforced common themes that continue to portray the city as a former cosmopolitan, melting pot, and hybrid place that experienced a period of decline and melancholy (Ballinger 2003b). Ballinger (2003b) argues that this renewed potency of nostalgia for the Imperial cosmopolitan Trieste reflects contemporary concerns with identity and nation, and misinterprets the realities of imperial times through contemporary lenses of cosmopolitanism and tolerance. The turn-of-the-century Trieste is depicted as having a "rich cosmopolitan texture" (McCourt 2000, 4 cited in Ballinger 2003b, 86) and as a "bustling hub for immigrants, a cosmopolitan centre that attracted diverse non-Catholic religious-ethnic minorities" (Dubin 1999 1,17 cited in Ballinger 2003b, 86). Morris, in her writing, emphasised the "Mitteleuropean mix" of Latin, Slavic, and Germanic cultures, stating that "the human

hybrid is the norm in this city" (Ballinger 2003b, 86). She further asserted that Vienna regarded Trieste as a Jewish city during the Habsburg era (Ballinger 2003b, 86). Joyce, who lived in Trieste during the fin-de-siecle, linked the city's supposed Jewishness with the idea of the Orient and the east (Ballinger 2003b, citing Morris 2000, 42). Morris connected the term "Oriental" to "exotic," suggesting that the city had the capacity to absorb and preserve "the other," providing space for ethnic and linguistic diversity (Ballinger 2003b, 86). As a British author, Morris drew analogies between the British and Habsburg empires (Ballinger 2003b, 87). Joyce also saw similarities and differences between the two empires, stating that Ireland's relationship with Britain was akin to Trieste's relationship with the Austro-Hungarian empire (Ballinger 2003b, 87). However, Joyce distinguished between the negative British imperialism and the Habsburg empire's charm and vitality. He returned to Trieste after World War I but found the city dead, living only in its "ghostly reincarnation" (McCourt 2000, 252 cited in Ballinger 2003b, 88). As a matter of fact, the Habsburg nostalgia as depicted by Dublin, McCourt and Morris reflects contemporary concerns with multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism.

In his research, Miloš Jovanović (2019) examines the pivotal role of the historical narrative of Habsburg grandeur in place branding strategies in Vienna. The city preserves, repurposes, and integrates its imperial architectural and material heritage in the name of cultural heritage preservation. However, Jovanović argues that such neoliberal place-branding strategies perpetuate narratives of the "whitewashed empire," as they decontextualize urban spaces and obscure certain historical realities. The preservation and marketing of imperial architecture continue to propagate narratives of past exploitative structures and imperialism, which continue to influence the global market and contemporary spatial dynamics. Jovanović (2019) defines the "whitewashed empire" as not only a nationalist phenomenon that reinterprets the Habsburg empire as a precursor to "proto-Austrianness" but also as a legacy that perpetuates discourses of European supremacy. He further elucidates that these narratives are not merely historical, but continue to shape contemporary discourses and perceptions:

"For urban managers, imperial historicity represents one answer to the post-industrial conundrum, a way to extract profit from the legacy of material

inequality whose original structural framework has long disappeared. European supremacy, the restoration of aristocratic-bourgeois world-views, and the extraction of profit from spatial heritage are three facets of whitewashing that obscure the gritty textures of empire. Bound by imperial nostalgia, they are the narrative framework and material base of empire's contemporary legacies." (Jovanović 2019, 472).

To rephrase, the historical legacy of imperialism provides a response to post-industrial challenges by capitalising on past inequalities, reinforcing European hegemony, reviving aristocratic principles, and commodifying heritage for financial gain, thereby concealing the harsh realities of empire. This nostalgic narrative both shapes and sustains modern imperial legacies. Jovanović (2019) encourages a critical examination of historically-contingent interpretations and genealogies of buildings and monuments to gain a nuanced understanding of the narratives and counter-narratives that illuminate the relationship between the past and present. He asserts that the urban space holds historical significance in the imperial construction of identity from the Eighteenth century, encompassing "aristocratic and bourgeois cultural artefacts, the production of colonial knowledge, narratives of military might, and modern architecture" (Jovanović, 2019, 461). Furthermore, Jovanović's approach challenges the presumed absence of colonial logic in the cultural space of Habsburg Mitteleuropa.

In alignment with Vienna, the preservation, reconstruction, and marketing of Habsburg urbanity significantly contributed to place-branding strategies in Trieste and numerous other former imperial cities. Jovanović (2019) conceptualises place marketing as an embodiment of "urban entrepreneurialism," wherein economic accumulation prioritises growth-oriented strategies over public service provisions. As early as 1996, Appadurai posited that nostalgia serves as a "lubricant" in late capitalist consumerism, enhancing the marketability of consumer goods.

The urban space of Trieste continues to reflect the geopolitical transformations experienced by the city over the past centuries. Monuments and buildings bear witness to the overlapping and multifaceted loyalties of local memories. Several scholars have investigated the processes and timelines of (re)erecting imperial sites of memory in the city over the past decades (e.g., Baskar 2007; Ličen 2017; Klabjan 2018).

Habsburg Nostalgia in Trieste

The Habsburg nostalgia in Trieste has garnered significant scholarly attention, with studies examining how local inhabitants interact with this narrative (Ballinger 2003; Colombino 2009; Białasiewicz & Minca 2010; Hametz 2014; Carabelli 2019). These authors primarily focus on the Italian-speaking population, with only Baskar (2002) and Ličen (2018) addressing the engagement of the Slovene minority. Hametz (2014) research disassociates Habsburg nostalgia from national identity and the Germanic context, positioning it as a model for non-national possibilities and a desired central role for Trieste in Mitteleuropa. The nostalgia for an idealised past of a prosperous and tolerant Habsburg Trieste is not a yearning for the past, but rather a political project or the city's aspirations for its future (Ličen 2018).

Interest in the Habsburg past in Trieste started to reemerge in the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1970s, during the bicentennial commemoration of Maria Theresa's death, Trieste's perceived Habsburg grandeur and cosmopolitanism became encapsulated in the concept of Mitteleuropa and associated with transnational regional cooperation in the Alpe-Adria region (Ballinger 2003). Building on this observation, Baskar (2007, 50) argued that the surge of nostalgia in Friuli Venezia-Giulia can be interpreted as a response to the suppression of supranational or mixed identities by the Italian state, particularly during the fascist era but also in the post-World War II decades. In this context, "Austronostalgia" represents a form of "the return of the repressed," which rejects the enforced exclusivist national identity (Baskar 2007, 50). In such narratives, the Habsburg empire is portrayed as a supranational and multinational state that accommodated regionalist claims, in contrast to the current Italian nation-state (Baskar 2007, 50). This phenomenon of Austronostalgia reflects a complex interplay between historical memory, cultural identity, and political ideology in the region of Friuli Venezia-Giulia.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a further resurgence of interest in the Habsburg past in the former Habsburg regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia, which was reflected in the re-erection of many old monuments (Baskar 2002, 71). Trieste in particular has numerous such monuments, with some of the most significant being re-erected during this period. For instance, the monument to Empress Elisabeth was

re-erected in 1997 (Baskar 2002, 86). One of the most prominent sites associated with Habsburg nostalgia in Trieste is the Miramare Castle, which has been a significant cultural and historical landmark since its construction in the 1860s by Archduke Maximilian and his consort Charlotte of Belgium (Hametz 2014, 142). Colangelo's research (2000) indicates that the majority of Triestines, irrespective of their national self-identification, share a positive collective memory of the Habsburg empire. The prevalent portrayal of Habsburg Trieste is that of a prosperous harbour characterised by peaceful coexistence and tolerance among various national and religious groups (Colangelo, 2000). Katia Pizzi contests the portrayal of the city as a multilingual commercial hub and melting pot of the nineteenth century, instead characterising it as a peripheral area where "diverse and conflicting cultures and subcultures held together within a splintered and entropic social fabric, without becoming homogenised" (Pizzi 2016, 55). The region's identity was historically unsure, and it became "all too prone to monocultural Italian discourses" during the early twentieth century (Pizzi 2016, 55).

The Habsburg myth in Trieste bears similarities to the stereotypes associated with the myth of the Golden Age (Baskar 2002, 92). The myth is a prominent feature of Trieste's cultural landscape, as evidenced by its presence in local literary production, particularly in Italian and Triestine dialect literature. The myth also permeates popular culture including songs, expressions, and jokes (Klabjan 2018, 81).

At the end of the millennium, the Habsburg myth experienced a resurgence that extended beyond its traditional geographic boundaries, as evidenced in Ballinger's (2003b) research. Ballinger examined three literary works composed in English, revealing the authors' fascination with the cosmopolitan nature of Habsburg Trieste. In 2003, Ballinger observed that visitors who were familiar with Trieste through its literary associations often noted the city's "provincialness" and a "sense of faded glory and melancholy" of "sad" Trieste (Ballinger 2003b, 88). This melancholic sentiment, however, was not unique to contemporary Trieste but was also a characteristic of fin-de-siecle Habsburg Trieste, as evidenced by the interest in psychoanalysis and high rates of suicide and mental illness (Ballinger 2003b, 88). The writings of Triestine intellectuals of that time, such as Italo Svevo, demonstrate an obsession with "memory, ageing, and decline" (Ballinger 2003a, 27). Trieste's intellectual climate was significantly influenced by Viennese psychoanalysis, making it the centre of the

psychoanalytic movement on the Italian peninsula (Ballinger 2003a, 27). However, non-Triestines who resided in the city during Ballinger's fieldwork at the turn of the millennium, attributed the melancholy to feelings of disappointment and resentment towards being relegated to a peripheral status (Ballinger 2003b, 88). In these years, Trieste was described as "a quiet Italian backwater" with a nearly oppressive atmosphere, obsessed with the past, both with "its glories and its traumas", mirrored in its economic stagnation and political isolation (Ballinger 2003a, 28). In fact such descriptions of the city as neurotic and in a perpetual "identity crisis" due to their frontier status were commonplace in the early 2000s (Ballinger, 2003b). Ballinger's fieldwork, however, disproved the claims that the city was a "capital of nowhere" whose citizens were free of racism and nationalism, as described by Morris (2000). Not only the exiles had "an ineradicable resentment against all Slavs" as Morris stated, as chauvinism against Slovenes and Croats was prevalent in the Italian discourse in the city (Ballinger 2003b, 89).

Both Pamela Ballinger (2003a, 2003b) and Maura Hametz (2014) agree that Trieste underwent a transformation following the collapse of the Iron Curtain. The various facets of nostalgia should be interpreted as a yearning for the idealised imperial grandeur. Also Ličen (2018) ethnographic investigation suggests that Habsburg nostalgia emerged from the contemporary discontent among Trieste's residents regarding the city's economic and political status as a provincial Italian municipality. As noted by Maura Hametz (2014, 143), "ties to the Habsburg and the Germanic past were reinvented in light of the increasing integration of Europe and the expansion of the European Community in which Germany took a leading role."

The Slovene anthropologist Daša Ličen (2018) observes a reimagining of the myth of Trieste over the past three decades. Through her fieldwork in Trieste, Ličen focused on the culinary dimension of Habsburg nostalgia. Traditional foods and dishes associated with the city, such as mustard, 'cren' (horseradish), jota³, putizza/potica⁴, presnitz⁵ pinza⁶, krapfen, sauerkraut, sausages, goulash, apple strudel, and others,

³ Soup made with beans, sauerkraut, potatoes and pork.

⁴ Putizza in Italian, potica in Slovene. Circular cake made with pastry dough and filled with a mix of different nuts, raisins, eggs, sugar, cinnamon, spices, rum or marsala.

⁵ Circular shaped strudel with similar ingredients of the putizza.

⁶ Regional variation of the Austrian Easter bread called "Osterpinze," which is a type of sweet bread made with flour, yeast, and eggs.

suggest a Mitteleuropean or Central European heritage. Many restaurants in Trieste actively emphasise their imperial connections or ties to Vienna (Ličen 2018, 43). Triestine cuisine is promoted as "culturally distinctive" from Italian cuisine, with a strong emphasis on Austrian or "exotic" Hungarian influences (Ličen 2018). However, Ličen notes that Slovene or more broadly Slavic origins and elements are often downplayed in this culinary narrative (Ličen 2018). This selective emphasis on Central European influences in Triestine cuisine reflects a deliberate construction of identity that highlights certain cultural connections while marginalising others.

Carabelli (2019) acknowledges Trieste's nostalgic character but emphasises its multifaceted, hybrid, and ambivalent nature and states that "nostalgia in Trieste is also a business" (Carabelli 2019, 5). Therefore, according to her, what is often perceived as Habsburg nostalgia is primarily just the Habsburg coffeehouse aesthetic, a place-branding strategy designed to attract tourists and investors by meeting their expectations of an idealised Trieste (Carabelli 2019). Upon closer examination, Carabelli states that even Trieste's Habsburg coffeehouses reveal details of Irredentism, indicating that Triestinis do not long for the empire's return, as they reject imperial subordination and emphasise the role of Irredentism. The Habsburg narrative should be read as a political attempt to reimagine the city as a key player in both Italian and Central European politics (Carabelli 2019).

The shared history between Vienna and Trieste is leveraged to forge new business alliances. According to the municipal head of tourism interviewed by Carabelli, the majority of tourists are Austrians, who feel at home there: "Trieste is like Vienna with the sea" (Carabelli 2019, 6). Furthermore, the head of tourism clarified that only those with no historical knowledge are nostalgic for the empire, as it represented a period of economic prosperity. He, and the majority of people, are not nostalgics, but they steward "engineer nostalgic atmospheres to match the expectations of tourists" (Carabelli 2019, 6). The marketing role of the Habsburg narrative is often overtly stated during the (re)erection of new monuments or their repositioning (Ličen 2017, 25). Furthermore, advertising campaigns at both municipal and private levels frequently emphasise the Habsburg or Central European atmosphere of the city to attract tourists.

Borut Klabjan (2018, 63) asserts that while the term nostalgia is commonly employed in Trieste to signify "an undefined longing for a supposedly stable,

prosperous and ordered Habsburg past," it is misleading to simplify the narrative to a singular sense of nostalgia. The city's historical experience of recurrent geopolitical transformations has given rise to a nuanced and multifaceted attitude towards state loyalties, national affiliations, and territorial belongings (Klabjan 2018, 63). This ambivalence has resulted in not only feelings for a "mythologized and dreamed but unrepeatable past," but also in social agency in the present, as "Habsburg reminiscences touch not only on realms of memory but represent (or wish to represent) concrete and ongoing political resources" (Klabjan 2018, 63). In other words, the legacy of the Habsburg era continues to shape the city's political landscape, as local actors draw on this history to articulate their interests and aspirations. Daša Ličen (2018) posited that starting from the 1990s, Habsburg nostalgia has emerged as a significant element shaping the Triestine identity, commonly referred to as "triestinità."

Antonella Prosecco's analysis of Habsburg nostalgia and Trieste's identity highlights the significance of the political myth of autonomy, self-representation, and municipalism (in Hametz 2014, 136). The Habsburg era is remembered as a time when Trieste enjoyed a high degree of political and economic autonomy, free from the constraints and limitations of other political systems. According to her, this myth of autonomy is celebrated and exalted. Therefore, nostalgia for the Habsburg past is not simply a longing for a stable and prosperous era, but also a desire to reclaim the city's autonomy and self-determination.

In Trieste, the concept of "Mitteleuropa" is frequently referenced in initiatives such as the port's revitalization, as noted by Ballinger (2003b) and Carabelli (2019). In this context, the invocation of the Mitteleuropean narrative intersects with Habsburg nostalgia, reflecting a shared political agenda. The widespread use of this geographical concept in everyday discourse in Trieste diverges from its original German nationalist connotations. The city has strategically redirected its focus from Italy towards the former territories of the empire, aiming to enhance its political and economic influence and secure a pivotal role in the region (Ballinger, 2003; Carabelli, 2019).

The Triestine writer Claudio Magris portrays Mitteleuropean Trieste as a "hybrid" realm characterised by the Danube and the Habsburg legacy (Ballinger 2003). Magris associates the essence of the Habsburg world and Mitteleuropean ambiance with iconic establishments like Caffè San Marco and Caffè Tommaseo, which continue to

thrive in the city (Ballinger 2003, 96). These Cafes are not solely driven by nostalgic sentiments but are actively experienced by the city's residents. Carabelli (2019, 9) observes that in these cafes, "history is both preserved and displayed," yet they do not evoke imperial nostalgia. While these cafes initially exude a distinct Habsburg aesthetic, a closer examination reveals the presence of Italian Irredentist symbols. Carabelli (2019, 9) notes that these cafes embody the dual idealised images of Trieste as the "Habsburg metropolis" and the "Irredentist hotbed," representing two extreme facets of the same "(hi)story", or historical narrative. She argues that the commemoration of the Habsburg past, Mitteleuropean ideals, and cosmopolitan potential coexist with the "Irredentist spirit of the Italian city" (Carabelli 2019, 10).

Borut Klabjan's paper (2018) aimed to challenge the portrayal of Trieste as "Urbs Fedelissima", a loyal imperial city, often romanticised by nostalgic narratives. Klabjan argued that the city's landscape had already been transformed into an Italian aesthetic form before the dissolution of the empire, as evidenced by the toponymy, monuments, and their discussions in the city council. The cultural and political landscape of Trieste had been shaped by a "long-term dynamic interplay between architecture and counter-architecture" since the mid-nineteenth century, reflecting larger issues of politics surrounding national affiliations and collective identities (Klabjan 2018, 70).

Nostalgia idealises and simplifies the past. Here the Habsburg past is often idealised as a time of prosperity and inter-ethnic harmony, with conflicts and tensions being silenced or downplayed. For instance, the silenced Slovenian-Italian tensions that culminated in the fascist period are often overlooked in nostalgic accounts of Trieste's past (Colombino 2009). In fact, Habsburg nostalgia glosses over complex historical dynamics and conflicts that shaped the cultural and political landscape of the city. However, the inaccuracies of this nostalgia do not detract from its significance in contemporary Trieste. By examining how people portray the Habsburg past, we can gain insights into their values, aspirations, and concerns, as well as the broader social and political dynamics that shape their perceptions and attitudes. In fact nostalgia, as a phenomenon, highlights specific historical elements but also has the capacity to facilitate selective forgetting, as highlighted by Angé and Berliner (in Ličen 2018, 50).

Trieste was partially forgotten for decades. In the last years tourism reemerged and the new reinvigorated tourist industry opened up new regional affiliations and geographies of belonging connected to the Habsburg mythos (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1). Using Habsburg narratives in the place-branding strategy further increases promising opportunities in the present and for the future.

Despite Austria's predominantly Alpine and landlocked geography, Austrians actively engage in Adriatic tourism, as evidenced by the significant presence of sailing ships in the marinas of the Upper Adriatic (Baskar 2009, 14). Austrian writers extensively document their experiences with the Adriatic Sea through various literary forms such as travel accounts, guidebooks, cookbooks, memoirs, music, movies, and thriller novels. Within the Austrian cultural-historical context, these regions are perceived as symbolic of the former Austrian maritime domain (Baskar 2009, 14). Following the conclusion of the Cold War, Austrian travellers, artists, and academics have increasingly embraced the Adriatic region, delving into its imperial Austrian heritage and even challenging the traditional perception of Austria as a landlocked Alpine nation (Baskar, 2009, 14). Baskar (2009, 15) notes that this heightened interest in the Adriatic is not solely driven by Habsburg nostalgia but is part of a broader process that involves the redefinition of cultural identities and the reimagining of geographical boundaries in a region that was recently divided by the Cold War.

Austrian tourism in Trieste has a historical foundation dating back to imperial times. From the mid-nineteenth century, the city was intricately linked to Vienna through a railway connection, and the Austrian Lloyd, the state shipping company, orchestrated cruising tours from Trieste to the Adriatic coast (Baskar 2009, 19). Trieste served as a pivotal starting point for journeys into Dalmatia, establishing itself as a gateway to the Adriatic region. The burgeoning tourist interest in the Adriatic coastline received substantial backing from the Austrian court and influential figures, leading to the development of tourist infrastructure, travel literature, monographs, and related products. The imperial Austrian engagement with the Adriatic, particularly in the context of nationalist tourism in 'their South', the Austrian Riviera, was framed as a patriotic duty and a means of redeeming the national landscape (Baskar 2009, 23). This narrative of nationalistic tourism intersected with Italian irredentists and their Venetian

narratives and genealogies, reflecting the complex historical and political dynamics of the region. While Venetian and Habsburg legacies historically clashed, contemporary perspectives reveal a more intertwined narrative where these two historical narratives engage in dialogue as the celebration of a new post-nationalist memorial culture of European integration is put on the first place (Baskar 2009, 24).

3. Touristic Myth of Italy



Figure 9: Trieste City Hall, Piazza Unità

The portrayal of Trieste in Vienna intertwines the common Habsburg past with the notion of the city's "Italianness" and the romanticised tourist imagery or myth of Italy. These narratives and imaginaries are not unique to Trieste, touristic narratives are rather intrinsic to tourism as such. In fact, it is through the lenses given by narratives that tourists 'see' the place they are visiting. Touristic imaginaries serve as socially transmitted implicit schemas of interpretation that in interaction with individuals' personal imaginations influence perceptions and understandings of the world (Salazar and Graburn 2014). In other words, tourists explore the city, they interpret their surroundings through desires, fantasies, and narratives they gained at 'home'.

The tourist myth surrounding Trieste is characterised by a competition between Mitteleuropean and Mediterranean narratives, with the former rooted in a Habsburg imperial genealogy and the latter stemming from a Venetian legacy (Baskar 2002, 88). These two genealogies, based on distinct and competing imperial histories, are utilised by various networks for diverse purposes, such as legitimisation, identification, recognition, and at times, territorial claims along the Adriatic coast (Baskar 2009, 15). However, these legacies should not be perceived as inherently incompatible and

antagonistic due to underlying nationalist or irredentist motives, as they can sometimes coexist harmoniously within a cosmopolitan and reconciliatory discourse of Europeanization (Baskar 2009, 15). This is particularly evident when the European integration process, with its metaphor of unity-in-diversity, is linked to the Habsburg ideology of unity in diversity (Baskar 2009 15). Indeed, Austrian intellectuals often assert that the Habsburg Empire serves as a prototype for the European Union. These discourses engage in a competitive dynamic while also existing in tandem. Ara and Magris (2015) posit that the fundamental nature of Trieste is encapsulated in the juxtaposition of these concurrent yet conflicting narratives. They employ the term "*nebeneinander*"⁷ to depict not the synthesis but rather the coexistence of irreconcilable contradictions and heterogeneity that manifest at both the collective and individual levels within the city. This juxtaposition allows for the simultaneous celebration of autochthones and hybridity (Baskar, 2002). The Mediterranean narratives are connected also to the touristic myth of Italy.

Touristic Myths

Tourists 'see' the location they are visiting not only through the lenses of their personal imagination, but also through those touristic imaginaries. In other words, the tourist gaze is not completely 'innate'; rather, it is structured and standardised by shared imaginaries, tourism professionals, the media, and fellow travellers (Urry 2011). Some scholars suggest that tourism is connected to the fictional worlds depicted in literature, film, and art, as tourists' experiences of reality are intertwined with the realm of imagination (Hennig 2002, 170). For example, ethnologist Hans Fischer conducted an in-depth study on the perceptions of German tourists during their visits to Western Samoa. His research uncovered a disconnection between the tourists' experiences in the actual visited country and their perceptions. Their portrayal of Western Samoa exhibits a striking alignment with a well-established European South Sea mythology that traces its origins back to the 18th century (Hennig 2002, 171). This divergence highlights the influence of historical narratives and cultural imaginaries on contemporary tourist

⁷ "*Nebeneinander*" -Side by side, in parallel.

experiences, showing how preconceived notions and mythologies can shape travellers' interpretations of unfamiliar destinations.

The development of tourist myths understood as structured interpretative frameworks of reality connected to a tourist destination, is pivotal in enhancing the allure of a destination. The stronger the myth, the more popular the destination becomes. There are several factors that contribute to the appeal of a tourist myth to a broad audience. A key element is the sense of the 'extraordinary'. As a matter of fact, tourists seek to encounter life in a manner distinct from their daily routines and to feel a sense of detachment from their familiar surroundings (Urry in Carabelli 2019, 7). Significant myths that are pertinent to tourism include nature, the noble savage, art, individual freedom, self-realisation, equality, authenticity and paradise (Hennig 2002 174). Tourists can engage with these myths through the act of consumption, such as by consuming the "traditional food" of a particular location (Hennig 2002, 17). Hennig suggests that the act of eating pasta al pesto in Liguria, for instance, allows tourists to symbolically participate in the "social cosmos of simplicity and proximity to nature" (2002, 177). This also means that tourism has the capacity to materialise abstract myths that would otherwise remain intangible (Hennig 2002). In relation to self-realisation, Hennig (2002) posits that vacationing can serve as a moment where many social constraints are lifted and social pressure is diminished (Hennig 2002, 180). Therefore, vacationing may foster feelings of personal autonomy and freedom, thereby intensifying the perception of self (Hennig 2002). The concept of authenticity and uniqueness is another significant factor that attracts tourists to particular destinations (Hennig 2002). Authenticity is often perceived as a quality that distinguishes a place from others, making it unique and appealing to tourists who seek genuine experiences. The search for authenticity has been described as a quest for a sense of genuineness and truth that is believed to be lacking in modern, mass-produced and commodified experiences (Hom 2015). Tourist myths do not form a cohesive whole, but rather, they are heterogeneous in nature.

Touristic Myth of Italy

*"The yearning for the 'land where the lemons bloom' is immemorial. Italy is far more than just the Germans' favourite holiday destination, far more than just an attitude to life. Italy is life at its purest. And, at the same time, a country where contrasts reign: ancient grandeur and art treasures as equally as decay and crumbling facades, high culture and organised crime, wealth and poverty. Any sense of middle ground seems to pass by in Italy."*⁸ (Baedeker 2023, 680).

Italy ranks among the top five tourist destinations worldwide (Hom 2015), with tourism accounting for approximately 10% of the country's GDP⁹. Looking at the most frequented regions in the European Union, in the first twenty positions there are six Italian regions. In the ranking of the most popular areas of the European Union, in the first twenty positions six Italian regions can be found: Veneto, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, Lazio, and the Autonomous Province of Bolzano (Zago 2020, 225). This highlights the enduring allure of "Destination Italy" and the significant economic impact of tourism on the Italian economy.

The touristic myth of Italy has a long history as a multi-faceted imaginary that was formed over centuries through phenomena like the Grand Tour and organised vacations (Hom 2015). Nowadays, the idealised Italy has a "strong reputation for resisting commodification through historic preservation, artisanal craftsmanship, espresso hegemony," (Hom 2015, 5) and therefore a "symbolic respite from the stratifying forces of globalisation" (Hom 2015, 6). Moreover, the stereotype of the "dolce vita", *the sweet life* in English, and good 'authentic' food gives Italy an allure of relieving "from the anxiety and ennui of modernity" (Hom 2015, 3). The phrase 'la dolce vita' should indicate the essence of the 'Italian Lifestyle'. This romanticised and

⁸ "Die Sehnsucht nach dem "Land, wo die Zitronen blühen," ist uralte. Denn Italien ist weit mehr als das liebste Urlaubsziel der Deutschen, weit mehr als ein Lebensgefühl. Italien ist Leben pur. Und gleichzeitig ein Land, in dem Gegensätze regieren: antike Größe und Kunstschatze ebenso wie Zerfall und bröckelnde Fassaden, Hochkultur und organisiertes Verbrechen, Reichtum und Armut. Jegliches Mittelmaß scheint in Italien vorbeizugehen."

⁹In recent years, the tourism industry in Italy has directly contributed approximately 5% to the country's GDP and has indirectly impacted around 13% of the GDP. Furthermore, the sector has directly accounted for 6% and indirectly influenced 15% of the total employment in the country. The data reported a steady and positive growth in the tourism sector until 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic largely disrupted and impeded tourism activities (OECD; URL 2). However, as soon as tourism became allowed again, Italy became again a popular travel destination.

engineered lifestyle is characterised by the pursuit of pleasure, contentment, and stress avoidance. This Italian concept emphasises the appreciation of culinary excellence, social engagement, familial bonds, passionate relationships, and artistic enjoyment. The touristic myth of Italy brings together romanticised portrayals of the past with notions of tradition and authenticity, collectively constructing an illusion of resistance against capitalism and globalisation (Hom 2015). These constructs of tradition and authenticity are deliberately crafted and presented to tourists, serving as commodities for mass consumption. Destination Italy offers a totalising sensory experience, promising visitors a sensory feast through its abundant artistic heritage, picturesque landscapes, refined yet simple cuisine, and the allure of 'la dolce vita', stimulating the senses of tourists (Hom 2015). Such fantasies portray the country as if it would not suffer from consequences of neoliberalism as the growing inequalities between rich and poor or from environmental catastrophes related to climate change (Hom 2015, 10).

In her book, Stephanie Malia Hom (2015) examines the role of tourism in constructing the concept of "Destination Italy" through text, practice, and space, concluding that this myth is integral to the formation of the Italian nation-state. According to Hom (2015), the legitimization of "Destination Italy" can be traced back over centuries through phenomena such as Christian pilgrimage during the Renaissance, the Grand Tour of the late 18th century, and the firsts guidebooks of Baedeker and Murray, as well as the advent of the British tour operator Thomas Cook (Hom 2015, 7). The Grand Tour, in particular, played a significant role in shaping the modern tourist industry, as it brought foreigners and artists from Britain and Northern Europe who standardised tourist practices and gazes, thereby transforming heritage into a touristic industry. These practices not only form the foundation of "Destination Italy" but also mark the very origins of mass tourism (Hom 2015).

Hom emphasises the interdependent relationship between the construction of Italian 'Nation' and the 'Destination', asserting that they are inseparable (Hom 2015, 7). Furthermore, she explores the relationship between tourism and the modern Italian state, arguing that the politics of the Italian state are inextricably linked to the history of modern mass tourism. Hom (2015) also investigates the ways in which tourism both highlights and capitalises on the Italian state as a postmodern construct. She analyses the production of texts and stereotypes that portray Italy as a land of leisure, the

practices of both international and domestic tourism that revolve around this imaginary, and the creation of spaces or built environments that replicate this imaginary on a global scale. Through her analysis, Hom sheds light on the complex relationship between tourism, national identity, and the politics of the modern Italian state.

The Italian government, regions, and tourism agencies like ENIT (the Italian National Tourism Agency) work to market and promote Italy as a premier travel destination globally. This includes targeted advertising campaigns, participation in international tourism fairs, and partnerships with travel providers. One of the most recent campaigns was the highly criticised campaign "Open to Meraviglia" ("Open to wonder") carried out by the Minister of Tourism Daniela Santanchè in spring 2023 (URL 3). The aim was to bolster tourism to Italy after the decrease caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign sees Botticelli's Venus, a symbol of "rebirth and renewal" in the role of an "influencer" travelling around Italy "posing" on posters present in international airports and social media posts (URL 3, Figure 10). The campaign has faced backlash for various reasons, including the significant budget used, the choice of testimonial, the hybrid slogan between English and Italian, technical problems, poor internationalisation and translations (Povoledo 2023). In addition the campaign was called "grotesque", "obscene" and was criticised for perpetuating predictable clichés and stereotypes about the country (Povoledo 2023, Syed 2023). For some, the campaign was trivialising "their" heritage "in the most vulgar way." (Syed 2023). The "face" of the campaign was portrayed to eat pizza, a stereotypically Italian food, that is, however, not typical for the whole country. As also this choice was criticised, the Tourism minister Santanchè answered that she does not understand the criticism as pizza is famous all over the world, is part of the Mediterranean diet and of Italian cuisine, "which is appreciated, imitated, and copied all over the world," adding also "Perhaps it is criticised by the slightly snobby and radical chic people who eat caviar and salmon." (Syed 2023).



Figure 10: Poster of the campaign "Italia - open to Meraviglia" depicting Botticelli's Venus eating Pizza at the Lake Como, Italian Tourism Ministry (2023)

Italy as portrayed on the website of the ministerial campaign "Open to Meraviglia" promises "landscapes that will take your breath away, rich history, and delicious food, your trip to Italy will be nothing short of unforgettable" (URL 4). Such descriptions align with Hom (2015) of Destination Italy. Italian nature is portrayed as "pristine" with "villages, lakes, sunny beaches and a thousand other enchanting places to add to your travel itinerary" (URL 4). The official website of the campaign encourages tourists to craft its own "unique" trip to Italy based on their own "lifestyle and needs". It brings further most of the stereotypes associated with the country: Following the "love of good food and passion for fine wines" tourists can discover the "Delicious combinations handed down through the centuries transmitting the values and essence of being Italian" (URL 4). The "Italian way of life" is portrayed as "fun" as "there is no better place than Italy" for "pleasure and leisure" (URL 4). Shopping is "an essential part of your holiday" due to the high quality of the "Made in Italy" both in local markets and in luxurious boutiques as "excellence and beauty are synonymous to Italianess" (URL 4). The campaign did not invent anything new, on the contrary, it reinforced already constructed images and stereotypes that, as this was the case, are normally perpetrated through tourist campaigns financed by the state or local authorities or private investors, and spread by websites, blogs, social media and guidebooks. Constructed images are normally perpetrated through tourist campaigns financed by the

state or local authorities or private investors, websites, blogs, social media and particularly guidebooks.

A successful tourist myth is carefully crafted and perpetuates itself through visual and written material. Hom (2015) analysed guidebooks, one of the oldest media used for this aim. She notices that guidebooks perpetuate different stereotypes and myths depending on their language and target audience. English-language guidebooks depict Destination Italy as a land of leisure, where locals embrace "il dolce far niente" (the sweetness of idleness) and "la dolce vita" (Hom 2015, 52). This portrayal as a land of vacations implies that "Italians exist as figurative tourists in their own lives" suggesting a mythic, pre-industrial time and place (Hom 2015, 52). This depiction fulfils the tourist's quest for authenticity. Notably, Italian-language guidebooks do not employ the "il dolce far niente" trope. According to Hom (2015, 59) this omission is not a deliberate resistance to cultural stereotypes and linguistic hegemony of English-language guidebooks, but represents more likely an inadvertent avoidance of the economic and political issues connected to the trope's genesis. These issues include Italy's delayed modernisation and the persistent 'questione meridionale' (Southern Question)¹⁰. Conversely, Italian-language guidebooks uphold the notion of 'il bel paese,' the beautiful country, portraying the country as a unified and coherent entity. Since the Unification, the nation was polarised by regionalism and a strong north-south divide and the creation of the myth of Destination Italy helps to create a "singular landscape unified by natural beauty and cultural monuments" (Hom 2015).

German speakers often use the epithet "bella Italia" (Beautiful Italy) to speak about the country. Travel guides often use this epithet (e.g. Baedeker 2023, Werner 2023) and one uses it as its title (Bella Italia by Polyglott 2020). Baedeker's 2023 travel guide describes Italy as "Land of a thousand possibilities" ("Land der tausenden Möglichkeiten") because of the diversity of the places one can visit and as a place that needs "time for dreaming" (Zeit für Träume) in order to be able to explore sun, beach and dancing through the night" or "wild, unspoilt nature" (Baedeker 2023, 32). The

¹⁰ In Italian historiographical and political discourse, the term "Southern Question" denotes the post-unification recognition of a persistent socioeconomic disparity between Southern Italy and the other regions, particularly the Northern ones. This concept emerged in the aftermath of Italian unification and retains relevance in contemporary socio-political discourse, reflecting the ongoing nature of this regional imbalance.

guide defines Italy as the German favourite tourist destination that embodies a quintessential lifestyle and vitality (Baedeker 2023, 680). According to Baedeker's guide (2023, 680), Italy's allure lies in its paradoxical nature, juxtaposing historical magnificence and artistic heritage with decay, cultural sophistication with organised crime, and affluence with deprivation. All the analysed guides highlight popular destinations among this group and often incorporate Italian vocabulary into the text. This approach not only aids communication but also immerses tourists in the Italian cultural experience, making their journey more "engaging" and "authentic".

Tourist guides play a significant role in shaping travel patterns and destination choices, often promoting a select group of "must-visit" locations. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Italy, where cities such as Venice, Florence, and Rome, along with regions like Cinque Terre and the Amalfi Coast, are consistently highlighted as essential experiences. The repetitive promotion of these destinations across various guidebooks, travel websites, and social media platforms contributes to a concentration of tourist flows, leading to the phenomenon of overtourism. In the case of Italy's popular destinations, this has manifested in various ways: Venice struggles with cruise ship congestion and the displacement of local residents; Florence and Rome grapple with overcrowded attractions and strain on public services; while Cinque Terre and the Amalfi Coast face environmental pressures and the erosion of traditional ways of life.

The Negative Impacts of (Over)tourism

Overtourism is understood as an excessive presence of tourists and temporary visitors in certain areas that result in negative impacts on local communities, infrastructure and nature (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020; Zago 2020). Overtourism negatively changes the socioeconomic texture of cities, landscapes and causes environmental damage. The forced and unequal sharing of space and resources between residents and tourists often undermines the lifestyle and quality of life of residents, resulting in community opposition towards tourism (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020; Zago 2020). Despite the dominance of mass tourism in cultural coastal areas, which attract the majority of tourists, there has been a significant shift in tourist behaviour. In the past, the dominant style of travel were pre-packed experiences organised by tourist agencies that followed standardised itineraries (Zago 2020, 226).

The new trends show that tourists do not desire to conform with others; In fact, they refuse to be a homogeneous group, looking for individual and more differentiated itineraries and seeking "knowledge, relationality, authenticity and slowness" (Zago 2020, 226). This means that institutions as tourist villages are in decline, instead tourists "invade" residential areas where the locals live. This shift is also visible in the increase of tourism in urban contexts, especially in cultural cities in Europe and in globalised world cities (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020, 122). Furthermore, tourists search for a simpler and slower vacation-lifestyle, in reaction to the stress of everyday life in their home urban context. Historically, peripheral South Europe has served as a leisure space for transnational mobile populations, often from the Western Europe as its cities are portrayed as fun and high-quality (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020). In the case of Italy, the aforementioned narratives of the 'authentic' "dolce vita" play a crucial role.

In urban contexts, tourists do not want to visit only tourist bubbles and the most important monuments. Nowadays, tourists search 'authentic' atmospheres in residential areas that were not built for them. This shift is caused by the desire to 'blend in' with the locals and the environment and by the quest for personal identity exploration and autonomy (Zago 2020). The trend however, has negative consequences on the housing market and on the everyday life of local residents that leads to displacement.

Cocola-Gant, Gago and Jover (2020) state that tourism is one of the factors of gentrification. In fact, the real estate market cannot be regarded as isolated from tourism. Gentrification is a complex socio-economic phenomenon that displaces longtime lower income residents from their neighbourhood through economic and aesthetic upscaling to the advantage of higher class residents (Zukin 2010). Gentrification has become, since the 1990s, a global "generalised urban strategy" that replaces traditional urban policies, and increasingly reflects neoliberal investment of productive capital over social reproduction concerns (Smith 2002). Zukin (2010, 221) describes a "shift from a city of production to a city of consumption" where the "authenticity" of the neighbourhood becomes the tool of economic elites to drive up real estate values. In the 'city of consumption' inhabitants and tourists search for neighbourhoods where they can "experience" the "authentic origins-a traditional, mythical desire for roots" (Zukin 2010, 2). This "authenticity" is a carefully crafted "experience of origins" through the preservation of historic buildings and districts, the

opening of small-scale boutiques and cafés, and the brandisation of "neighbourhoods in terms of distinctive cultural identities" (Zukin 2010, 3). However, as Zukin (2010, 2) writes, this search of "authentic origins" drives changes and forms inherently conflict through the continuous reinvention of communities. "Authenticity" becomes a tool of power and groups whose tastes are in line with it, impose them over other groups claiming moral superiority (Zukin 2010, 3-4). However, as Zukin (2010, 2) writes, this search of "authentic origins" drives changes and forms inherently conflict through the continuous reinvention of communities. Economic upscaling, historical preservation, and the changing of cultural consumption sites causes displacement of long-time residents from lower-income classes. This displacement has not mere economic reasons, but it is also a cultural and social displacement as the tastes and preferences of lower classes are excluded from the cultural and social life of the neighbourhood (Zukin 2010). In the context of Italy, "authenticity" has to be connected to the term "heritage". As a matter of fact, heritage and historic conservation play a big role in the myth of Italy and consequently in the tourism industry.

Herzfeld (2010) argues that in the neoliberal context, history and historic conservation represent a justification for gentrification. Projects of renovation and upscaling are started in the name of historic conservation. Such interventions of historic conservations are often in conflict with housing rights. Herzfeld (2010) writes that state-sponsored historic conservation and capital-driven gentrification have the same outcome of eviction and dispossession. The preservation of heritage is seen as favourable as in the dominant economic ideology of neoliberalism as it brings "improvement" and positive "development" to the area. The term "heritage" is sometimes portrayed as neutral and universal, and is actually grounded in "culturally specific ideologies of kinship, residence and propriety" (Herzfeld 2010, 259). Therefore, Herzfeld writes that it is no coincidence that heritage protection gained great prominence as it gives increased commercial value to the buildings (2010, 262). Italians take great pride in their cultural and artistic heritage.

Gentrification cannot be isolated by tourism, especially in cities that are popular tourist destinations. In fact, the "authenticity" of the neighbourhood does not attract only educated gentrifiers from the city, but also tourists and lifestyle transnational mobile population. Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover (2020) propose in their paper an analytical

framework to understand the socio-spatial impacts of tourism in urban context. Using qualitative methods, the authors show that tourism undermines the right of housing and that the commodification and touristification of neighbourhood spaces undermines the quality of life of residents. The authors define touristification as a socio-economic phenomenon in which tourism has the monopoly in the urban space prevailing in economic, social and cultural relations and making the social reproduction of communities, and therefore of long-term residents difficult (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020). In fact, the touristification of the real estate market and of commercial activities creates tourist monocultures that transform neighbourhoods forcing both lower class and middle class residents to move out because of economic and, or, social reasons.

Cocola-Gant, Gago and Jover (2020) write that this trend has been specifically important in Southern European cities that are portrayed as fun and with a good quality of life. Due to the spatial division of labour within Europe, the peripheral South historically represents the area of leisure for transnational mobile population, especially from Western Europe (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020). The transnational mobile population includes "visitors, second home buyers, lifestyle migrants, and more recently, digital nomads and international students." (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020). Furthermore, tourism can also be considered a factor that drives transnational gentrification. In fact, in several cases tourism resulted in the "intensification of land use" that increased property prices, already in the 1980s, before the emergence of online short-time rentals (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020). However, it was the use of such platforms as Airbnb or Booking.com, which allow short-term rentals and the growth of low-cost airlines, that intensified the process (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020). Many Italian cities have a shortage of houses available for long-term rent and the inflation of prices. The deregulation of the housing market and the lack of social housing reduces further housing alternatives for residents and causes displacement for both the working and middle-class (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020). Both gentrification and touristification cause displacement, however, touristification also causes further problems. In touristified neighbourhoods, residents suffer from the overcrowding of the transportation network, high levels of pollution and waste production, uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources and disruptive tourist behaviour (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020; Zago 2020). In fact, it "stretches beyond

housing and local discontent is also caused by disruptive tourist behaviour such as late-night noise, public affects issues related to public space and health, labour instability and precariousness, or the quality of the environment" (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020).

Slogans like "Tourists go home" or "Tourists not welcome" appear on many streets in cities who suffer from overtourism. In fact, in recent years there is a growing local discontent with tourism industry's dominance in many neighbourhoods (Zago 2020, 230). Urban social movements who oppose tourist gentrification focus on the right to housing and underline the drastic effect that tourism has on the real estate market as one of the most influential factors for price increase and dispossession (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020). In Europe, many movements try to stop the growth of tourism also through opposition to enlargement of transport infrastructures that bring tourists in, as ports for cruise ships and airports (Cocola-Gant, Gago, Jover 2020). In Italy, more cities and regions suffer from overtourism. Venice, Rimini, the Dolomites, Naples and Verona are ranked as territories who are at a very high risk of suffering from overtourism (Cocchi 2024). The new popularity of Trieste put the city into the second group between municipalities at high risk for overtourism (Cocchi 2024). In the Cinque Terre, escalating conflicts between residents and tourists have led authorities to enforce access restrictions and improve transportation to alleviate daily disruptions for locals (Zago 2020, 230). One of the most known Italian cities, Venice, is impacted by the unsustainable influx of tourists, numbering approximately 23-25 million annually, in contrast to its constant decline of the local population of around fifty thousand (Zago 2020, 230). To mitigate the consequences of tourism, the city has taken a multi-sited approach, including limiting tourist group sizes, managing visitor flows with an admission fee for short-term visitors, and trying to promote less known and more sustainable tourism practices (Chrisafis 2023). In 2021 the Italian government banned big cruise ships from entering the Venice Lagoon to protect the fragile environment and historic buildings. However, cruises can still enter the Venice port (La Nuova 2024).

4. Methodology & Research Question

The aim of my study is to investigate various narratives on Trieste in Vienna and the reasons for their recent resurfacing. For Viennese people Trieste is not unfamiliar as the two cities have long standing economic and cultural connections. Nonetheless, in the last decade a new wave of interest emerged. The increased interest is visible in the extended coverage of Trieste in newspapers and books, the rise of the import rate of Karst wine and other goods, and a notable increment of Austrian visitors to the region. Examination of the real estate market, particularly post-COVID, reveals a significant influx of Austrian purchasers and investors (Čoralič 2023). The portrayal of Trieste has become more prevalent in Vienna, with narratives ranging from Habsburg legacy and imperial nostalgia to a shared Mitteleuropean identity or the romanticised Italian tourist destination. My research aims to explore them and go beyond the commonplace assertion that "Trieste resembles a little Vienna on the seaside!". Hence, my research question is as follows:

"How is the idealised image of Trieste constructed in Vienna?"

The answer to the research question is grounded on a combination of multiple research methods, including participatory observation, formal and informal interviews, literature review and media analysis. The research started in June 2023 and was concluded in June 2024. The individual steps of how the research was carried out will be explained in the chapter along with a discussion of the methodologies employed. In the first place I explain the methodological approach I used and then all research methods used during fieldwork.

Defining the Methodological Approach

The initial stage of the research was characterised by attempts to delineate the field and the methodological approach. Since I wanted to understand how the Viennese see Trieste, I tried to figure out where and how I should do field research: in Vienna or Trieste? Reading George E. Marcus' (1995) article on the methodological approach of

multi-sited ethnography proved useful and helped me to think beyond the spatial dichotomy Trieste-Vienna. In the multi-sited approach, the ethnographer moves either physically or conceptually across multiple sites and studies the relationships or connections between them to gain a rich understanding in diffuse time-space. To understand an object of study that cannot be researched focusing on a single site, Marcus (1995) suggests the strategy of following connections, associations and relationships to define the field. He suggests six modes of construction of the field, that is the following: of people (I), things (II), metaphors (III), plot, story or allegory (IV), life or biography (V) and conflicts (VI).



Figure 11: "Trieste in Vienna", Train monitor at the Viennese Museum of Science and Technology

Especially in the first phase I tried to follow the traces of Trieste in Vienna, and partially the traces of Vienna in Trieste. This meant the collection of various types of material: touristic brochures and guides, newspaper and magazine articles (both physical and online) about Trieste in Austrian media, and photographs. For example, a visit to the Vienna Museum of Science and Technology revealed many models of boats made in Trieste and of the Südbahn, the Railway that connected Habsburg Vienna to its seaport Trieste. The photographic collection contains photographs of book covers of novels written by Austrians that take place in Trieste, and guidebooks, which are visible in bookshops all over Vienna. I analysed more guidebooks and articles written in German preferably by Austrians as they provide a lens through which people see the city they are visiting. Guidebooks propagate narratives that show the interplay between historical events, cultural memory, and identity, offering valuable perspectives for anthropological research on the cultural representation of places. During the initial phases of the research, I realised that the job I was doing to support myself fit perfectly into this search. Since spring 2022 I have been working in a wine and delicatessen

shop/cafe in Ottakring in Vienna that specialises in products from Trieste and its surroundings. Here I could also conduct fieldwork and participant observation in a more classical sense.

The thesis is deeply shaped by the methodological concept of "patchwork ethnography" as articulated by Günel, Varna and Watanabe (2020). This approach acknowledges and embraces the neoliberal context and the complexities of researchers' lives, including personal, financial, and political constraints in shaping knowledge production (Günel et al. 2020; Cardoza et al. 2021). The traditional fieldwork is reimaged both in temporal and spatial aspects: as the researcher needs to balance multiple commitments, the field visits become short-term, remote and use fragmented research methods. Here the field is not a single location but a patchwork of different places, situations and data, where the internet and social networks also play a role. Patchwork ethnography opens up to the necessary reconsideration of the dichotomy "at home" and "in the field" that becomes porous as it can be in the case of online ethnography. Günel et al. (2020) acknowledge the contexts that impede anthropologists to be always available and "up-for-anything fieldworkers". However, this does not mean that the fieldwork is conducted superficially; on the contrary, the multiple methods expand materials, tools and objects of the analysis and allow for long-term engagement with the field, language proficiency, and contextual knowledge that is deeply grounded with rigorous and valuable data collection (Günel et al. 2020). Furthermore, patchwork ethnography opens up to a new knowledge production that emphasises the importance of understanding how researchers' subject positions influence their research in the neoliberal context (Günel et al. 2020).

The access to the field was both facilitated and made more complex by working at the wine and delicatessen shop specialised in products from Trieste. On one side, I already established loose contact with some regular clients who brought their home in Trieste. On the other hand, I had to work. Chua (2021, 153) brings further the concept of patchwork ethnography introducing the notion of patchwork ethnographer, "a figure composed of different parts that move constantly in and out of view, while sustaining multiple functions and relations." Chua invites to reflect beyond the individual anthropologist to the networks and relational dynamics in which they are entangled and can only partially control (2021, 153). Chua's work as anthropologist is in recent

decades influenced by her private life presence on social media. While the concept is not entirely new, it helps to acknowledge better researchers' lives and their complexities, including personal, financial and political constraints that shape knowledge production. The method of patchwork ethnography proved particularly resonant with my research, particularly in the context of participant observation. This approach, which emphasises the integration of diverse sources and methods, aligns with my understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of anthropological research, as it enhances the richness and depth of the data gathered. This research process followed a circular pattern, wherein data gathered through interviews and fieldwork were complemented by thorough literature review and media analysis. The data collection methodology employed in this study encompassed a diverse array of media formats, with the textual component demonstrating a multilingual composition.

The patchwork ethnography methodology has significant implications for the writing process, as it helps to "make the seams visible" or in other words, it encourages the explicit highlighting of the various editorial decisions that underpin the research (Yeh in Cardoza et al. 2021). This includes, for instance, the contextualisation of data, the extraction of pertinent information, and the transitions between different field sites and the researcher's home (Yeh in Cardoza et al. 2021). In this particular study, one of the "seams" that I sought to make visible pertains to the linguistic dimensions of the data collection. Specifically, the interviews were conducted in German, yet the interviewees frequently interjected with terms in Italian or Slovenian when discussing specific aspects of Trieste. In addition, the written materials generated throughout the research process, including interview reports, field notes, and the field diary, exhibit a multilingual character. The primary language of composition is Slovene, with direct quotations from the field primarily rendered in German, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the research context. Moreover, Italian terms are frequently integrated, attesting to the complex linguistic landscape of the region under study. English, predominantly utilised in connection with academic literature, given its prevalence as the language of scholarly communication, also features prominently in the written materials. The thesis is written in English. This linguistic diversity underscores the importance of acknowledging and accommodating the multifaceted nature of research processes, as well as the role of language in shaping knowledge production.

Furthermore, Italian, Slovene and German are all languages that have historically and presently contributed to divergent narratives that have influenced the shaping of Triest(e)/Trst.

Across centuries, the German language served as the primary vehicle of cultural and political authority within the Habsburg territories (Simon 2016, 8-9). In the nineteenth century, both Italian and Slovenian cultural revival movements vied for dominance, giving rise to two parallel yet distinct endeavours focused on separate cultural domains (Pizzi 2016). Following Trieste's incorporation into Italy, the once-prominent position of the German language waned. Presently, the majority of Trieste's residents speak Italian or the local Triestine dialect as their first language. The prevailing languages in the city are Italian and Triestino, with English often proving challenging to use effectively, as revealed in certain interviews. Nowadays in Trieste, the German language primarily functions as a linguistic medium for tourism. Notably, individuals in Trieste who harbour nostalgia for the Habsburg era exhibit a fondness for the German language.



Figure 12: Poster of one of the many events in Trieste that connect the city to Austria and Austrian literature (URL 8)

In the context of Trieste, the city's fluctuating geopolitical boundaries and heightened linguistic awareness contribute to the significance of language in shaping its perception. The specific languages spoken, as well as their interplay, contribute to a

distinctive feel and sensibility that influences the acquisition and transmission of knowledge within and about the urban environment (Simon 2016, 6). Languages constitute an integral element of the city's experiential feel and serve as vehicles for representing the city through literary and other written works (Simon 2016, 6). In this regard, texts generate the city's "aura and mythology", framing and perpetuating it in the "cultural memory" (Simon 2016, 6). Narratives about cities can vary significantly between different languages, often resulting in disparate and even contradictory portrayals of the same urban centre, particularly in regions where linguistic competition has historically been prevalent (Simon 2016).

Baskar (2006) characterised Trieste as a frontier town (*ville-frontière*) rather than the town on the border (*ville frontalière*), drawing upon Joel Krotek's differentiation. Krotek delineated the frontier town as a contentious locale bearing multiple names, existing within a territory that embodies divergent aspirations, and being possessed by the past and overwhelmed by divided memories (Baskar 2006, 192). In reference to the Julian March, a region nowadays divided among Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia, where also Trieste lies, Ballinger (2003a, 21) asserts that its topography, which still bears the imprints of past violences, serves as a contemporary arena of linguistic and political contestation. The use of a specific place name by a speaker reflects their linguistic and political preferences, thereby manifesting a "divided memory" (Ballinger 2003a, 21). Ballinger further explains that this "divided memory" of the territory is not merely indicative of the contrast between official, state history and the "authentic collective memory" of a particular group, but also encompasses internal divisions within these groups. These cleavages are influenced by a myriad of factors, including disparities in political affiliation, class, and gender (Ballinger 2003a, 21). Given the multiplicity of meaning systems, it is important to specify the language in which distinct narratives are spread. This research is not monolingual, instead, it seeks to use the plurality of meaning systems and their discrepancies as a productive force.

Translation can be perceived as a process that entails not only "good will and harmonious outcomes" but also encompasses elements of conflict and disparate power dynamics (Simon 2016, 7). Despite some scholars' scepticism regarding its efficacy, which they construe as a mere symbolic function or as a means of fortifying existing boundaries (Simon 2016, 7), language can serve as a vehicle for peaceful linguistic and

cultural exchange between groups, rather than solely as a tool for ethno-nationalism and political conflicts (Ballinger 2003a, 24). This dynamic is exemplified in the Trieste region, where Slavic and Italian linguistic variants have significantly influenced one another, incorporating words and phrases from each other's lexicon as well as Austro-Germanic terms (Ballinger 2003a, 24). This linguistic fusion is evident in the Triestine dialect, which is widely employed across various social strata and occasions, thereby serving as a crucial marker of local identity (Ballinger 2003a, 25). In this context, dialects can be viewed as emblematic of cultural intermixture, while simultaneously functioning as a means of demarcating group boundaries (Ballinger 2003a, 24).

In my research, I predominantly employed German as the language of communication during fieldwork in Vienna and in interviews conducted with native Austrian speakers. However, the multilingual nature of the research context was evident in the interviewees' frequent interjection of Italian or Slovenian terms. In the process of incorporating extracts from formal and informal interviews within the text, I made a deliberate decision to present the English translations in the main body, while relegating the original transcripts to footnotes. When individuals have employed terms in Italian, Triestine, or Slovene, these have remained unaltered in the English translation, accompanied by a translation in parentheses. I was especially careful with names of villages and towns, reporting them with the name used by the interviewer. For brief quotations, the original text is not relegated to endnotes but instead appears in parentheses within the main body of the text. This approach aimed to enhance the readability of the text for those who may not possess proficiency in German, Italian or Slovene, while simultaneously offering the original version for those who wish to scrutinise the veracity of the translated excerpts without the potential bias of my interpretation. Despite my fluency in both languages, neither English nor German serves as my native tongue. At the same time, the interviewees have German as their first language, and varying levels of proficiency in Italian, or none at all. None of the interviewees speak or understand Slovene.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted at a wine and delicatessen shop and cafe in Vienna specialising in products from Trieste and its surroundings. This venue serves as a prominent gathering place in Vienna for people captivated by Trieste, often retailing newly released tourist guides, culinary publications, and literary works centred on the region. Beriss and Sutton (2007) write that within our contemporary society, a significant portion of the interesting aspects of social and cultural existence unfold within restaurants and similar venues. These venues have evolved into important symbols of postmodern life, bringing together elements of economic life that are already studied by cultural anthropologists, encompassing forms of transaction, methods of production, and the symbolism behind consumption. Moreover, they serve as a context for exploring issues related to class, ethnicity and race, gender dynamics, and sexual orientation (Beriss and Sutton 2007). Restaurants serve as embodiments of the ethos of urban centres, regions, ethnic communities, and nations, encapsulating their unique identities (Beriss and Sutton 2007; 1). Studying restaurants means studying how processes of identity and memory are emplaced in different sites, as these establishments not only mirror the broader environments they inhabit but also reflect the social dynamics within cities and across nations (Beriss and Sutton 2007, 4).

Conducting participant observation in this wine and delicatessen shop and cafe that specialises in products from Trieste holds significance. Furthermore, in Austria food and wine play an important role as cultural signifiers of Trieste and its depictions. Triestine cuisine features prominently in narratives linking the city to both the Italian tourist myth and Mitteleuropean heritage. In fact, food and wine serve as pivotal symbols within these narratives, embodying the sensory essence of Trieste that is embraced locally in Vienna. The significance of food and wine "waxes and wanes in intensity depending upon circumstances" (Crowther, 2013, XXIX) acting as a "powerful emotive force" that represents the heart of social interactions, influencing individuals and interpersonal dynamics (Crowther, 2013, XXIX).

The first steps into participant observation involved informal interviews in the shop to uncover fundamental narratives about Trieste. These initial interviews offered interesting insights right away, revealing prevalent themes such as the gastronomic

heritage of the city, the shared Habsburg history between Vienna and Trieste, childhood memories encompassing early visits and Trieste's influence on Austrian history, literature, and media, the blend of familiarity and exoticism, a yearning for the sea, and the romanticised Italian tourist myth. Following the analysis of these initial findings, a comprehensive literature review and detailed interviews were scheduled to delve deeper into the research.

The delicatessen and wine shop served as a starting point for engaging potential interviewees, with the shop owner assuming a gatekeeping role by facilitating connections with interview subjects. Additionally, the Austrian owner of the wine and delicatessen establishment was interviewed and stated that narratives on Trieste play a significant role in attracting a niche clientele interested in the region. Emphasising a commitment to offering "authentic" and high-quality goods sourced locally from small to medium-scale producers in the vicinity, the shop owner's idea aligns with the assertion made by Crowther (2013; 188) that restaurants and shops function not merely as passive providers of products but as active social institutions shaping identities, fostering social interactions, and disseminating narratives. Working myself in the shop, and especially being the sole from Trieste, I actively participated in the construction and propagation of the image of my home city in Vienna. Through my presence and interactions with clients, I perceived that I contributed a sense of "authenticity" to the business. Some of the regular clients I established contact with, as soon as they discover where I come, would eagerly recount their experiences from recent trips to Trieste or engage in conversations about local events and developments. The shop owner acknowledged my regional background as advantageous, given my familiarity with the products and the region.

My employment in the wine shop was motivated by financial necessity, limiting my capacity for continuous participant observation. Consequently, I categorise as "fieldwork" only those days in which I recorded observations in my field diary. Despite these constraints, I managed to gain a robust dataset, as I continue to work at least 12 hours per week since May 2022. While certain interesting conversations with customers were paused due to work tasks, the regular clientele picked up the conversations for more suitable occasions. Furthermore, working in a wine shop specialising in Trieste's wines heightened my awareness of the narratives associated with these products.

Customers seeking assistance in selecting a wine typically prioritise stories attached to the product over complex wine characteristics. Key factors that resonate with customers include the wine's typicality and "authenticity" for the geographic area, production by a small-scale winemaker, and detailed descriptions of the wine's region. The latter is particularly effective for customers who have vacationed in the geographic area. Conversely, customers with advanced oenological knowledge often require minimal assistance, either knowing their preferences or seeking the shop owner's expertise. As a younger woman, my authority and knowledge of oenology comes excluded a priori. In truth, my expertise in oenology is limited; however, my familiarity with the geographic region is extensive, aided by my bilingual background. This proficiency enables me to provide context and insights regarding the products' origins, and cultural significance. In this context, I perceived a process of "patchworking" my identity and role as I adapted and shaped my identity in response to situational demands and requirements.

Fieldwork in the shop proved particularly useful as by tracking wine consumption, particularly in social contexts, one can discern the dissemination of narratives surrounding Trieste's gastronomy within Vienna. The local consumption of wine serves as a tangible connection between the two cities, reflecting local practices within a global context. Working in the wine and delicatessen shop transcends mere operational tasks such as stocking shelves, slicing prosciutto, crafting cappuccinos, preparing food, or cleaning. It involves actively propagating narratives about Trieste and observing the responses of Viennese clientele. On the other hand, it also means (re)hearing narratives and stereotypes that Viennese people hold about Trieste. Furthermore, the shop serves as a microcosm for observing broader trends in the mediascape, as increased media coverage of specific wines, beverages, or foods in Austrian newspapers and magazines corresponds to a slight uptick in sales of these products. What proved particularly interesting were reflections of regular visitors to Trieste, or of those who have established a secondary residence there, who highlight discrepancies between the reality and the idealised image of Trieste constructed in Austria. These insights were then deepened in individual interviews.

Interviews

The delicatessen and wine shop constituted a primary access point for my research, particularly in terms of identifying interview participants. The shop owner served as the initial gatekeeper, while additional interviewees were reached through mutual acquaintances in Trieste. In total, eight in-depth interviews were conducted, three of which were group interviews involving couples and a three-member family. All the twelve interview participants were Austrian who live in Vienna. With the exception of a 23-year-old daughter from the family interview, the interviewees ranged in age from 35 to 83, possessing established careers or at the end of their professional lives. Their educational backgrounds encompassed completion of higher education programs, and they were predominantly middle or higher-middle class. The interviews were arranged through Whatsapp messages. Following consent, the interviews were recorded using my personal mobile device and ranged in duration from one to four hours. With the exception of a single interview held at the interviewees' residence, the remaining interviews transpired at various cafes in Vienna and one at an "osmiza"¹¹ on the Triestine Karst. The interviews were predominantly conducted in German, interspersed with occasional phrases in Italian, the Triestine dialect, or Slovene.

The interviews started by asking about the interviewees' initial experiences in Trieste and their initial impressions of the city. This approach brought to light insightful personal reflections on the city and its evolution over time, as well as individual engagements with it, such as memories and personal connections. Subsequent questions varied based on the interviewees' responses and their willingness to engage in conversation. Six interviews were conducted with individuals or families who had elected to purchase a secondary residence in the city. In a more precise sense, five of these individuals or families do not own a flat in Vienna due to its high cost so they rent their primary home. Property acquisition prices in Trieste are comparatively lower. The remaining two interviews featured participants who had spent extended periods in

¹¹ Osmiza/osmizza in Italian, and Osmica in Slovene is a typical temporary tavern found primarily in the Trieste region, particularly on the Karst plateau. Established in 1784 under Empress Maria Theresa, the Osmize were initially created as a means for farmers to sell their wine and other locally produced goods directly to consumers for a limited number of days each year, specifically eight days, as indicated by the term "osmica," derived from the Slovenian word "osem" meaning eight. This custom dates back to the late 18th century, specifically 1784, when peasants were granted permission. The osmiza has the same historical origin as the Austrian Heuriger or Buschenschank.

Trieste as their former partners were native to the city, but had never established permanent residency there. All interview participants expressed an affinity for Trieste, feeling more or less at home there. Some are contemplating relocating there permanently during the latter stages of their lives.

Upon reviewing the interviews, several recurring themes surfaced, including the notions of familiarity and a sense of belonging, the hospitable reception by the Triestini residents, the city's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape, the blend of familiarity and exoticism, the shared Habsburg heritage, childhood reminiscences, Trieste's portrayal in Austrian literature and media, the romanticised tourist perception of Italy, the difference between Trieste and the rest of Italy, Trieste's culinary offerings, the affinity for the sea, and the close proximity between Vienna and Trieste.

Analysis

The data gathered through interviews, field notes, and literature reviews underwent rigorous analysis and categorization. Interviews were repeatedly revisited and selectively transcribed, with recurring themes identified and manually coded. In parallel, a comprehensive literature review was undertaken. Subsequently, the coded interview results, field notes, and literature review were compared and hierarchically organised to generate two primary categories: Habsburg Nostalgia and the Touristic Myth of Italy.

Habsburg Nostalgia follows Schlipphacke's (2014, 6) definition, which describes it as "a longing for a feeling of home that traverses cultural and ethnic spaces." Initially, I intended to introduce a third fundamental category, the concept of Mitteleuropa and its shared values and culture. However, I soon realised that determining whether a code should be classified under the Mitteleuropa or Habsburg Nostalgia category was impractical. In the Viennese context, this distinction lacked relevance, as the concept of Mitteleuropa was rarely mentioned by either formal or informal interviewees. Consequently, insisting on a separation solely to introduce a third category would offer a forced outcome.

The second primary category, the Touristic Myth of Italy, encompasses data that both validates and challenges the 'Italianness' of Trieste. This category acknowledges

the complex and multifaceted nature of Trieste's identity, which is influenced by its unique history, culture, and geographical location. Trieste was often compared to other Italian cities, foremost to Venice. The primal reason for this comparison was the number of tourists and the prices of properties in the two cities. Therefore, I added the subcodes overtourism, touristification and tourist gentrification under the primary code Touristic Myth of Italy.

A potential third subcategory that could be incorporated into the study is the sea, given that Austrians yearn for it. There is a strong affinity for the sea that could be associated with both the Touristic Myth of Italy and Habsburg nostalgia. However, there are also instances where Austrians appreciate the sea as a natural phenomenon, independent of these two concepts. The sea holds a significant place in the cultural imagination of Austria, as it is often perceived through the lens of the Touristic Myth of Italy, which romanticises the Mediterranean coastline and its associated lifestyle. Additionally, the sea is also intertwined with Habsburg nostalgia, as it represents a connection to the imperial past when the Habsburg monarchy had extensive maritime territories, including the Trieste. However, this research does not specifically focus on the aspect of the sea and its relationship with the Touristic Myth of Italy and Habsburg nostalgia. While the sea is a recurring theme in the interviews and other data sources, it is not the primary focus of the study. Nonetheless, the sea remains an intriguing area of inquiry that warrants further exploration in future research

Writing Process

The writing process of this study started in the final stages of ethnographic research. I continue to be employed at the wine and delicatessen shop, although the most recent months have not yielded any novel or substantial data beyond what has already been gathered. New episodes occur, but they do not differ substantially from episodes that have happened in the past or in other words, narratives are merely being repeated.

During the writing process in the library I also consulted several tourist guidebooks. In fact, guidebooks traditionally offer significant insights for anthropological research on the narration of places, serving as a rich source of data for

understanding how destinations are portrayed and perceived. The selection of guidebooks for this study was based on specific criteria: all were originally authored in German by Austrian or German writers and were accessible in Vienna's libraries. This selection process ensures a focused analysis of how Trieste is presented to a German-speaking audience, potentially revealing cultural biases, historical perspectives, and linguistic nuances specific to this demographic. Guidebooks often serve as a traveller's initial introduction to a destination, shaping expectations and framing the visitor's gaze. As such, they play a crucial role in constructing the tourist's initial perception of Trieste. As the analysis of these texts provides a foundation for understanding how Trieste is marketed and imagined in the German-speaking tourism market, I decided to include them in my text.

In the writing process, a deliberate choice was made to utilise aliases instead of the real names of interviewees, with the exception of public figures, such as an author, who is referred to by their actual names. This decision was taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. The decision regarding whether to disclose the name of the shop where the fieldwork was conducted or to use an alias was reached after a thorough reflection. This consideration underscores the importance of maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the research process, ensuring that the identities of individuals and establishments involved are handled with sensitivity and discretion.

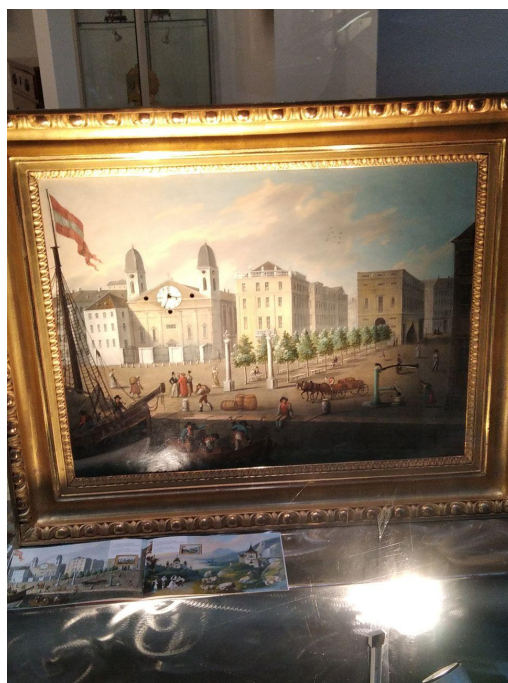


Figure 13: “Look, Trieste! Again!”, photograph of an Antiquarian's shop window in the first district in Vienna

II. Part - Research Analysis

(Re)Introduction

Arrive in Trieste from the Triesterstraße in Vienna via the historic road connecting the two cities since the 18th century: this is the goal set by the journalists of ORF radio's Diagonale programme. The road was designed in 1719 by the Habsburg plan to connect the imperial centre to its harbour. Its importance extends beyond transportation, playing a crucial role in industrial, religious, logistical, artistic, and geographical aspects of the region (ORF 2024). Today, faster routes cut through the territory leading to Trieste and the original road is difficult to follow because the road network has changed, and so has its name. The ORF radio team undertook the road trip guided by Beppe Beyerl's book, in which he documented his journey on foot along the original route. Their path takes them through Graz, Maribor, and Ljubljana before arriving in Trieste via the "Strada per Vienna/Dunajska cesta" in Opicina/Opčine.



Figure 14: Gulf of Trieste from the Obelisk in Opicina/Opčine

In Opicina, atop the Karst plateau, the team pauses at the obelisk, where the view opens onto the Gulf of Trieste. This image was immortalised as early as 1857 by the Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter, who gazed out over the sea. The place has become a topic now in Austrian travel literature and articles and blogs about it influence Austrian tourists to go and see that place. The road descending the plateau towards the centre of Trieste and the harbour marked a turning point for the city's growth, which had previously been hindered by its geographical position caught between the sea and the

plateau. Indeed, the "Triesterstraße" provided Trieste with greater opportunities for trade with its hinterland (ORF 2024, 02:08:00). The connection between Vienna and Trieste was further enhanced in 1857 with the introduction of the railway, creating a rapid link between the two cities. This development not only facilitated trade but also boosted tourism. Trieste became a key departure point for journeys into Dalmatia, establishing itself as a gateway to the Adriatic region (Baskar 2009, 19). The Austrian court and influential figures supported the growing tourist interest in the Adriatic coastline, leading to the development of tourist infrastructure, travel literature, and related products (Baskar 2009). An example of the boosted tourism industry is the poster (Figure 15) created in 1898 by the Südbahngesellschaft (Southern Railway Company) to advertise the direct railway connection from Vienna to Trieste. The poster depicts the beauties of the Südbahn as the view of the gulf of Trieste, the Miramar castle, the luxurious Südbahnhotel Semmering, and caves in the Karst.

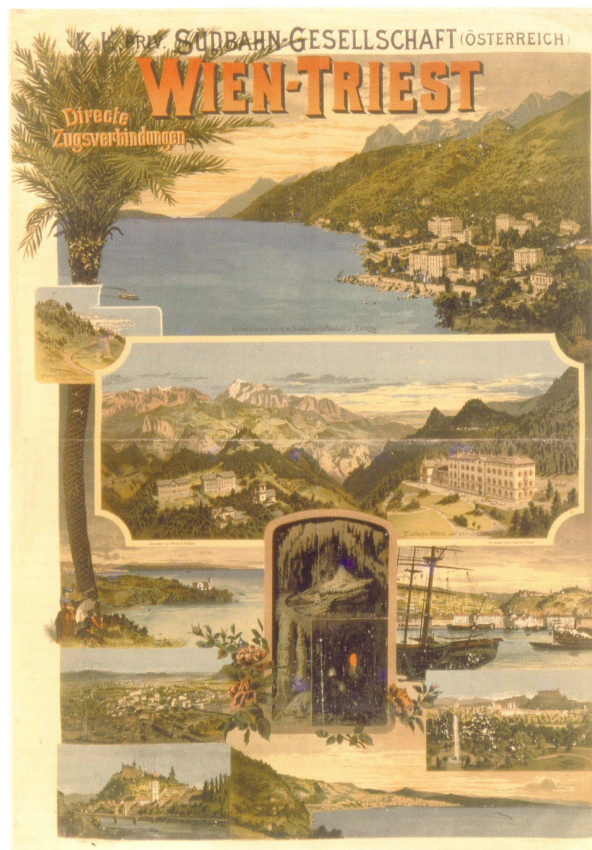


Figure 15: Poster "K.K. priv. Südbahn-Gesellschaft (Österreich) Wien-Triest" (Weber, Balze 1898)

Another piece of evidence reflecting the tourism of that era is the Baedeker tourist guide. In Baedeker's 1892 travel guide about Austria-Hungary, Trieste is described as Austria's main seaport, highlighting the significant role of the maritime trade, noting that it "is to southern Germany what Hamburg is to northern Germany" (Baedeker 1892, 214-215). The new Baedeker guide from 2023 offers a contemporary perspective on Trieste, emphasising its unique position. This time, the city appears in the guide about Italy and is described as "not an ordinary Italian port city"¹² due to its historical past of over 500 years under Habsburg rule and its geographic position near the Slovene and Croatian border (Baedeker 2023, 606).

In the tourist guide "La Bella Italia" by the German publisher Polyglott (2020, 117), Trieste is highlighted in the chapter titled "Una birra, per favore! ("A beer, please!)" Also here, the city is portrayed as an important Habsburg free port and a "typical product of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire."¹³ Unlike other guides, however, this one emphasises beer production (Polyglott 2020, 117). The guide discusses the Dreher family's contribution to beer history, noting that they developed the first lager beer in Schwechat (near Vienna) and opened another brewery in Trieste in 1869. Due to the heat of Trieste's summer, they implemented new technology for artificial cellar cooling in 1877 (Polyglott 2020, 118). Typically, both Italy and the Karst region around Trieste are associated with wine or coffee rather than beer. Although the local drinking culture includes both beverages and there are smaller beer producers, this focus on beer is rather uncommon.

The Austrian publisher Styria has produced multiple guidebooks on Trieste. In their 2020 edition, Britta Ramhapp portrays Trieste as a city "die jeden Österreicher ein wenig sentimental werden lässt", that makes every Austrian sentimental due to its architectural similarities and coffee house culture reminiscent of Vienna (Ramhapp 2020, 9). Furthermore, she emphasises Trieste's unique Austrian heritage, unparalleled among Italian cities (Ramhapp 2020, 6). The 2016 edition highlights Trieste's unique character shaped by diverse cultural, linguistic, and traditional influences, though it lacks specificity regarding which cultures and languages besides the implied Italian and

¹² "Schon ein Blick auf die Landkarte genügt, um zu verstehen, dass Triest keine gewöhnliche italienische Hafenstadt sein kann. Sie liegt in unmittelbarer Nachbarschaft zu Slowenien und Kroatien und war politisch über 500 Jahre mit der k.u.k Monarchie verbunden -Kunst und Kultur entwickeln sich hier so eigenständig, dass es bis heute viel zu entdecken gibt." (Baedeker 2023, 606)

¹³ "typisches Produkt des Vielvölkerstaates der Donaumonarchie"

Austrian. In the 2020 edition, she adds that Trieste not only has a rich Austrian heritage but also retains Italian ease alongside Slovenian influences (Ramhapp 2020, 6). Although the guide mentions Slovene as an official local language (Ramhapp 2020, 166), it does not elaborate on this fact or the presence of the Slovene minority in relation to architectural monuments, language, or literature.

Ramhapp's portrayal of Triestine culture is somewhat stereotypical. She characterises locals as "truly Italian" based on their scooter usage, particularly noting their ability to transport beach paraphernalia on Vespas (Ramhapp 2016, II). However, she contrasts Trieste's driving culture with "southern Italian" stereotypes, suggesting a more orderly approach to traffic (Ramhapp 2016, II). Furthermore, Ramhapp portrays the locals as largely indifferent to politics. She describes how urban areas with potential for development, such as the old port, have remained unused for decades, serving only as projects for politicians' self-aggrandisement. Triestines, however, according to her remain unbothered, preferring to sunbathe on the concrete of Barcola beach and enjoy the sea (Ramhapp 2016, I; Ramhapp 2020, 6).

The Austrian publisher Styria also released the 2021 tourist guide "Triest für Fortgeschrittene" by Georges Desrues and Erich Bernard. The authors state that "Trieste is often said not to be the real Italy, and this is somewhat true" and that many visitors, Italians, and even Triestines themselves would agree (Desrues and Bernard 2021, 6). The authors see specifically in this fact "the charm of this extraordinary city" that lies "at the crossroads of cultures, situated between North and South, and at the transition from West to East" (Desrues and Bernard 2021, 6). The guidebook adopts a contemporary, blog-inspired approach, presenting vignettes of Trieste that transcend conventional tourist attractions. It explores lesser-known areas, historical sites, and the city's intricate past, with particular emphasis on architectural heritage and gastronomy.

German-language guidebooks, and Austrians that I meet, frequently characterise Trieste as a city that reveals its beauty upon closer inspection. Ramhapp (2020, 6), Desrues and Bernard (2021, 6) Jacobs (2021, 11) all emphasise this aspect. In his comprehensive guide published by the German publisher Trescher, Jacobs (2021, 11) notes that Trieste's allure lies not in world-famous landmarks but in its overall ambience and unique geographical position between the sea and Karst plateau. This characteristic has largely shielded the city from mass tourism. Jacobs (2021, 11) describes Trieste as a

city of contrasts, situated in northeastern Italy near the Balkan Peninsula yet exuding a Central European atmosphere reminiscent of Vienna. Its historical and geographical context has fostered a convergence of cultures and identities, blending Central, Eastern, and Western European influences, as well as Romance, Germanic, and Slavic linguistic and cultural spheres. Jacobs portrays Triestines as surprisingly warm, helpful, and hospitable toward tourists, despite being perceived as somewhat arrogant by other Italians (2021, 11). He characterises the city as "austere yet lovable," highlighting its unique charm and the welcoming nature of its inhabitants.

In the same way that a tourist reads the tourist guide before setting off, this introduction opens the second part of the thesis that focuses on the analysis of data collected through fieldwork and interviews. This second part mirrors the first in its construction: the initial chapter examines first encounters with Trieste and the subsequent tourism boom. The following chapter delves into Habsburg nostalgia in all its facets. This exploration is particularly relevant given Trieste's historical connection to the Habsburg Empire and the romanticization of this period in tourist literature. The final chapter discusses the myth of tourism in Italy. This section examines how Trieste fits into broader narratives about Italian tourism, highlighting the city's unique position as a cultural crossroads between Central Europe and the Mediterranean.

5. First Encounters with Trieste

"Interviewee 2: "So for me, one of the first experiences I had in connection with Trieste was not in Trieste and not in Vienna, but down in the Marches. I met a woman, an older woman. That was many years ago [...] she was married meantime in the States and she and her husband were on holiday there for a short time and we got talking [...] Where you are from and she said [...] I live in the States, but I was born in Trieste. It just slipped out. Ah, in our harbour!"

Interviewer: Then what did she say?

Interviewee 2: She jumped in anger and stamped her feet and said: Trieste is Italy, is Italy, is Italy and has nothing to do with Austria! After that, I broke off the conversation with her because I wanted to joke, ... I'm not a monarchist, a nationalist or anything else. Yes, I wanted to make a joke. Well, let's just say that Trieste is like the whole thing, of course, as far as Grado and as far as...

Interviewee 1: It is a shared culture, history...

He: Yes, all the way down to Istria, isn't it? So, this is Küstenland¹⁴." (Interview 1, 00:04:00-00:05:20)

In an interview, an Austrian man recounted an experience from many years ago when he met an older woman from Trieste while on vacation in the Marche region. When he jokingly referred to the city as "our harbour," implying an Austrian connection, she reacted strongly. She stated that "Trieste is Italy," highlighting the strong emotions the city's contested past can evoke. The reaction led the man to end the conversation, as he

¹⁴ "Also für mich ist ein der ersten Erlebnisse, das ich im Zusammenhang mit Triest gehabt habe, war nicht in Triest und nicht in Wien, sondern das war in den Marchen unten. Ich habe eine Frau getroffen, eine ältere Frau. Das war vor sehr vielen Jahren [...] sie war verheiratet mittlerweile in den Staaten und mit ihrem Mann waren sie dort kurz auf Urlaub und wir so ins Reden gekommen [...] Woher man halt so ist und wie sie gesagt hat [...] wohne in den Staaten, aber bin eine gebürtige Triestinerin. Ist mir so rausgerutscht. Ah, in unserem Hafen!"

[00:04:40] Martina: Was hat sie dann gesagt?

[00:04:41] Er: Die ist, die ist gesprungen vor Zorn und hat aufgestampft und hat gesagt: Triest ist Italien, ist Italien, ist Italien und hat nichts mit Österreich zu tun! Drauf, ich habe mit ihr das Gespräch abgebrochen, weil ich wollte, dass Scherz, ... bin weder Monarchist noch Nationalist noch irgendwas. Ja, ich wollte einen Scherz machen. Sag mal so, dass Triest ist natürlich so wie das Ganze, also bis nach Grado und bis...

[00:05:11] Sie: Es ist eine gemeinsame Kultur, Geschichte

[00:05:13] Er: Ja, bis ins Istrische hinunter, nicht? "Also, das ist Küstenland."

wanted to joke, not do a political statement. The interview continued with the man and his current partner reflecting on the episode, acknowledging the shared cultural and historical ties in the region. They mentioned the historical term “Küstenland”, which was used in the Austro-Hungarian era to refer to the region from Grado to Trieste and further down to Istria (Interview 1, 00:04:00-00:05:20). The anecdote illustrates how history is not ‘dead’ but influences politics, narratives and everyday encounters especially in cities such as Trieste, where the twentieth century was marked by territorial dispute. The city has multiple and conflicting identities. The reference to the ‘Küstenland’ is not a mere reference to the Habsburg past, but evokes a common shared memory. The city, its inhabitants and visitors negotiate it in different ways, recognising its different traces.

The narrated episode is a good start for this chapter that focuses on the first 'encounters' with Trieste. Indeed, the city is not a fully unknown place for Austrians. Trieste holds a historical significance for Austria and its predecessor, the Austrian Empire. Consequently, the first interactions with the city often precede the actual physical visit: *"It was anything but Trieste, I always think to myself, what was it really?"* and *"Trieste was somewhere. Trieste has always turned up. And so who even as a child again and again ... And at school too, of course. And here is Trieste, but then that was always. Yes, that was the harbour of Vienna."* (Interview 1, 00:28)¹⁵. As in the quote, Trieste “was somewhere” already during the history lessons in school, it ‘always’ comes up in travel-related newspaper articles, culinary and wine tours. It appears ‘again and again’ in books, films and music and various other cultural contexts. However, despite this widespread exposure, it is important to note that not all Austrians visited the city or want to visit it. Since my arrival in Vienna in September 2020, when asked where I am from, I respond with 'Trieste.' Most of the time, Austrian natives who were born and raised in Austria have enthusiastically replied that they have already visited the city or that they plan to do that soon. I never needed to explain where Trieste was. However, upon further reflection, I recognize that my interactions have been largely limited to individuals encountered through university or social circles, which predominantly

¹⁵ "Die war alles andere als Triest, denk ich mir immer war was war wirklich? Triest war nicht zum Ersten Mal für mich. Triest irgendwo. Triest ist immer aufgetaucht. Und wer ist also schon als Kind immer wieder ... Und natürlich auch in der Schule. Und es gibt Triest, aber das war dann immer. Ja, das war der Hafen von Wien." (Interview 1, 00:28).

consist of fellow students. This realisation prompts me to acknowledge that my impressions and observations may be influenced by the specific demographic and socioeconomic factors associated with these particular groups. In fact, a class critical perspective on the study could bring to different answers.

The initial question of the interviews pertained to the respondent's first encounter with Trieste. This opening question served as an effective conversational catalyst, eliciting mnemonic responses and providing a temporal framework for understanding the individual's relationship with the city. Responses varied, reflecting a mix of childhood familiarity, recent discoveries, and explorations driven by romantic relationships. The fieldwork was conducted in a wine and delicatessen shop specialised with products from Trieste and surrounding regions. Therefore, the vast majority of the clientele knows Trieste, or at least knows its typical products. In conversation with the shop owner, it emerged that certain customers were introduced to Triestine products before visiting the city. Upon developing an appreciation for the region's characteristic products, they became intrigued by the city and decided to visit it. Alternatively, some customers purchased food and wine directly from the producers on site. Upon learning the customers' place of residence, the producers informed them that their products could also be found locally in Vienna. Although the predominant topics of discussion in the shop revolve around food and wine, I have taken the initiative to ask about the first impressions of Trieste. A significant number of those who had visited the city prior to the 2000s have remarked on the notable urban renewal efforts, such as the implementation of pedestrian zones, which have effectively revitalised the cityscape, making it more vibrant and hospitable. The increase in tourism over the past decade has also been markedly evident. Furthermore, the city did not give to all a favourable impression on the first visit. Even among those interviewees who currently own a property in the city was like that.

An interviewee clearly stated that the first encounter with the city was actually not so impressive, or different from what was expected:

"I wasn't very impressed the first time, I wasn't that enthusiastic. It was a bit off-putting for me. I also missed the 'Italianità' a bit. So I didn't go straight to 'Citta Vecchia' (Old Town), up to San Gusto. I think that was on my second visit,

but we got stuck in Borgo Teresiano and that was just a version of Vienna, so I was a bit bewildered and I can't say what I expected, but not what I found."
(Interview 4, 00:03)¹⁶

[...]

"And it was actually my girlfriend who thought the city deserves another chance. We went again the following year. So I was actually already over. I saw it, it wasn't that great, let's leave it alone. And then we went again and I always tell people about it. [...] I discovered the gelateria [...] in 'Via Malcanton' and said okay, where there's such good ice cream, it can't be bad, it can't be all bad. This city has something. And then we went up to San Giusto, discovered the old town and suddenly everything that I missed the first time was there, it was like when you're really blind. You're looking for something and it's in front of you. You can't see it. You look all around to the left, but not exactly in the centre where it is. And that's how I felt about Trieste and then we discovered it. And it was with the beginning of the boom that it became a topic in the Austrian media landscape again."¹⁷ (Interview 4, 00:04)

In the citation above, the interviewee described a gradual devotion for the city, initially finding it unimpressive but eventually falling in love with its charm. It was particularly after exploring areas like Città Vecchia and San Giusto, that he started to love the city as they have an "Italian flair". The same interviewee, born in the late 60s, recounted how Trieste remained a mystery due to historical borders until the European Union

¹⁶ "Beim ersten Mal war ich nicht sehr angetan, weil ich nicht so begeistert war. Da war es für mich ein bisschen abstoßend, spröde. Ich habe auch ein bisschen die Italianità vermisst. Also ich bin auch nicht gleich Citta Vecchia, rauf auf San Gusto gegangen. Ich glaube, das war dann beim zweiten Besuch, sondern wir sind da hängen geblieben im Borgo Teresiano und das war halt eine Ausgabe Wiens und dadurch war ich ein bisschen konsterniert und ich kann nicht sagen, was ich erwartet habe, aber nicht das, was ich gefunden habe." (Interview 4, 00:03).

¹⁷ "Und das war eigentlich meine Freundin, die gemeint hat, die Stadt verdient doch noch eine Chance. Im Jahr darauf fahren wir wieder hin. Also, ich war ja eigentlich schon durch. Ich habe es gesehen, war nicht so toll, Lassen wir es gut sein. Und dann sind wir wieder hingefahren und das erzähle ich immer. [...] Dann habe ich die Gelateria [...] in der Via Malcanton entdeckt und habe gesagt, okay, da wo es so gutes Eis gibt, das kann nicht schlecht sein, es kann nicht ganz schlecht sein. Diese Stadt hat doch was. Und dann sind wir halt rauf nach San Giusto gegangen, haben die Altstadt entdeckt und plötzlich war alles das, was ich beim ersten Mal vermisst habe, war so, wie wenn man halt Weiß ich nicht, wenn man so richtig blind ist. Man sucht was und es liegt vor einem. Man sieht es nicht. Man schaut überall links herum, aber nicht genau in der Mitte, wo es liegt. Und so ist es mit Triest gegangen und wir haben es dann entdeckt. Und das war so mit dem beginnenden Boom, dass es wieder ein Thema wurde in der österreichischen Medienlandschaft."

expansion. He visited Italy in his childhood on family vacations but he overlooked Trieste until later years:

"That's actually not so long ago.[...] I was born in the late 60s, and back then, it was quite normal to go on vacation with the children from the 70s onwards. We were always in Italy. Of course, [...] also in the Croatian places on the Istrian coast, peninsula. And Trieste was a blank spot for me because, in fact, until the founding of the EU, the eastern expansion, until Austria's accession, that was at the border with Yugoslavia. That was mentally the Iron Curtain for us, and it was truly a border town. I didn't really know much about Trieste. So, even with my parents, we were always very fond of Italy... Tuscany." (Interview 4, 00:01)¹⁸.

The interviewee discovered Trieste's region gradually. He and his children often visited Grado, a popular tourist destination for Austrians, circa 50 km from Trieste. Circa ten years ago, he and his new partner were often in the area and: *"And that was an idea with a couple we were friends with, a bit of a bet. Who will go to Trieste first?"¹⁹* (Interview 4, 00:02). Nowadays he owns a flat in the city and writes books that take place there.

Another interviewee, a 60-years old Viennese who has been since his childhood passionate about the sea, sailing and technology visited the city already as a kid. However, the city appeared unremarkable and boring compared to the more adventurous part of the holidays, and the Miramar castle was small compared to Schönbrunn. His passion for sailing brought him back once again as a teenager and also this time the city rejected him by a cold Bora in midsummer and the greyness of empty buildings and streets:

¹⁸"Das ist tatsächlich noch gar nicht so lange her. [...] Ich bin Ende 60 geboren und da war es halt schon ganz normal, dass man so ab den 70er mit den Kindern auf Urlaub fährt. Und wir waren immer wieder in Italien. Natürlich auch [...] her die kroatischen Orte auf der istrischen Küste, Halbinsel und Triest war für mich ein weißer Flecken, weil tatsächlich [00:01:00] bis zur Gründung der EU, zur Osterweiterung, bis zum Beitritt Österreichs war ja an die Grenze zu Jugoslawien. Das war so für uns mental der Eiserne Vorhang, und das war halt wirklich eine Grenzstadt. Ich habe auch nicht wirklich so viel gewusst über Triest. Wir sind, wenn wir also, auch mit meinen Eltern. Wir waren immer sehr Italien affn.. Toskana.." (Interview 4, 00:01).

¹⁹ "Und das war so eine Idee mit einem befreundeten Ehepaar, so ein bisschen eine Wette. Wer wird zuerst nach Triest fahren?" (Interview 4, 00:02).

"There was bora, although it was cold at the height of summer. And there was nobody around. We got there in the afternoon. And OK, there are thousands of boats and thousands of houses and cars, but it was all closed, there was no-one to be found. The wind was cold. We wandered around all night in this grey, closed city. There were no pubs open back then 42 years ago, only dives and they were just creepy. And in the end we slept on the footbridge of the station until we got inside and then they locked up at 11 or something, they kicked us out and I remember I was in my sleeping bag at Bora's in the Piazza della Libertà or something like that at the station and the city was rather gloomy and closed off. Yes, it's anything but welcoming. Yes, no nice encounters, few people, lots of traffic. But yes, grey and closed. And that was it. I wasn't there for a long time²⁰." (Interview 3, 00:04:03).

The grey and closed city appeared once again *"grey and closed"* when he once crossed Trieste with his wife by car. From the 'Sopraelevata'²¹, the highway, the city appeared *"catastrophic"* with hideous houses and only industry (Interview 3, 00:05:20²²). Also when they stopped with the sailboat, the city centre was not as tempting as now after it was renovated and opened for pedestrians. Only 20 years ago the first interesting sides started to emerge. There was the sea, a newly renovated city centre, a lure of Italianess and at the same time something familiar. Here connections to Vienna started to really emerge.

²⁰ "Da war Bora, obwohl es im Hochsommer war es dann kalt. Und da war aber niemand. Wir sind dort am Nachmittag angekommen. Und OK, es gibt Tausende Boote und Tausende Häuser und Autos, aber es war alles zu, niemand war zu erreichen. Der Wind war kalt. Wir sind die ganze Nacht in dieser grauen, verschlossenen Stadt herumgeirrt. Es waren keine Lokale offen, damals vor 42 Jahren nur Spelunken und die waren halt unheimlich. Und letztlich haben wir dann auf den Steg des Bahnhofes geschlafen bis drinnen und dann haben sie zugesperrt um 11 oder so, haben uns rausgeworfen und ich weiß noch, ich bin im Schlafsack bei Bora auf der Piazza della Libertà oder so da auf dem Bahnhof gewesen und die Stadt war eher im düster verschlossen.

Ja, es ist alles andere als einladend. Ja, keine netten Begegnungen, wenig Leute, viel Verkehr. Aber ja, grau verschlossen. Und das war es dann. Da war ich dann lange nicht da." (Interview 1, 00:04)

²¹ The Triestines call the highway (or better autostrada and superstrada) infrastructure that connects the city to the Italian and Slovenian highway networks the 'Sopraelevata'.

²² "Triest von der Ferne: Industrie, Irgendwie sind wir rübergefahren über die Sopraelevata. Katastrophe ... Schornstein, scheußliche Häuser. Also nur nicht nach Triest, weiter, weiter,..." (Interview 3, 00:05:20).

Trieste was, in other cases, for a long time the last city before the Iron Curtain and was a transit point for holidaying on the Yugoslav coast. Three interviewees, recalled their memories of Trieste as children or students:

"So my first memory of Trieste was always... If you were on holiday in Croatia or Yugoslavia back then, many people went to Yugoslavia because it was cheap. Yes, as a student Where do you go? To the sea, to Yugoslavia. And then you always travelled back via Trieste, because there was almost no other way. Well, at least we always travelled like that [...] [we thought] now we're in Italy and then we always drank a good coffee, because you didn't get any good coffee [...] Those were these 'Urerinnerungen'- first memories'. Okay. It's like that, for me it's like that, everything was already at a point where I thought to myself yes, that's nice, a little bit of the sea " (Interview 1, 00:07)²³.

The interviewee in her sixties recounted her first memory of Trieste, explaining that if Austrians went on holiday to Yugoslavia back then, they went through the city. Another interviewee recalled a typical family holiday of his childhood in the seaside holiday in Yugoslavia with their camper and before that a last stop in Trieste to buy Italian groceries as on the other side of the border not everything they wanted was available (Interview 6, 00:01). The description of Trieste as a (former) border town appeared also in other interviews.

An interviewee who was in the early 2000's often in the city as her partner lived there, told me that when the Lira was still used "Trieste was still really close to the 'East'" (Interview 2, 00:03)²⁴ and not long after the Croatian War. She continued, stating that in the nineties:

²³ "Also meine erste Erinnerung nach Triest war schon immer,... wenn man in Kroatien oder Jugoslawien damals auf Urlaub war, sind viele nach Jugoslawien, weil es ja billig war." Ja, als Student: Wo fährt man hin? Ans Meer, nach Jugoslawien. Und dann ist man immer über Triest zurückgefahren, weil es ging ja fast nicht anders. Also, wir sind zumindest immer so gefahren.[...wir haben gedacht] Jetzt sind wir in Italien und dann immer jetzt trinken wir mal einen guten Kaffee, weil du ja keinen guten Kaffee gekriegt hast[...] Das waren so diese, diese Urerinnerungen. Okay. Es ist schon so, für mich ist das schon so, alles war schon so ein Punkt, wo ich mir dachte ja, schon nett, so ein bisschen noch Meer" (Interview 1, 00:07)

²⁴ "war Triest ja noch so wirklich knapp am Ost." (Interview 2, 00:03).

"Trieste was still almost on the Iron Curtain and you could really feel that. Yes, it was still this semi-communist... atmosphere... And there was still relatively little investment in the city. Yes, and only then, over time, were there these EU funding programmes for urban renovation." (Interview 2, 00:03)²⁵

As mentioned in the quote above, the European Union funding programmes for urban development changed the image of the city centre:

"Back then, the Cavana was really, really totally, how do you say it in Italian? d... 'diroccato'. Yes, the Cavana really was... You didn't like going into some streets at night. And there were rats and an insane number of cats. And there were still these little huts everywhere where people fed the cats. That's all gone now." (Interview 2, 00:05)²⁶

Until the early 2000s, the Cavana neighbourhood was once marked by disrepair and neglect, characterised by safety concerns, rodent infestations, and excessive feral cats. As the neighbourhood and more generally Cittavecchia, the old town, represent the heart of Trieste, tourists and visitors immediately noticed how *'diroccata'* (in disrepair) it was. The local slovene language daily newspaper Primorski Dnevnik recalls the image of Trieste in the eighties: the "Veliki Trg"²⁷ with its wavy paving served during the weekends as a parking lot for the Verdi Theatre, Libertà square was a bazar, the Corso Cavour represented a traffic bottleneck before the entrance to the waterfront, which remained urbanistically outdated since the time of Maria Theresa; in Cavana and particularly in the Old Town, many houses were in disrepair; all streets were in the

²⁵ "Triest war ja noch quasi am Eisernen Vorhang und das hat man einfach total gespürt. Ja, das war noch so dieses halbkommunistische... Ambiente... Und da gab es noch relativ wenig Investitionen in der Stadt. Ja, und erst dann, im Laufe der Zeit gab es dann diese EU Förderungen für Sanierungen." (Interview 2, 00:03).

²⁶ "Damals war die Cavana wirklich, wirklich noch total, wie sagt man da auf Italienisch d.. 'diroccato'. Ja, die Cavana war wirklich... Also, in manchen Straßen ist man gar nicht gern reingegangen in der Nacht. Und da waren die Ratten und irrsinnig viele Katzen. Und da waren ja überall noch diese kleinen Hütteln, wo die Leute die Katzen gefüttert haben. Das ist ja auch alles weg inzwischen." (Interview 2, 00:05)

²⁷ Veliki Trg, in Italian Piazza Grande, the Main/Big square is the former name of Piazza Unità. Many slovene speaking Triestines call it Veliki Trg in Slovene, for this reason the local newspaper decided to use this name. Also some Italian speaking Triestines call it Piazza Grande instead of Piazza Unità, here the reason is mostly political.

possession of traffic, cars, and wild parking, and there were no possibilities of having outdoor seating areas in front of cafes, bars and restaurants (Primorski Dnevnik 2019).

One of the interviewers stated that actually it wasn't until the 1990s that European cities started prioritising urban development and improving the quality of life for residents (Interview 4, 00:11):

“To be honest, Trieste was actually a grey city in the 70s, yes, and also in the 80s, just like Vienna. So you always see the old pictures and it was really ugly. [...] But if you look at your own surroundings, you have to say it wasn't any better. [...] like most European cities. [...] It was all black and grey, all the facades were blackened with soot, all the pavements were dirty and filthy. And the cars were squeezed together everywhere and there were hardly any spaces for people. And where you now say that there is somehow a structure, a spatial organisation, that is an orderly square where I have green space, recreational space, a traffic area, parking space... It all came later, in the 90s.” (Interview 4, 00:11)²⁸.

In the 1970s, most European cities, including Trieste and Vienna, had a grey, unappealing appearance. Facades were blackened, pavements were dirty, and streets were congested with cars, leaving little space for pedestrians (Interview 4, 00:10). According to him, only some cities, maybe the German München, were ahead slightly due to the better economic situation, but the overall urban landscape lacked green spaces, recreational areas, and organised planning.

The urban renewal process in Trieste started in the Cavana district in the old town in 1996 with the support of European Union funding (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 178). Due to the increasingly stagnant economic situation the city management, following the logic of the entrepreneurial city, decided to ‘remake the facade’ of the city in

²⁸ “Aber man muss ganz ehrlich sagen, Triest war in den 70er, ja und auch in der 80er, so wie Wien auch, eigentlich eine graue Stadt. Also man sieht immer nur die alten Bilder und es war hässlich. [...] Wenn man aber das eigene Umfeld sieht, muss man auch sagen, es war nicht besser. [...] wie die meisten europäischen Städte. [...] Es war alles schwarz und grau, alle Fassaden waren rußgeschwärzt, alle Gehsteige waren schmutzig und dreckig. Und überall haben sich die Autos zusammengequetscht und es gab kaum Plätze für die Menschen. Und wo du jetzt sagst, es gibt irgendwie eine Struktur, eine Raumordnung, also einen geordneten Platz, wo ich Grün habe, Erholungsfläche, Verkehrsfläche, wo Parkfläche... Es ist alles später gekommen, dann so in den 90er.”

architectural and urban planning terms to strengthen the tourist economy (Colombino, Minca 2005). However, according to Colombino and Minca (2005), the regeneration process was attempted not by following the gentrification process as per the North American and European tradition of making the 'entrepreneurial city', but by seeking to rebuild a diversified urban social capital produced 'from below'. In earlier years Cavana and the whole part of the Cittavecchia (old town) was degraded and abandoned. In 1997, the area was characterised by dilapidated buildings, which had become shelters for the homeless and irregular immigrants (Colombino Minca 2005, 44). The old city, which represents the oldest part of the city, was marked by urban decay, and the residents were predominantly elderly, unemployed, and impoverished families. According to the municipal administration, the difficulties caused by abandonment and micro-crime led the population to relocate and close the few remaining commercial activities (Colombino, Minca 2005, 45). In 1996 the city administration decided to apply for European Community grants from the Urban initiative concerning the redevelopment of urban areas. The European Community was concerned with the growing tensions within society due to social exclusion in inner city or peripheral urban areas characterised by lack of economic opportunity, low incomes and poor quality of life (European Community 1994). The aim of the initiative was to help the local authorities "to provide the necessary amenities so as to attract economic activity and create confidence and security for the population living in the areas, integrating them into the economy and the social mainstream." (European Community 1994, 6). The assisted projects should have "a balanced and coherent set of economic development, social integration and environmental programmes" (European Community 1994, 7). The social aspect of the initiative had to be concretised with the provision of social services for the poor, healthcare, public order and infrastructure improvements.

The renewal of the old town and the pedestrianisation of the city transformed the image of Trieste. Many Austrians who visited the city before the renovations recounted the transformation. Among other things, the Piazza della Borsa was once filled with automobiles, and the Via San Niccolò, now a shopping mile, was packed with cars (Interview 3, 00:06:45). In the nineties the renewal process started and left Trieste with a new image:

“And then there was all the EU money and then the city centre and the Caravana were renovated and only then did this [Austrian] hype [for Trieste] slowly begin. And before that it was more... a bit of this retro experience like when you travelled to Prague or Slovakia. It all had that Eastern Bloc charm and Trieste had a bit of that too. So it did have a bit of that Italian flavour, what people love about Italy, but not really. Well, it has more of what you experience now when you go to Istria or the Croatian islands, I think, in terms of the atmosphere” (Interview 2, 00:04)²⁹

One interviewer describes the atmosphere of the city prior to the renovations as an Eastern Bloc charm, similar to Prague or Slovakia. Although it retained some Italian characteristics, it lacked the “authentic” Italian flair. The notion that Trieste's urban regeneration process began later than Vienna's is repeatedly emphasised. Moreover, the idea that the entire city is “behind” is a recurring theme: to Viennese, it seems that Trieste's shops are not yet dominated by multinational corporations, and interpersonal relationships are still characterised by human interaction rather than anonymity. Additionally, the traditional Osmizze, are said to retain the typical atmosphere of Vienna's Heuriger of about twenty years ago:

“And... Yes, it was somehow a bit like ten years further behind Vienna. In terms of urban development. At the time, I think it was the Illy era and [...] the spirit was insane, it was completely different. It was already ‘after the war’ and you could tell it was going in a different direction. [...] And the cultural scene... There was a cultural scene now and a lot was already happening. Things are starting to move.” (Interview 2, 00:05)³⁰

²⁹ “Und dann gab es ja die ganzen EU Gelder und dann wurden die Innenstadt und die Caravana saniert und dann hat ja erst dieser, dieser Hype schon langsam begonnen. Und vorher war das ja eher... ein bisschen so diese Retro-Geschichte wie damals, wenn man nach Prag gefahren ist oder oder in die Slowakei gefahren ist. Das hat alles diesen Ostblock-Charme gehabt und das war auch ein bisschen in Triest. Also es hat schon ein bisschen dieses Italienische gehabt, das, was die Leute so an Italien lieben, aber nicht wirklich. Also, es hat schon noch mehr von dem, was man erlebt, wenn man dann nach Istrien oder auf die kroatischen Inseln fährt, finde ich, vom Feeling.” (Interview 2, 00:04)

³⁰ “Und... Ja, also das war irgendwie noch ein bisschen so was wie zehn Jahre weiter hinter Wien. So von der Stadtentwicklung her. Das war zu der Zeit, glaube ich, diese Illy-Epoche und [...] der Spirit war schon irrsinnig, was schon ganz ein anderer. Der war schon so “After-war” und und man hat schon gemerkt, es geht jetzt in eine andere Richtung. [...] Und die Kulturszene... Es gibt jetzt schon eine

Trieste's urban development is portrayed to lag behind Vienna by approximately a decade. The Italian city started to change in the Riccardo Illy era, and the city's spirit and cultural scene underwent a significant transformation, signalling a shift towards a new trend. Riccardo Illy was first Trieste's mayor (1993-2001) and then President of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region (2003-2008). Illy, an entrepreneur whose family owns the triestine Illy cafe brand, wanted to give the city a new image with the redevelopment of the town centre and to attract new investments and tourism (Zilli, Modaffari 2020). Successive administrations have continued, with varying degrees of success, to envision Trieste as a tourist city, attempting to brand it in different ways. The city centre and waterfront have undergone visible modifications, making way for new commercial activities that appear to be increasingly oriented towards tourists. These activities are mostly composed of bars and restaurants, many of which are pizzerias offering the stereotypical Italian food abroad - pizza, which, however, does not belong to Trieste's gastronomic "tradition". If twenty years ago, Cavana was the dilapidated neighbourhood of the city, today it has become one of the most lively and frequented areas:

"It's just a lot.... It's all much more chic. Yes, you have one restaurant after another in Cavana, so everything that used to be a craft shop or accessories for sailing, sail ropes and varnish etc., they're all closing down and instead some food shops are coming in, all of which are changing quite often. And they're not even that special, are they?" (Interview 2, 00:10).³¹

The transformation of Cavana's commercial landscape is significant. Former craft shops and sailing-related businesses are giving way to restaurants. The proliferation of restaurants in Trieste's city centre, particularly in the area extending from the Grand Canal to via Torino, is a notable trend. These new establishments offer dishes stereotypically associated with Italian cuisine such as pizza and pasta. In front of several

Kulturszene und da passiert jetzt schon einiges. Also da beginnen sich Sachen zu bewegen." (Interview 2, 00:05)"

³¹ "Es ist halt viel.... Es ist alles viel schicker. Ja, du hast halt in Cavana ein Esslokal nach dem anderen, also jedes alles was früher ein Handwerksgeschäft war oder Zubehör für Segel, Segel- Taue und Lacke usw, die hören ja alle auf und stattdessen kommen so Food-Geschichten rein, die sich alle ziemlich ändern. Und jetzt nicht einmal so speziell sind, oder?"

of these restaurants servers attempt to entice tourists to dine there, a common practice in tourist-heavy areas. This development is viewed with annoyance by Triestine residents, Austrian owners of secondary homes, and tourists seeking a perceived "authenticity" in their travels. While the shift may be perceived as a revitalisation of the city centre, the growing prevalence of a tourist-oriented economy may lead to touristification of the area.

In the city centre, a profound transformation is perceived. Until about a decade ago, visitors were primarily passing through on their way to other destinations or visiting someone. Trieste was a somewhat "*exotic*" choice for a Viennese (Interview 2, 00:05), an "*insider tip*" (Interview 2, 00:08), a niche destination. Nevertheless the city was known: "*Well, it has always been known because it is part of our history. But it wasn't the first destination that you quickly travelled to for the weekend.*" (Interview 2, 00:11)³². For Viennese people other destinations were more interesting:

"Back then it was much more interesting to go to either the Croatian islands or Tuscany was so fashionable and also further down. Grado, Venice and.... Trieste was always a bit second rate because it was just okay for a short holiday. But the fact that it doesn't really have a beach where you can say, 'We're going swimming there now we're going swimming there, it didn't offer that much. Venice was much more interesting.'" (Interview 2, 00:09)³³

In the past, destinations such as the Croatian islands for a sea holiday, and Tuscany to see the 'mythical Italy', were more fashionable and appealing for longer vacations. Trieste, on the other hand, was considered a less desirable option, suitable only for brief getaways, as it lacked the allure of a prominent beach where one could easily go swimming. Venice was a more compelling choice for many tourists. However, over time, particularly in the last five years, the trend has shifted, and Trieste has become a

³² "Also bekannt war es schon immer gewesen, weil es ein Teil der Geschichte unserer Geschichte ist. Aber es war jetzt nicht so das erste Ziel, wo man schnell hinfährt für Wochenende."

³³ "Damals war viel interessanter in entweder auf die kroatischen Inseln fahren oder Toskana war so in Mode und auch weiter runter. Grado, Venedig und.... Triest war so immer ein bisschen zweite Reihe, weil es auch und es war halt gerade mal für einen Kurzurlaub okay. Aber dadurch, dass es nicht so richtig einen Strand von Badestrand hat, wo man sagt, da gehen wir jetzt schwimmen, hat es jetzt auch nicht so viel geboten. Da war Venedig viel interessanter"

hype and part of international tourism circuits. The hype for Venice is too high, and the city suffers from overtourism:

“In the meantime, Venice has become so interesting that you can't stand being there any more. And now it's shifting a bit to Trieste, I think. And Trieste now fulfils this image of the Italian city much more than it did 20 years ago.”
(Interview 2, 00:10)³⁴.

Trieste is now gaining popularity as a city that represents a taste of Italy, a shift from its previous status 20 years ago. In a short time, the number of beds available doubled, both in hotels and on short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb (Zilli, Modaffari 2020, 183). The tourist use of apartments has also led to an increase in rents and property prices. The number of people interested in purchasing an apartment in Trieste has risen, particularly among Austrians who wish to acquire a secondary residence there.

³⁴ “Und inzwischen ist Venedig so interessant, dass man es gar nicht mehr aushält dort. Und jetzt verlagert sich das ein bisschen nach Triest, glaube ich. Und, und und. Triest erfüllt ja jetzt viel mehr dieses Image von diesem, von der italienischen Stadt, als es damals, so vor 20 Jahren noch gehabt hat.”

6. Habsburg Nostalgia

In Trieste, Vienna is everywhere: in the urban space in the form of monuments, nomenclature, architecture, on the menu of typical restaurants and on the tongues of many Triestines. In fact, walking through the city centre, a Viennese cannot miss the architectural imprints left by the Habsburg Empire. There are schools with the same inscription 'K.u.K. Statsgymnasium' as the one of the doors that your daughter frequented in Vienna (Interview 3; 01:13:02). Not far you can 'meet' the statues of the former "rulers" of "your" country, Charles IV, Maria Theresa, and a big standing empress Elisabeth "Sisi" near the Central Station. And the station was built as the last stop of the Südbahn to connect the harbour to its former capital, Vienna. But maybe you arrived by car, starting in Vienna on the Triesterstraße and arriving in Trieste through the 'Strada per Vienna/Dunajska cesta' in Opicina/Opčine. Strolling from the Central Station to the city centre, near the sea there is a statue dedicated to Ressel, the same Ressel of the Resselpark where you played as a child in Vienna (Interview 1). A bit further there is a new Viennese Kaffeehaus, the Café Sacher. Or the more 'traditional' Trieste Café Tommaseo, or Café degli Specchi, or Café San Marco with a similar atmosphere to the old Coffeehouses in Vienna. Around the corner you enter a music shop and you find plenty of CD recordings of your favourite Austrian Operettas (Interview 3, 01:14:07). Antique shops are full of photographs of Franz Joseph or medallions and military artefacts just like the ones your grandfather and great grandfather kept. And perhaps you can find a K.u.K. War Navy chronometer that was made for the planned South Pole expedition, for a modest price, much lower than in Vienna (Interview 3, 00:07:02). The city districts you just stroll bear names that any Austrian would immediately recall: the "Borgo Fanceschino" named after Emperor Franz II, the "Borgo Giuseppino" after Emperor Joseph II, and the "Borgo Teresiano" named after the sovereign Maria Theresa. And if you are especially lucky, you could drink your beloved 'Weißersritzer' (in Trieste simply spritz) and eat a 'Keisersemmel' looking at a portrait of Franz Joseph. All 'these familiar Austrian' traces come up often, you can have many 'dejavu-effects'. Maybe also the tourist guidebook you have in your

hands says the same, this city makes every Austrian a bit sentimental, "[*eine Stadt,*] *die jeden Österreicher ein wenig sentimental werden lässt*" (Ramhapp 2020, 9). But does this mean you are a 'victim' of Habsburg Nostalgia even if you say that you are not a monarchist or so?

As one interviewee noted, Trieste feels like a part of their historical narrative, even if it is not part of their personal experience: "*That is just a shared history and seen in that way. For me, Trieste is a part... one can't really say... of my past. I haven't actually experienced it*³⁵." (Interview 1, Interviewee 2, 00:05:21). Despite the 106 years since Trieste's separation from Austria, some still perceive the city as a part of their past:

*"I've never been a monarchist or a dreamer. There are also people who think that something was lost there, and that it was our harbour and our sea. One can certainly have that view, because of course, my grandmothers still had that perspective, they were both born in the monarchy. For them, it was taken for granted and then it was actually a collapse, that it no longer existed. But somehow it was still there. You travelled to Abbazia, you travelled to 'Rovigno' or 'Capodistria'*³⁶. *Even though they probably couldn't afford it. But it was totally anchored and rooted in Viennese society*³⁷" (Interview 4, 00:06:01)

As visible above, even Austrians who are personally detached from monarchist or nostalgic sentiments regarding the former Empire, they acknowledge that some people perceive the loss of the coastal territories as a deprivation. Such views were more common among older generations. The grandmothers of the interviewed author who were born during the monarchy and experienced its dissolution as a profound change and wound. He also stated that the Viennese "passion" for Trieste is not new. People

³⁵ "Das ist halt eine gemeinsame Geschichte und und so gesehen. Ist für mich, dass Triest ein Teil... kann man nicht sagen ...meiner Vergangenheit. Ich habe es ja nicht erlebt" (Interview 1, 00:05:21).

³⁶ Italian names used by the speaker.

³⁷ "Ich bin jetzt nie so der Monarchist oder Träumer gewesen. Es gibt ja auch Leute, die meinen, da hätte man was verloren und das war unser Hafen und unser Meer. Kann man natürlich haben, weil natürlich, meine Großmütter hatten das noch so, die waren beide in der Monarchie geboren. Für die war das eine selbst ein Selbstverständlich und dann tatsächlich auch ein Zerfall, dass es das nicht mehr gegeben hat. Aber irgendwie war das halt noch so drinnen. Man fährt nach Abbazia, man fährt nach Rovigno oder Capodistria. Auch wenn sie sich das wahrscheinlich gar nicht leisten konnten. Aber es war in der Wiener Gesellschaft total verankert und verwurzelt"

used to travel to coastal towns of ‘their coastline’ like Opatija/Abbazia, Rovinj/Rovigo, Koper/Capodistria. This practice was widespread, and according to the interviewee also by those who probably could not really afford it.

Heidi Schlipphacke (2014, 6) defines Habsburg Nostalgia as "a longing for a feeling of home that traverses cultural and ethnic spaces". Nostalgia can be characterised as a "disease of the modern age," stemming from rapid technological advancements and a focus on utility and efficiency (Schlipphacke 2014, 4). This environment forces individuals to adapt quickly, moving away from the leisurely pace of childhood. Habsburg nostalgia is multifaceted, hybrid and it evolves and transforms over time and space, influenced by cultural and historical contexts. The imperial past is often idealised as a model of order, with dedicated officials ensuring public safety, enforcing fair taxation (Baskar 2007, 47-48) in opposition to the ‘bad politicians’ of nowadays. Or the "emotional pull of empire" could refer to the desire to belong to a cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, and prosperous supra-national entity (Schlipphacke 2014). In fact, Habsburg nostalgia holds multiple temporalities and spaces (Hametz 2014). It does not represent a rejection of history, rather is a selective remembrance of it (Hamez 2014, 131) that offers "the key to the gate connecting the lessons of the past and the needs of the present" offering a model for crafting the future (Wilson in Hametz 2014, 134). Pamela Ballinger (2003) notes that the renewed interest in Habsburg nostalgia reflects modern concerns about identity and nationhood, often reinterpreting historical realities through contemporary ideas of cosmopolitanism and tolerance.

“This familiar Austrian” Flair

Trieste and Vienna share similar architectural features, particularly those from the ‘Gründerzeit’ in the 19th century. In fact, many buildings in central Trieste resemble those in Vienna with similar features as herringbone parquet floors, food frames and double doors (Interview 2, 00:23:50). Furthermore, Trieste and a few surrounding municipalities, preserved a cadastral system similar to that of Austria and different from the rest of Italy. Such similarities emerged in many ethnographic conversations and interviews. For example, a Viennese couple who decided to move permanently to Trieste recounted a renovation experience in their newly acquired apartment. The

drainage system in their new home in Trieste was similar to the system they already knew in Viennese 'Altbau' buildings. The local worker however, could not find the bathroom's drainage system and dismissed the homeowners suggestions. Eventually, the homeowners' assumption was proven correct, underscoring the shared architectural features between Trieste and Vienna particularly in structures dating from the 1870s (Interview 1, 01:33:08).

The enduring presence of Habsburg architectural and cultural elements in Trieste's urban landscape evokes a profound sense of familiarity and nostalgia among Austrians. The city, as some other former Habsburg cities, seems "*more viennese than Vienna*", as described in an ethnographic interview. This sentiment is further encapsulated in sentences as: "*...for us, it's so readable and it simply has constant déjà vu effects. Somehow as if we already know each other, as if the city has long been familiar, as if one has lived there forever.*"³⁸ (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 00:24:29) or phrases as "*dieses vertraute Österreichische*" (this familiar Austrian [atmosphere]) (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:40:47). The following extract from the interview elucidates this perspective:

"I think it is particularly interesting for Austrians. Ah yes, and I believe you can still experience it in Trieste because much has remained unchanged. Do you know what I mean? In other countries, much has deteriorated. In Zagreb, there is still a lot, but communism tore down many things, etc. But here, you can really see with your own eyes, that was the Post Palace, that is the Lloyd Palace, that was the government building, so that's what remains. And it is remarkable that it is still there, so you understand how this city functioned during the monarchy. I think that is also its attraction. And you do not see that in other cities like Ljubljana, where much has already been torn down, right? And I think that makes it more attractive than Budapest because it is Italian. That's the second thing," (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:40:30)³⁹.

³⁸ "...für uns sowas von ablesbar und das hat einfach andauernde déjàvu Effekte. So irgendwie als werden wir uns schon kenne, als wird die Stadt längstes vertraut ist, als wird man dort ewig leben."

³⁹ "Und es ist, glaube ich eher noch interessant zu erfahren für Österreich. Ah ja, und ich glaube, in Triest erfährt man es halt doch, weil vieles stehen geblieben ist. Weißt du was ich mein? In anderen Ländern, dass vieles verfallen. In Zagreb gibt es schon noch viel, aber da war der Kommunismus, hat das viel weggerissen worden usw Aber dass du da wirklich mit eigenen Augen siehst, das war der Postpalast, das ist der Loydpalast, das war die, die, die von der von der Regierung, also das ist das, was noch übrig."

This passage highlights the position of Trieste as a city where the traces of the Habsburg Monarchy are visibly preserved in contrast with other cities such as Zagreb and Ljubljana. There, many historical elements have been significantly altered or lost due to political changes particularly during the communist era. The preservation of landmarks such as the Post Palace or the Lloyd Palace in Trieste represent a tangible link to the Habsburg past. According to the interviewee, this preservation is a key factor in the city's allure. Moreover, he underscores that is the mixture of both the Trieste's Italian character, combined with its Habsburg heritage, enhance the city appeal compared to other former Habsburg cities like Budapest. This dual identity—being both Italian and a repository of Habsburg legacy— is what many Austrians like. The historic preservation of the Habsburg flair makes Trieste seems more "Viennese than Vienna"⁴⁰ as in Vienna the "Habsburg" flair "developed" whereas in Trieste was "preserved".

Therefore, visiting Trieste and expecting a full Italian and Mediterranean style in Trieste appears "completely absurd" ("völlig absurd"). (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 00:09:30). This observation challenges preconceived notions of Mediterranean and Italian aesthetics and urban landscapes. The interviewee elaborates:

Interviewee 2: *"As a Viennese, one always had this fantasy of the Adriatic and Mediterranean, as one knows from Croatia, with small stone houses [...] and this image was not fulfilled because I didn't know how to categorise six-story Jugendstil buildings, how that relates to the Mediterranean and sailing. It was heterogeneous, confusing. The Karst: OK, there are Osmizze and Terrano, but..."*

Interviewee 1: *"It's not... not an Italian feeling that one somehow associates with Italy or like one has with Venice. So it was somehow already familiar, so to speak."*⁴¹ (Interview 3, 00:10:20)

Und das ist es halt einmal, dass es noch da ist, dass du weißt, so hat diese Stadt eigentlich funktioniert, als es noch in der Monarchie war. Ich glaube, das ist auch seine Anziehungskraft. Und das siehst du in anderen Städten nicht so in Laibach, Ljubljana oder so, das ist ja viel weggerissen schon, oder?" Und ich glaube, das macht halt mehr Anziehungskraft aus als Budapest, weil es halt italienisch ist. Das ist diese zweite," (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:40:30)

⁴⁰ "Triest ist Wienerisch als Wien" - quote from fieldwork datas.

⁴¹ Interviewee 2: "Als Wiener hat man immer gehabt eher so die Phantasie von Adria und Mittelmeer, wie man aus Kroatien kennt, also kleine Steinhäuschen, [...]und, und das hat das Bild nicht bedient, weil weil ich gewusst, wie ordne ich jetzt sechsstöckige Jugendstil bauten ein, wie hat das

This dialogue reveals several key insights. Firstly, the interviewees experience a dissonance, highlighting a disconnect between their expectations of a Mediterranean environment as known from Croatia and the actual urban landscape of Trieste. Similarly the presence of Viennese Jugendstil buildings in a supposedly Italian-Mediterranean context appear out of place. The presence of such architecture complicates the narrative of Trieste as a typical Italian city, seeming "somehow already familiar" suggesting a recognition of shared cultural elements of the common past. Thirdly, the *osmiza*, the wine and food, and its atmosphere clashes with the Italian context. The *osmiza* can be considered a 'typical product of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire,' as its origins is rooted in the imperial policies that allowed local farmers to sell their products. *Osmize* evoke a sense of connection to the Viennese *Heuriger*, yet their distinctiveness is marked by the local context in which they exist. Their presence in the Triestine Karst region, where the majority of the population speaks Slovene, imbues the *Osmize* with a Slovene connotation.

Many interviewees told me that Trieste does not appear so welcoming and "easy to understand" or that you need to spend more time there to understand it and like it (Interview 1, Interview 3, Interview 4) An interviewee told me about a family friend from Tyrol, who even after marrying a Triestine woman and having worked there, appears always unconnected to the city. According to him, the friend being from Tyrol is not used to the different cultures living in one city, but for a Viennese this is completely normal:

"Nevertheless, he's always dissatisfied with the city and I tell him, the problem is, you're not from Vienna, you don't understand how the city works. Yes, well, that's interesting that... the city and also the people...this mixture, mixture of peoples, yes, and dealing with these different ethnic groups, so also Greek and so on for the Viennese... Yes, Vienna, Vienna has always been a melting pot - Poles, Bohemians, Moravians, Hungarians... it would be a shame if it wasn't like

Mittelmeer zu tun und segeln, und es war heterogen, verwirrend, Karst: OK, da gibt es jetzt aus *Osmizzen* und *Terrano* aber.. // Interviewee 1: Das ist kein... kein Italien Gefühl, dass man es irgendwie mit Italien verbindet oder wie man es mit Venedig hat. Also das war irgendwie schon vertraut, so zu sagen".

that. Of course there's all that here in the cuisine, in the culture and that's how it is there too, yes..." (Interview 3; 00:25)⁴²

The quote highlights Trieste's identity as a multicultural city, emphasising its historical role as a melting pot for various ethnic groups. The interviewee appreciates the diversity that enriches the city's culture and cuisine, and affirms that being from a multicultural city as Vienna it is that is easy to understand. In fact, the multiculturalism and diversity of the city was praised or appreciated in all interviews, as for example in the following excerpt about the Habsburg Trieste:

"So the last one, I just looked at the Armenian neighbourhood in May, there's this one house with the Armenian church at the back of Via Tigor. But you really had a lot of different ethnicities and it worked. That's actually what I thought was great" (Interview 4, 00:21:33)⁴³

This comment highlights Trieste's historical multicultural character and its success as a melting pot of diverse ethnicities.

Monuments and Historical Memory

The city's monuments and statues also play a significant role in preserving the memory of the Habsburg era. In the 1980s and 1990s interest in the Habsburg legacy surged in Friuli Venezia Giulia leading to the restoration of many monuments, especially in Trieste. One of the first monuments to be re-erected in Trieste was the monument to Empress Elisabeth 1997. According to Klabjan (2018) Sissi's restoration symbolised the city's optimism about participating in a new transnational Europe in a

⁴² Trotzdem, der ist immer unzufrieden mit der Stadt und ich sag ihm, Du das Problem ist, du bist nicht aus Wien, du verstehst net wie die Stadt funktioniert. Ja, also das ist interessant, das quasi... die Stadt und auch die Menschen...dieses Gemisch, Völkergemisch, ja, und das umgehen mit diesen verschiedenen Ethnien, also auch griechisch und so weiter für den Wiener .. Ja, Wien, Wien war immer ein Schmelztiegel: Polen, Böhmen, Mähren, Ungarn,.. wäre schade, wenn es nicht so wäre. Es gibt natürlich all das hier in der Küche, in der Kultur und so ist es dort auch, ja..

⁴³ "Also das letzte, erst jetzt im Mai angeschaut das armenische Viertel, da bei der Via Tigor hinten dieses eine Haus mit der armenischen Kirche. Aber du hast wirklich wahnsinnig viel verschiedene Ethnien gehabt und das hat funktioniert. Das fand ich ja eigentlich das Tolle."

pivotal role. Here Sissi represents the nostalgia for the prosperous unity of Mitteleuropa and reflects Trieste's aspirations for revitalisation through cross-border initiatives. Sissi's return to prominence represented the temporary triumph of the optimistic viewpoint in Trieste "that saw the revival of a transnational sentiment and the erosion of state borders and national enmities." (Klabjan 2018, 58). In 2008, the city administration decided to put the statue of Maximilian back to its initial place on Piazza Venezia, with the mayor clearly stating that he wanted to attract Austrian tourists (Klabjan, 2018, 85). The construction of states depends on various geopolitical, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, and religious factors. Specific factors such as whether a ruler had visited a particular region or not are generally not considered critical in state-building processes. For example, Empress Elisabeth, who has a very large statue in Trieste, had only visited the city twice, and she did not particularly like the region. However, her husband, the emperor Franz Joseph has none: "*And everyone gets a monument, except Franzl!*" (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 01:14:28)⁴⁴.

Sovereign Maria Theresa, although she had never been to Trieste, played a fundamental role in the growth and development of the city. However, "*the poor*" Maria Theresa, "*who has really done a lot for this city*" (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 01:13:51)⁴⁵ did not have a statue in Trieste until 2023. In 2017, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Maria Theresa of Austria's birth, Trieste resolved to erect a monument in her honour. The initiative was funded through a crowdfunding campaign. The outcome was the creation of a three-metre-diameter thaler with the silhouette of the Empress on its facade. The monument was installed in 2023 in Ponterosso Square, located in the Borgo Teresiano district. The thaler is not universally appreciated; it has been described pejoratively as "*der scheußliche Taler*," which translates to "*the hideous thaler*." (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 01:13:28). One of the interviewees expressed disbelief at the aesthetic qualities of the thaler, stating that she could not comprehend its perceived ugliness upon first seeing it (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 01:13:28). Her partner added that he felt a strong aversion to the thaler, remarking that he would like to pull it down with a rope every time he passed by (Interview 1, Interviewee 2, 01:13:51). Others suggested that "*they should rather bring out the old monuments*,"⁴⁶ implying that

⁴⁴ "Und alle kriegen ein Denkmal, nur der Franzl nicht!"

⁴⁵ "Die arme Maria Theresia, die wirklich viel gemacht hat für diese Stadt..."

⁴⁶ "Die sollten lieber die alten Denkmäler rausholen."

the older monuments are likely more aesthetically pleasing (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:14:30). However, some also appreciated the monument, describing the tolar as a successful artwork, noting its conservative and pictorial representation. The interviewee emphasised that while it is not a direct bust of Maria Theresa, it reflects the multicultural nature of Trieste, where various Mediterranean currencies, including soldo, were commonly used in transactions (Interview 4, 00:37:04). He also suggested that contemporary monuments are often favoured over "old-style" ones due to the high costs associated with realising the latter, making them nearly impossible to implement.

For the inauguration of the new monument dedicated to Maria Theresa on February 7, 2023, an heiress of the monarch was invited. An interviewee described her as a *"eine Habsburger Tante,"* a Habsburg aunt. He found this invitation, along with the presence of the Carinthian Shooting Associations marching in traditional or Empire army clothing, to be perplexing because he was unsure how to interpret it:

"The inauguration was irritating, as it was attended by a Habsburg aunt. We took a look, but there were all these Carinthian marksmen's associations marching around - is that folklore? Or is it now? Are you serious? Or what is it? And so there is a certain uncertainty about how to deal with it in, let's say, the inner-city public." (Interview 1; 00:47)⁴⁷

The interviewee's reaction to the inauguration ceremony highlights the complexities of historical memory and cultural representation in public spaces. He expressed uncertainty about what the invited heiress of the monarch should represent. According to the promoters, the thaler symbolises the affection of the city for the former ruler as her political and economic reforms substantially contributed to the modernization and the growth of the city. The local authorities present emphasised her strategic vision for Trieste's future, highlighting her policy of religious tolerance, which fostered a multicultural and cosmopolitan environment (Saracino 2023). Massimo Fedriga, the president of the region Friuli Venezia Giulia, underscored that the Triestes spirit remains mitteleuropean despite geopolitical challenges and projected into the future. According

⁴⁷ "Irritierend war die Einweihung, wo sie zu eine Habsburger Tante da war. Wir haben uns angeschaut, aber lauter Kärntner Schützenverbände aufmarschieren man weiß nicht, ist das jetzt Folklore? Oder ist das jetzt? Meinen Sie das ernst? Oder was ist es? Und also es gibt da gewisse Unsicherheit mit mit in in der sagen wir, innerstädtischen Öffentlichkeit damit umzugehen."

to Fedriga, the city and the region are experiencing a period of renewal driven by Trieste's unique ability to connect Central and Southern Europe (Saracino 2023). The mayor of Trieste, Roberto Dipiazza, also portrays Maria Theresa as a symbol for future prosperity through new projects such as the renovation of the old harbour, Porto Vecchio. Ironically, Dipiazza likes to compare himself to the former ruler, asserting that he, like her, is committed to fostering the city's growth, urban development and prosperity. The mayor's comparison of himself to Maria Theresa illustrates how historical figures continue to shape the future narrative of a city. However, such selective nostalgic narratives gloss over the complexities and nuances of history, presenting a simplified version that aligns with current agendas and state borders. When asked how they feel about the monument, one interviewee responded: "*But I do not feel sought after as an Austrian. I do not see this coin and think, 'This now belongs to me.' It is as if I want to be welcomed again as a lord from the old empire.*" (Interview 4, 00:33:20)⁴⁸. The interviewee expresses a lack of personal connection to the coin, that should symbolise a Habsburg identity, stating that it does not evoke a sense of belonging or pride. Another interviewee, an artist who expressed a general interest in public spaces, described monuments as "representative," likening them to dogs urinating on a corner to mark their territory. In his view, monuments only serve as a way for those in power to assert their dominance and claim ownership over a particular location (Interview 7, 00:11:00, 00:15:30). The artist noted that this practice is not limited to Trieste but is also prevalent in Vienna and other places. He further speculated that in 50 years the context behind the placement of these monuments will be lost and people will no longer understand the reasons or circumstances that led to their installation (Interview 7, 00:15:50). The artist characterised monuments as a pure "spectacle of representation," implying that they are more about showcasing power and authority than about genuine commemoration or historical significance.

Trieste's monuments serve as tangible representations of its past and the ongoing negotiations surrounding its complex identity. As the city transitioned from being part of the Habsburg Monarchy to becoming part of Italy, the urban landscape was often modified. To show a further "Italianisation" of the city, on September 12, 2019, exactly

⁴⁸ "so ich fühle mich jetzt nicht als Österreicher begerd. Ich sehe jetzt nicht diese Münze, dass ich sage, das gilt jetzt mir, man möchte mich als Österreicher wieder quasi als Herr aus dem Altreich hier begrüßen."

100 years after the Italian occupation of Rijeka/Fiume, the statue of Gabriele D'Annunzio was erected on the Piazza della Borsa. D'Annunzio was an Italian poet and fascist who personally participated in the invasion of Rijeka, making his commemoration in Trieste particularly contentious. This event led to a lasting strain in the relationship between Croatia and the city of Trieste. The placement of this statue in a prominent public space, such as the Piazza della Borsa, suggests an attempt to assert an Italian national identity in a city that has long been a site of cultural and linguistic diversity. The statue was wanted by the mayor Roberto Dipiazza, from a centre-rightist party. This fact, heaving in mind his comparison to Maria Theresa, furthermore underlines the complex intertwining of narratives in Trieste. The statue was commissioned by Mayor Roberto Dipiazza, a member of a centre-right political party. This fact, in light of his comparison to Maria Theresa, further underscores the complex interplay of narratives in Trieste.

"Well, the idea that the old monuments are back where they've always been is definitely a very good one, but the new monuments show how the city is struggling to, yes, not re-assume an Austrian identity. The Ressel memorial just says "Alle nostre Terre"⁴⁹("To our Lands" in Italian) yes, there is neither a date nor any... So that he was a forestry engineer in the K. and K. Navy and so on, so it is avoided, well, to take sides in favour of Italy or Austria. With Ressel. On the other hand, in front of the Piazza della Borsa, I found it extremely disturbing that D'annunzio, for me an irritating Nazi, was so... unbelievable. Yes, that shocked me, but good. That's just the Italians."⁵⁰ (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 00:43:48).

⁴⁹ To be accurate, on the monument is written "Funzionario forestale e geniale sperimentatore dell'elica navale lo commemora a 200 anni dal suo arrivo in queste terre il Comune di Trieste." That translates to "The Municipality of Trieste commemorates him, 200 years after his arrival in these lands, as a forestry official and brilliant experimenter of the naval propeller." As the original is similar to the message of what the interviewee wanted to convey, I decided not to correct it in the main body.

⁵⁰ "Naja, hat die Idee also, dass die alten Denkmäler wieder dort sind, wo sie immer waren, ist auf jeden Fall sehr gut, aber die neuen Denkmäler da sieht man, wie die Stadt darum ringt, ja, ja nicht eine österreichische Identität wieder anzunehmen. Beim Ressel-Denkmal steht nur drunter "Alle Nostre terre" ja, der ist da weder eine Jahreszahl noch irgendwelche... Also, dass er Forstingenieur der K. und K. Marine war und so weiter, also es wird vermieden, na ja, hier pro Italienisch oder pro österreichische Partei zu ergreifen. Beim Ressel. Hingegen, vor der Piazza della Borsa für mich extrem störend, dieser für mich ärgerlich Nazi, der D'annunzio denn so so... unglaublich. Ja, das hat mich schockiert, aber gut. Das sind halt die Italiener."

The passage from an interview reflects the clash between narratives of Habsburg nostalgia, multiculturalism and Italianity in Trieste. The interviewee used the monument of Joseph Ressel, a forestry engineer of the Habsburg navy, to show how the city is avoiding to portray too much "Austrian identity". Indeed, the memorial lacks clear identifiers of allegiance to either Italy or Austria and illustrates the city's attempt to navigate its complex heritage without fully committing to one national narrative (Figure 16). He mentions D'Annunzio, describing him as an "irritating Nazi," underscores the discomfort surrounding certain figures in Trieste's history. In fact, D'Annunzio's role in the nationalist movements and his association with fascism, complicate the city's identity as it seeks to embrace a multicultural narrative.



Figure 16: Ressel memorial in Trieste

"Dejavu-Effects" - Food and Social Practices

Nostalgia can manifest in various forms, with food being a powerful means of evoking memories and experiences of the past (Ličen 2018). Daša Ličen's anthropological research (Ličen 2018) reveals a recent shift in Trieste's culinary identity, focusing on the revival of Habsburg nostalgia over the past 30 years. Her fieldwork highlights how traditional Triestine cuisine is widely used to emphasise a Central European or Mitteleuropean heritage distinct from typical Italian cuisine. Dishes as krapfen, sauerkraut, sausages, goulash, cren (horseradish), and many other that are non-existent in the rest of Italy, serve as a symbol of the Habsburg past. In fact, Habsburg nostalgia became in the last three decades one of the key points of the local identity, the triestinità (Ličen 2018). Indeed, many restaurants in Trieste actively promote their imperial connections, particularly to Vienna, through their menu offerings. The city's culinary scene showcases dishes with Austrian and Hungarian influences presenting them as unique and exotic compared to mainstream Italian fare. However, Ličen (2018) observes that this culinary narrative tends to downplay or omit Slovene and other Slavic influences. This selective emphasis on certain cultural connections while marginalising others reflects a deliberate construction of Trieste's culinary identity. The reimagining of Trieste's food heritage thus becomes a tool for shaping perceptions of the city's cultural affiliations and history. Also here, this apparent "revival" of "tradition" is interesting to be analysed not because it shows us how nineteenth century Trieste tasted, but because it tells us about this day and age. Food is a vehicle of a popular narrative of Habsburg nostalgia. Undeniably, nostalgia tells us more about the present and future than about the supposed past of the city.

Marcel Proust's "In Search of Lost Time" famously illustrated how food serves as a potent vehicle for nostalgia, capable of evoking powerful memories and emotions. In Proust's narrative, tasting a madelein dipped in tea evoked childhood memories from Combray. Anthropologist David Sutton's work on the intersections between food and memory, "Remembrance of Repasts" (2001), highlights the capacity of smell and taste in shaping recollections. Similarly in her study on the radical changes in Indian food consumption, Tulasi Srinivas introduces the concept of "gastro nostalgia" to describe how food can symbolise long-lost utopian ideals for Indians (Ličen 2018, 48).

Along the same lines, also Triestine cuisine serves as a vehicle for recollecting memories of that Habsburg "golden age" allowing individuals to "get a taste" of the past (Ličen 2018, 48). In a revealing interview, a Viennese person who brought a second home in Trieste, described how triestine dishes with a distinctively Mitteleuropean origin creates a sense of familiarity and gives him "dejavu-effects" in restaurants and supermarkets:

"You go to the supermarket and you read Kaiser-Semmel, so you have one Kaiser-Semmel. Okay, you go to Pepi: 'un Kaiserfleisch-Semmel, per Favore', okay, goulash, gnocchi... Then there's, what's it called, Rudi somewhere in Via Torre Bianca or something, 'un Bauernschmaus per favore' and so on, so okay, we're at home. So Dreher, so Hungary isn't? All these references to the old monarchy are so obvious to us and that simply has permanent dejavu effects." (Interview 3; 00:23:00)⁵¹

This quote illustrates how the blend of Austrian and Hungarian dishes and vocabulary create a sense of familiarity and nostalgia to Viennese visitors, evoking the multicultural heritage of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Furthermore, the "permanent dejavu-effects" as described by the interviewee, highlight the enduring impact of history on contemporary life, showcasing how food can be a powerful connector to the past. Further in the interview, the same participant vividly described how he tasted one of his favourite dishes on a cold and rainy November day. In that day, the 200 km/h bora was causing shutters to bang and hotel room drains to gurgle:

"Then I went for lunch in a café in 'via Ghega', the Bar Udine, which was run by someone else at the time. It was an elderly lady who cooked very well and who always served 'Vanillekipferln', one of my favourite dishes, in that early before the Christmas season: Viennese 'Vanillekipferln'. And there, in the cold, nasty weather with Bora, I told in broken Italian to some locals what I was

⁵¹ "Man geht eben im Supermarkt, da steht im Supermarkt Kaiser-Semmel und einer Kaiser-Semmel. OK, man geht zum Pepi: "un Kaiserfleisch-Semmel, per Favore", OK, Gulasch, Gnocchi. Dann gibt es, wie heißt es, da Rudi irgendwo in der Via Torre Bianca oder so "un Bauernschmaus per Favore" ne und so weiter, also OK, wir sind daheim. Also Dreher also Ungarn nicht?, dieser ganze Bezug der alten Monarchie ist für uns sowas von ablesbar und das hat einfach andauernde dejavu Effekte"

*doing there. I'm originally from Vienna, I want to buy a flat, now why? A holiday flat. And he immediately tried to invite me, because that gives them hope, the Viennese come and buy flats again, there's hope."*⁵² (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 00:18:36).

The interview excerpt offers a rich snapshot on how food creates a sense of nostalgia both for the Viennese interviewee as for the locals. Notably, the locals' enthusiastic response to the idea of a Viennese person buying property in Trieste reveals an underlying economic hope tied to the city's Habsburg heritage. This anecdote encapsulates the interplay of nostalgia, cultural continuity, and economic aspirations in modern Trieste, demonstrating how the city's imperial past continues to shape its present identity and future prospects. In another moment of the interview, the interviewee spoke about the triestine buffet⁵³, a triestine culinary institution specialised in meat-based dishes that reflect Austro-Hungarian traditions. The interviewee noticed that one of the most known and historic buffets, Buffet da Pepi, is very popular among Austrians, Viennese and French visitors. He expressed confusion and specifically questioned why Austrians and Viennese would travel to Trieste to eat Schweinebraten (roast pork), a dish typically associated with Austrian cuisine (Interview 1, 00:28:02). This observation raises questions about the motivations of tourists who seek familiar foods in foreign locations, potentially prioritising comfort and nostalgia over new culinary experiences. If on one hand, he likes the dejavu-effects that Triestine cuisine gives him, he often underlined the superiority of Italian cuisine.

⁵² "dann Mittagessen gegangen in einem café in der via Ghega, die Bar Udine, die damals noch von wem anderen betrieben wurde. Das war eine ältere Dame die sehr gut gekocht hat und in dieser Zeit schon in der vorwärts Weihnachtszeit immer Vanillekipferln zugesteckt hat, die zu meinen Leibspeisen gehören: Wiener Vanillekipferln. Und dort, wie bei so einem kalten Sauwetter mit Bora, irgendwem Lokalen erzählt hab was ich dort mache im abgebrochenen Italienisch. Ich bin halt aus Wien, ich möchte Wohnung kaufen, jetzt wieso? Ferienwohnung. und der hat mich sofort eingeladen versucht, weil das gibt Hoffnung, Wiener kommen und kaufen wieder Wohnungen, es kommt Hoffnung auf."

⁵³ Buffets are a distinctive culinary institution in Trieste, characterized by their historical origins and unique offerings. Emerging over a century ago near the port area, these buffets were initially established to serve hearty meals to harbour workers who began their shifts early in the morning. Specialising in meat-based dishes, buffets reflect the culinary traditions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, featuring items such as würstel (sausages), cooked and smoked meats, tongue, pork hock, and various goulash and stews. Food is typically served from large metal cauldrons (caldaia), where meats are kept simmering just below boiling point. Accompaniments often include traditional side dishes like sauerkraut (crauti), freshly grated horseradish (kren), and strong yellow mustard (senape). Some buffets also feature regional specialties, such as baccalà mantecato (whipped cod fish), sarde in savor (marinated sardines in onion and vinegar) or seasonal dishes like gnocchi di susine (plum dumplings).

A further nostalgic element in Trieste and in the Karst region are the *osmize*: these institutions and the Viennese *Heuriger* are in fact both born from the same Habsburg tradition where winemakers can serve their new wine and products under a special licence for a shorter time. Triestini love their *Osmize*, and also the Viennese *Heuriger*, stating often that if you do not go to *Grinzing* while visiting Vienna, it is as if you never visited Vienna (Interview 1, 00:48:17). However, with time the two institutions evolved differently. According to an interviewee, Trieste has preserved certain typically Austrian elements of the past, while these have evolved in Vienna:

"You could say the Osmiza, yes yes, you hardly find such Heurigen here any more, because here you can buy lasagne at the Heurigen. Yes, well, there are still a few in Grinzing, [...] otherwise they sell melons with ham or whatever [...] when I was a child in Austria, the Heurigen were like the osmiza are today. But in Austria you don't find osmiza like that any more. So that means it's a piece of true Austrian culture, so to speak. Another older, older part of my own childhood in Vienna." (Interview 1; 01:10:15).⁵⁴

The interviewee notes that in Vienna nowadays *Heurigen* have evolved and include non-traditional dishes like lasagne and melons with ham, reflecting broader shifts influenced by globalisation. In contrast, he portrayed Triestine *Osmizas* as preserving a more 'authentic' cultural experience comparable to the *Heurigen* of his childhood in Vienna. This comparison underscores a sense of nostalgia, as the interviewee associates *Heuriger* and *Osmiza* with personal and cultural memory. Furthermore, the statement that *Osmiza* represents "true Austrian culture" raises questions about what he understands as Austrian culture.

Nostalgia for lost places from memories of childhood appear also in other occasions. In more interviews, Trieste was described as changing less rapidly than Vienna. According to an interviewee in Trieste you can still find those small family-run

⁵⁴ "man könnte sagen, die Osmiza, ja ja, bei uns findet man solche Heurigen so gut wie nicht mehr, weil bei uns kann man beim Heurigen Lasagne kaufen. Ja, also bei denen in Grinzing, es gibt noch einzelne, [...] sonst werden Melonen mit Schinken verkauft oder so.. [...] während das wie ich Kind war in Österreich, waren so die Heurigen wie es heute die Osmiza sind. Aber in Österreich findet man solche Osmizzen nimmer. Also das heißt, es ist ein Stück wahreres Österreichertum quasi. Noch ein älteres älterer Teil der eigenen Kindheit aus Wien ne."

shops where you can find only one good. This makes “*feel incredibly comfortable*” as “*a lot of things remained unchanged as in the time of my childhood*” (Interview 6, 00:24:29). Differently in Vienna, where everything “*it’s changing far to quickly*” (Interview 6, 00:24:30)⁵⁵.

A further mark of the Habsburg Empire in Trieste are the Viennese-style cafés. In fact, Kafeehäuser are a significant visual symbol of Habsburg cultural influence that persists in many former imperial territories (Ličen 2018, 44). In Vienna, historic coffee houses are recognised as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO (URL 5). They are noted for their unique atmosphere, characterised by elements such as marble-topped tables and Thonet chairs (URL 5). The tradition reflects a long-standing social practice that contributes to Vienna's cultural identity, serving as a hub for intellectual exchange and community interaction. Trieste played a pivotal role in the development of coffee culture within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The city's strategic harbour served as a crucial hub for coffee imports destined for Vienna and other regions of the empire. While contributing significantly to the establishment of Viennese coffee houses, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries, Trieste concurrently developed its own distinct coffee culture and establishments. In the contemporary era, Trieste maintains its prominence in the coffee industry, both as a major point of entry for coffee imports into Europe and as the headquarters for notable coffee companies such as Illy. The city actively promotes itself as a "coffee capital," leveraging its historical significance and ongoing relevance in the global coffee trade. In recent decades, Viennese historic coffee houses have seen a significant increase in promotion and tourist patronage becoming a central aspect of the city's cultural identity. Similarly, Trieste has experienced a resurgence of its own coffee houses in recent years. Many of these institutions, some dating back over a century, have become popular attractions that deliberately cultivate connections to the Habsburg era (Hametz 2014, 146). The focus of the revival is on their historical significance as venues for social interaction and cultural exchange, reminiscent of the vibrant literary and artistic communities of fin-de-siecle Mitteleuropa (Hametz 2014, 146). Claudio Magris, a prominent Triestine author, further emphasises their cultural importance portraying cafes like Caffè San Marco and Caffè Tommaseo as the very embodiment of the Mitteleuropean atmosphere.

⁵⁵ “Ich fühle mich irrsinnig wohl dort. Und alles, weil noch vieles ... weil ich in der Zeit meiner Kindheit noch stehen geblieben ist. In Wien verändert sich das viel zu rasch, was? Dort nicht”

The topic of coffee emerged during the fieldwork. The shop and cafe where I worked and conducted my research also retailed various types of Triestine coffee, which proved to be one of their best-selling products. The shop was equipped with an Italian coffee machine, and clients predominantly ordered coffee using Italian names such as espresso, macchiato, and cappuccino, rather than Austrian/Viennese coffee types and terminology or Triestine-specific terminology⁵⁶. Some customers specifically frequented the shop to consume Italian coffee, stating frequently that they want to drink ‘*a good Italian coffee/espresso*’. With regard to the interviews, coffee was not a popular topic. In recent years, Trieste has made concerted efforts to promote itself as a coffee city. However, in my impression, this initiative has not gained popularity in Vienna. One of the reasons for this fact could be the strong prevalence of the local coffee culture. The residents of Trieste exhibit pride in their coffee heritage, while Viennese consumers appreciate Triestine coffee and its preparation methods primarily due to its association with a general Italian coffee culture.

An interviewee addressed the debate regarding the significance of Trieste and Vienna in coffee culture, specifically emphasising consumption practices rather than trade: "*Apropo Vienna and Trieste: the history of coffee. They're still arguing today: is Trieste the most important coffee city, and now not in terms of trading coffee, but in terms of the coffee culture - drinking coffee, or Vienna?*"⁵⁷ (Interview 1, 01:38:05). His partner immediately asserted that Trieste holds unequivocally prominence in this context, as according to her, until recently coffee in Viennese cafes was really bad and expensive. On the other side, in Trieste the coffee is good and affordable and therefore much more present in people's everyday life.

A ‘new’ piece of Vienna in Trieste is the opening of the Sacher café and since its opening in June 2023, it has become a significant topic of discussion among locals and Austrians living or visiting the city. One interviewee expressed scepticism about the Sacher café, questioning the need to visit the Trieste location when they had never frequented the original in Vienna (Interview 1, 01:39:00). This sentiment suggests a

⁵⁶ In Trieste espresso is referred to as "nero", macchiato as "capo", a cappuccino is a "caffè latte", an espresso with a drop of milk is "goccia" or "gocciato"; a decaffeinated coffee as "deca". Coffee can be served in a glass, that is "in b" - "b" stands for "bicchiere", it means glass.

⁵⁷ "Apropo Wien und Triest: die Kaffeegegeschichte. Da streiten sie machen auch heute noch, ist Triest die wichtige Kaffeestadt, und zwar jetzt nicht Kaffee im Handel, sondern auch Kaffeekultur zum Trinken, oder Wien?"

degree of resistance to the importation of Viennese café culture into Trieste's established coffee scene. The current popularity of the Sacher café is viewed by some as a temporary "hype," with its longevity yet to be determined. Notably, the pricing of coffee at Sacher (3.50 Euro for a "Capo in B") is nearly triple than at historic local establishments such as Caffè Tommaseo or Café San Marco. The question of whether Austrians, particularly Viennese residents, frequent the Sacher café in Trieste has been met with scepticism. One interviewee noted that rather than local patrons, it is predominantly "*eher italienische Touristen*" (rather Italian tourists) who visit the café (Interview 6, 00:18:48).

Trieste, a small Vienna by the Sea?

On the interview privacy consent form I chose to write a simple title: 'Triest, Wien am Meer' (Trieste, Vienna at the sea). This description of Trieste is often used in Austrian newspapers or tourist guides. The title proved useful to start the interview as provoked reactions from the interviewees. One lady objected to my title saying that she disagreed because in Trieste there is neither a real community of Viennese people nor a 'rione' (district) named after the former Habsburg capital. According to her, the title was "*herabsetzend*" (belittling) (Interview 5, 00:10:02). I then told her about my experience, how often the Viennese responded with this phrase after they found out I was from Trieste or that so many newspaper articles describe the city with this image. After this explanation she agreed with me, saying that yes, a part of the city such as the centre - the one that tourists ultimately visit - is in this sense an Austrian city, since it was built under the empire. She went on to say that the 'loss' of Trieste was a bit sad:

*"So it was sad that this wasn't our harbour. Many people found that sad, didn't they? [...] Yes, and it's a bit of an afterthought, [...] But that's history. That was over 100 years ago. [...] But it's still felt that way, because it's such a pity, because it was so beautiful. We had a harbour there. Yes, that's true. But there's so much nostalgia, so much wistfulness"*⁵⁸ (Interview 5, 00:11:22).

⁵⁸ "Also traurig war es schon, dass dies nicht unser Hafen war. Das haben viele traurig gefunden, oder? [...] ja, und es ist ein bisschen ein Nachweinen, [...] Aber das ist ja Geschichte. Das ist über 100

The excerpt elucidates the multifaceted relationship between Austrians and Trieste, particularly emphasising the yearning for a lost connection to the sea. Older generations, in particular, retain in their collective memory an ingrained sense of loss, nostalgia. The aforementioned quotation is from an interview with an 83-year-old woman. Although she did not personally experience the 'loss' of Trieste, it is highly probable that those responsible for her upbringing were directly affected by this historical event. This intergenerational transmission of historical memory exemplifies how significant geopolitical changes can continue to influence cultural perceptions and collective narratives across multiple generations. There also is a recurring 'joke' in Austrian discourse regarding post-World War II geopolitical rearrangements. This narrative suggests a hypothetical scenario where Austria might have ceded Vorarlberg to Switzerland in exchange for retaining Trieste, thereby securing maritime access. The anecdote reflects a persistent Austrian longing for sea access (Interview 2, 00:24:20).

Conversely, not everybody likes the idea of Habsburg nostalgia and some fight against it. A further interviewee, an artist, expressed that he and his social circle composed of artists, creatives and medical professionals, all curious individuals love Trieste. However, none of them is nostalgic of the Habsburg empire: *"nobody has anything to do with the K&K [Habsburg monarchy] or anything... in no way... or not at all. On the contrary!"*⁵⁹ (Interview 7, 00:30:30). The artist then stated that when somebody is sad because the city is not in Austria anymore, he thinks the contrary: *"there are certain people who say: It's a shame that Trieste is no longer part of Austria. Thank God! Thank God it's not! No. So hurray! It would be a disaster if Trieste were in Austria."* (Interview 7, 00:31:03)⁶⁰. For him the city's appeal lies in its unique blend of characteristics. This quote provides insight into the contemporary Austrian perspective on Trieste, particularly among certain intellectual and creative circles. It challenges the notion of nostalgia for the Habsburg era, instead emphasising appreciation for Trieste's current identity. Reenactments and invitations of heirs to monarchs for monument

Jahre her. [...] Trotzdem wird es so empfunden, weil das ist so schade, weil das war so schön. Wir haben da einen Hafen gehabt. Ja, stimmt schon. Aber das ist so viel Nostalgie, Wehleidigkeit."

⁵⁹ "Ich meine, da hat keiner irgendwas mit K&K oder irgendwas... in keinsten Weise... oder gar nicht. Im Gegenteil! Also wir sind eigentlich..."

⁶⁰ "es gibt so bestimmte die sagen: Schade, dass Triest nicht mehr Österreich ist. Gott sei Dank! Gott sei Dank [ist es] nicht! Nee. Also juhu! Wäre ein Desaster, wenn Triest in Österreich wäre."

inaugurations appear "totally ridiculous" ("total lächerlich") as it is merely "folklore," which for the speaker is "contrived folklore that really goes against the grain" ("Aufgesetzte Folklore geht mir richtig gegen den Strich.") (Interview 7, 00:37:11).

Even if Trieste is not a small Vienna on the seaside, there are many traces of Vienna in it. Many interviewees told me about their memories in the city, or of traces of "their" past they found there. As a kid, an interviewee was fascinated by technology such as trains and boats. Josef Ressel, who designed one of the first working ship's propellers, was not new to him; on the contrary, already as a child he knew his inventions as these were portrayed in the Viennese Technology Museum. At that time, the museum had multiple dioramas and models of ships, Trieste's shipyards, trains and railroads built in the Habsburg times. He stated:

"You drive in [Trieste], down the Strada Nuova per Opicina by the university. You can see what? Villa Ressel. I was almost in tears. Is there a Ressel there? That must be the inventor of the ship's propeller! Villa Ressel yes and so, because here you are completely overwhelmed at every turn, yes, by these countless points of association with my own childhood, which was always very technically interested, which was interested in railroads, in shipbuilding." (Interview 3; Interviewee 2, 00:20:02)⁶¹

He then continued:

*"At a past Barcolana there were steam trains from Udine that brought spectators to the Barcolana in Trieste. I'm a lover of steam engines, and when I went to the station there was a locomotive: 'Lokomotivfabrik Floridsdorf'. I was in tears because it's okay at home, so the joke is that the Trieste people's lack of or uncertainty about their identity is not my problem because Trieste is **my** identity."* (Interview 1; 00:22)⁶²

⁶¹ "fährt man rein [in Triest], über die Strada Nuova per Opicina bei der Universität runter. Sieht man ja, was? Villa Ressel. Mir sind fast die Tränen gekommen. Gibt es da Ressel? Das muss doch der Erfinder der Schiffsschraube sein! Villa Ressel ja und so, weil hier ist man auf Schritt und Tritt völlig überwältigt, ja, von diesen zahllosen assoziations Punkten zu meiner eigenen Kindheit, die immer sehr technisch interessiert war, die sich für Eisenbahn, für Schiffbau interessiert hat"

⁶² "Bei einer früheren Barcolana hat so Dampfzüge gegeben von Udine, die Zuseher zur Barcolana nach Triest gebracht haben. Ich bin ein Liebhaber von Dampfmaschinen, gehe auf dem Bahnhof steht der

The cited passage reflects a deep personal connection to Trieste, emphasising the emotional significance of historical and cultural symbols. The interviewee's emotional reaction to seeing a locomotive made in a Viennese district underscores the emotional link between personal identity and regional history. This connection is further illustrated by the assertion that Trieste is integral to his identity. He portrays his secure identity in contrast with the perceived uncertainty among some Triestines:

"Yes, well, as a Viennese who has been interested in the sea, technology, and railways, like the Südbahn, and the Semmering Railway, from a young age. Where do they go? Well, of course, to Trieste and so on. If you have these technical interests as a Viennese and discover historical interests, you suddenly find that Trieste brings you something old and familiar in a surprising way, and that on every corner. Yes, it is always astonishing, and that this city constantly comes to meet you as a Viennese, because everyone says, well, there is Maria Theresa, and yes, Sissi of course⁶³." Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 00:22:35).

Such personal connections highlight how Trieste's Habsburg heritage is not merely a matter of historical record but an active, lived experience for many of its residents. This blending of personal and collective memory helps to sustain a cultural continuity that bridges the past and the present.

“Let's buy the City back!”

During an interview in the context of restoration, a Viennese interviewee criticised the ‘Italian way’ of renovation. He argued that investors, like himself, who

Lokomotive: Lokomotivfabrik Floridsdorf. Mir sind die Tränen gekommen, weil das okay daheim ja, also der Witz ist, dass sozusagen die mangelnde oder die Identitätsunsicherheit der Triestiner deshalb nicht mein Problem ist, weil Triest ist meine Identität."

⁶³"Ja, also weil ich s Wiener, der von Klein an sich fürs Meer interessiert, für Technik, für Eisenbahnen, die Südbahn, ja die Semmering Bahn. Ja, wo gehen die? Ja, natürlich in Triest und so weiter also. Wenn du als Wiener diese technischen Interessen hast, und die historischen Interessen entdeckst du plötzlich, das Triest dir auf verblüffende Weise alt, vertrautes hereinbringt ja, und zwar auf jedem Eck. Ja, es ist immer wieder verblüffend, und dass die diese Stadt als Wiener andauernd entgegenkommt, weil jeder sagt, Na ja, die Maria Teresa, ja eh die Maria Theresia, und ja Sissi sowieso ne." (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 00:22:35).

bring financial resources from outside to the region should focus on preserving the authentic character of historic buildings. According to him, the Italian approach to renovation means "*take all the walls out, replace the diagonal parquet, put the new floors in, replace everything with modern, stylish Italian furniture, [and] take out the windows.*" (Interview 3, 01:19:25) In contrast, he chose to "*take out the new floors and fix up the floors underneath and rebuild the old windows*" (Interview 3, 01:19:30). He perceives '*his role in Trieste*' (Interview 3, 01:20:33) as one of bringing external capital to help preserve and enhance "the older qualities" of the urban centre, thereby avoiding the Italian "*Sistemare*" mentality, which prioritises "*everything old out and everything new in*" (Interview 3, 01:19:37)⁶⁴. In his view, the concepts of "*rinnovare*" (renew) and "*restaurare*" (restore) do not exist within the restoration landscape in Trieste.

The aforementioned episode provides an interesting insight into the interviewee's position in Trieste. The Viennese interviewee's criticism of the "Italian way" of renovation could reflect a form of cultural imperialism. By positioning his approach as superior, he implicitly suggests that the Viennese (or more broadly, Habsburg) way of preservation is more authentic or appropriate. This attitude could reveal lingering colonial mindsets, where former imperial powers still feel entitled to dictate how former territories should manage their heritage. The interviewee's emphasis on preserving "the older qualities" of Trieste's urban centre demonstrates a nostalgic view of the city's imperial past. The desire to maintain an "authentic" character raises questions about whose version of authenticity is being privileged. The interviewee's claim that "*rinnovare*" (renew) and "*restaurare*" (restore) do not exist in Trieste's restoration landscape suggests a perceived lack of nuance in local approaches to preservation. However, this perception may stem from linguistic or cultural misunderstandings, rather than an actual absence of these concepts in Triestine practice. Furthermore, the interviewee's role as an investor "*who bring[s] money down there*" highlights the

⁶⁴ "dies wäre die Chance, dass diejenigen, die dort Geld runterbringen, Also ich zähle mich sicher dazu, dass wieder restaurieren, ja, also dass die Häuser nicht, wie es die Italiener gemacht haben, alle Wände raus, diagonale Parkett, Böden rein, alles auf moderne, stylische italienische Möbeln, Fenster raus. Sondern, Ich gehe her und bau zurück, ich tu die alten, die neuen Böden raus und du die Böden drunter herrichten und tu die alten Fenster wieder Rückbauen. Ne, es gibt sicher Chancen, dass das Kapital das von außen kommt auch im Zentrum oder in diese Stadt wieder, sag mal höhere und die älteren Qualitäten rettet und wiederherstellt restauriert, ja das kennen die Italiener kaum, da gibt es quasi das Sistemare und das ist letztlich alles raus und alles neu." 01:20:33 "Und Rinnovare oder Restaurare Es gibt zwar nicht wirklich so als Wort und. Und eben... Tatsächlich sehe ich meine Rolle dort eben als dieses Beispiel"

ongoing economic power dynamics between richer and poorer states in the European Union, and also between former imperial centres and peripheries. This financial leverage allows external actors to influence local preservation practices, potentially overriding local preferences or needs.

The economic power dynamics between Trieste and Vienna favours the latter one. In fact, compared to the Viennese real estate price, Trieste is cheap. From the interviews I conducted it emerged that some Viennese brought an apartment in Trieste and they rent the apartment in Vienna as the price there is more affordable than in the city they live the most time. In the last years the local newspapers, both *Il Piccolo* and the slovene-language *Primorski dnevnik*, often write that the local real estate market, especially in the city centre or near the sea, is dominated by foreign investors (e.g. Čoralič 2023, *Il Piccolo* 2024). An interviewee told me that his real estate agent estimates that 60% of the seals in real estate was to Austrians, and predominantly Viennese (Interview 3, 01:18:50). The local newspaper *Il Piccolo* frequently highlights the growing interest of Austrians in the Triestine real estate market. In an article published in summer 2024, they write that currently, more than half of the coastal villas overlooking the sea on the *Costiera* street are no longer owned by Trrestines. The majority of the new owners are Austrians and Germans, who typically utilise these properties as second homes for weekends and vacations (*Il Piccolo* 2024). In the last decade, the demographic landscape of the area has shifted significantly, with foreign nationals now constituting a large portion of homeowners. The past year has been particularly active, with Austrians or Germans acquiring seven out of ten properties. Homes with direct access to the sea and reachable by car are priced above one million euros, nevertheless, when compared to property prices around Austrian lakes, these homes are still relatively more affordable (*Il Piccolo* 2024).

The same interviewee who is “properly” restoring his Triestine apartment remarked, *"There are certainly people who, jokingly, say 'let's buy back the city,'"* (Interview 3, 01:18:50) adding that this statement is highly political and should be quoted with caution. Such comments, even when made in jest, underscore the complex relationship between Austrians and Trieste, and the socio-economic forces shaping modern cities.

The same interviewee posits that Trieste's multifaceted identity is paradoxically more accessible to Viennese observers than to some of its own inhabitants (Interview 3, 01:16:21). This is exemplified by the statement, "*the learned Viennese surprisingly brings the capacity to love all the heterogeneous parts of Trieste, because they remind him of something that also exists in Vienna*" (Interview 3, 01:17:03)⁶⁵. The cultural tension within Trieste is illustrated by divergent attitudes towards local traditions. Some Italians in Trieste distance themselves from regional dialects and carnival celebrations, as indicated by the observation that "*many people leave the city on these days because they reject this crude carnival activity*" (Interview 3, 01:16:21)⁶⁶. This rejection contrasts sharply with the Viennese embrace of similar elements in their own culture, where "*in the Heuriger culture and folk songs, things are always a bit cruder, there is dialect*" (Interview 3, 01:16:50)⁶⁷. The interviewee suggests that Trieste's complex identity poses challenges for its residents, noting that "*the Triestines have it much harder because the Italian middle-class rejects the Karst farmers*" (Interview 3, 01:17:20)⁶⁸. This internal discord is contrasted with the Viennese perspective: "*We don't find it difficult at all, as we've always had it and we appreciate everything.*"⁶⁹ In conclusion, the interviewee assumes that "*Trieste is so Viennese that probably many Triestines don't understand their own city*" (Interview 3, 01:18:08)⁷⁰.

Nostalgia and Identity between Triestines

Nostalgia for the Habsburg past is palpable among some Triestines. This sentiment is not only a longing for an idealised past of a prosperous and tolerant Habsburg Trieste, but is also a political project for the city's aspirations for its future (Ličen 2018). This is further supported by the use of words that derive from German in

⁶⁵ "der gelernte Wiener erstaunlicherweise die Kapazitäten mitbringt, all die heterogenen Teile Triest zu lieben, weil die erinnern ihn an irgendwas in Wien auch gibt"

⁶⁶ "viele Leute verlassen die Stadt an diesen Tagen, weil sie das so ablehnen, dieses derbe Faschingstreiben"

⁶⁷ "zur Heuriger Kultur zu Volkslied, da geht es immer ein bisschen derber zu, da gibt es Dialekt"

⁶⁸ "Die Triestiner haben sich viel schwerer, weil die italienischen Bürger lehnen den Karst die Bauern ab"

⁶⁹ "Wir haben es gar nicht schwierig, wenn es gibt es bei uns immer schon und wir schätzen alles"

⁷⁰ Trieste so Wienerisch, dass wahrscheinlich viele Triestiner an ihrer eigenen Stadt nicht verstehen"

the local dialect and the warm reception Viennese visitors receive from the locals: It happens quite often that people try to speak some German: "*Everyone tries to say 'Guten Tag, Guten Morgen, Guten Abend, Mahlzeit, Auf Wiedersehen'*"⁷¹ in German" (Interview 2, 00:24:28) and with German "'You get surprisingly far, often, surprisingly. Even more so with older people. With English, meanwhile, you can also get by'"⁷² (Interview 7, 00:14:05). I was told several times how common it is to find people who speak fluent German in Trieste (e.g.: Interview 1, 00:11:30).

The Triestine dialect bears significant similarities to the Venetian dialect while also integrating linguistic components from Friulian, Slovene, Croatian, German and Greek. This multifaceted linguistic composition is a testament to Trieste's rich history of immigration, maritime commerce, and the cultural imprint left by the Habsburg Monarchy. The dialect maintains a pervasive presence throughout the urban landscape of Trieste, with widespread usage across all demographic groups, including the younger population, in diverse social contexts and daily interactions. This also means that visitors are confronted with the dialect very often. For those who are just learning Italian, dialect can complicate things further. Those, on the other hand, who already speak Italian and have lived in Trieste for longer, soon learn to introduce dialect words into speech. And so they also notice words of German origin, such as 'viz' from 'Witz' (joke, in Italian 'scherzo'), or 'un bic' from 'ein bisschen' (a little bit, in Italian 'un pochino'). In an interview with a couple who has owned second homes in the Trieste area for nearly a decade and subsequently relocated there post-retirement, the topic of dialect emerged frequently. These interviewees, who are fluent in Italian, regularly employ various dialectal words in their speech. Moreover, they recognize numerous words of German origin even within the Triestine and Slovene dialect spoken in the region. They recounted that a Triestine friend expressed a particular fondness for the Triestine word 'Kichentich', derived from the German 'das Küchentuch' or 'das Geschirrtuch', meaning kitchen towel (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 01:31:12). Additionally, they noted German-origin words in the Slovene dialect, such as 'žluk' (from 'Schluck', meaning 'sip' or 'gulp'), 'lump' (meaning 'rogue' or 'rascal'), 'cug/cuh' (from 'Zug', meaning 'train'), and 'tišler' (from 'Tischler', meaning 'carpenter').

⁷¹ "Good day, good morning, good evening, enjoy your meal, goodbye."

⁷² "du kommst mit Deutsch erstaunlich weit, oft erstaunlich. Also bei älteren Läutern erst recht. Mit Englisch mittlerweile kommst du auch durch"

When Viennese people tell Triestines that they are from Vienna, they are always well received. During my fieldwork I gathered episodes where Viennese people told me how the local population was welcoming and helped them. They recounted an episode where in a packed full Heuriger/Osmizza in Contovello, the owners found a table for them even without a reservation, or when they parked their car in front of a garage and the owners let them do it (Interview 1; 00:20:08). Vienna is a "*Sehnsuchtsziel*" ("destination of longing") for Triestines (Interview 6, 00:08:14) and they have a "*verklärte Bild von Sisi und Wien und und Kaiser und Schloss*" ("glorified image of Sisi and Vienna and the emperor and the castle") (Interview 6, 00:08:30). Furthermore, Austria, their Alps and Christmasmarkets are generally a known destination of Winter holidays both for skiing and Christmas (Interview 6, 00:08:30).

The legacy of Habsburg rule remains palpable in Trieste also through the ubiquitous presence of imperial iconography. Statues, paintings, and photographs of former Habsburg monarchs adorn various locations throughout the city, serving as tangible reminders of its historical ties to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the course of my fieldwork, I encountered numerous anecdotes that highlighted the persistent presence of Habsburg traces within the urban landscape. An example was the amazement my interview partners had when they entered into a former small café that was located near the local church in Opicina. This establishment had adorned its interior with an abundance of visual representations of the Habsburg legacy, including numerous portraits of Emperor Franz Joseph and photographs of patrons' family members attired in the uniforms of the K.u.K. military (Interview 1, 00:19:20). The persistence of Habsburg nostalgia in Trieste is further exemplified by anecdotes that continue to circulate among locals. One interviewee recounted a particularly illustrative story:

"an old man who died a long time ago, but they told us about him and still do. The man was driving a car and whenever the police stopped him - and they stopped him partly because they knew him - and they were having fun - they checked his driving licence and he had a K&K driving licence. Okay, but the driving licence is no longer up to date and so he said - I was born there, that was my homeland, and I never left! My home - you're foreign, you came and

settled in. You're not from Trieste. - So, you're constantly confronted with stories like that today, and that's sometimes fun because it's a very lively story here." (Interview 1, 00:20:30)⁷³.

This anecdote vividly illustrates the complex interplay between identity, memory, and belonging in post-Habsburg Trieste. The elderly man's insistence on the validity of his outdated Kaiserliche und Königliche (K&K) driving licence serves as a metaphor for the enduring emotional attachment some Triestines feel towards their Habsburg past. His claim of autochthony and accusation of foreignness directed at the Italian police officers underscores the ongoing negotiation of local identity in a city marked by historical transitions and cultural hybridity. The interviewee's concluding remark that *"you're constantly confronted with stories like that today, and that's sometimes fun because it's a very lively story here"* (Interview 1, 00:20:30) suggests that such narratives are not merely relics of the past but continue to shape the contemporary social fabric of Trieste and Austrians who share a common past and recognise many of them.

Building on the analysis of Habsburg nostalgia in Trieste, it's important to note that for some residents, this nostalgia extends beyond mere sentimentality and manifests as a desire for political change. In Trieste, there are indeed individuals and small parties or movements, such as the Movimento Trieste Libera or Fronte per l'indipendenza, who advocate for a separation from Italy. These movements remain marginal in terms of popular support and irrelevant in the political landscape. The final goals of these movements differ, some of them want a separation from Italy, some complete independence and some other a return to a Habsburg-like arrangement.

The idea of restoring the 'Habsburg monarchy' or Austrian rule in Trieste is viewed with scepticism and amusement by some. In fact when speaking about such restorations, it is never clear what its proponents want: Austria a Republic and the

⁷³ "Mit solchen Dingen bist du dann halt auch konfrontiert" wie die Gesichte "von einem alten Herrn, der schon lange tot ist, aber von dem sie uns erzählt haben, und immer noch erzählen. Der Mann hat ein Auto gefahren und wenn ihm die Polizei aufgehalten hat - und die haben ihn zu Teil aufgehalten, weil sie ihn gekannt haben - und dass sie sich den Spaß gemacht haben, - wenn sie nämlich den Führerschein kontrolliert haben hat er den K&K Führerschein gehabt. Okay, der Führerschein ist aber nicht mehr so ganz aktuell und so, hat er gesagt - ich bin da geboren, das war meine Heimat, und ich bin nie weggegangen! Meine Heimat - ihr seid fremd, ihr seid ja gekommen und habt euch einquartiert. Ihr seid ja keine Triestiner. - Also, mit solchen Geschichten ist man heute laufend konfrontiert, und das macht zum Teil Spaß, weil es hier manches Mal eine sehr lebendige Geschichte ist." (Interview 1, 00:20:30).

Kaiser is dead⁷⁴. One interviewee dismissed such notions as absurd and otherworldly, comparing them to believing the Earth is flat (Interviewee 7, 00:35:00). He noticed the signs proclaiming a "Free City of Trieste" on the Bartoli building in Piazza della Borsa and found it hilarious (Interview 7, 00:35:00). Another interviewee, a psychiatrist, told me his explanation why Triestines are so happy when they meet Viennese people: "because that gives them hope that the Viennese will come and buy apartments again." (Interview 1; 00:19:21). According to him, Trieste is always in search of his identity, and Vienna became part of it: *"In other words, this image of the Triestines being torn apart and this gloomy identity crisis has been levelled out by the fact that Vienna has become part of their own identity."* (Interview 1; 00:20)⁷⁵. Additionally, the presence of Austrian tourists and investors often brings a sense of validation and pride to the local populace. The acknowledgment of Trieste's historical significance within the broader narrative of the Habsburg Empire serves as a source of communal identity and economic opportunity.

On the other hand, Trieste is recalling Italy through all the senses, and also benefits from the tourist myth associated with it. In Trieste you hear mostly Italian, you see Italian brands and buildings, you can eat pasta, pizza and drink aperitivo in front of the sea.

⁷⁴ Similarly in Interview 4: "Es gab dann auch schon ein paar Freunde, die durchaus, sage ich einmal, Austriakante wären, die halt das auch schätzen oder halt noch immer meinen, dass wir toll wären, wären wir noch bei Österreich, sage ich: aber es gibt keinen Kaiser mehr. Also von dem her, den kannst du im Fernsehen anschauen bei 'Wir sind Kaiser.'" (Interview 4, 00:19:34).

⁷⁵ "Das heißt, dieses Bild von der Zerrissenheit und dieser düsteren Identitätskrise der Triestiner hat sich dadurch ausgehebelt, dass Wien Teil der eigenen Identität geworden ist."

7. Myth of Italy

The touristic myth of Italy has evolved over centuries, shaped by phenomena like the Grand Tour and organised vacations (Hom 2015). Today, Italy is perceived as a bastion of tradition, craftsmanship, and culinary excellence that offers an escape from the pressures of globalisation (Hom 2015). The country's romanticised stereotypes of the "dolce vita" and good 'authentic' food create an illusion of resistance against the "anxiety and ennui of modernity" (Hom 2015, 3) and against modern capitalism and globalisation (Hom 2015). This carefully constructed portrayal of tradition and authenticity serves as a commodity for tourist consumption, promising a sensory-rich experience through art, landscapes, cuisine, and the allure of 'la dolce vita' (Hom 2015). Despite Trieste's unique historical background, including over 500 years of Habsburg rule, and its geographical position near the border which distinguishes it from "an ordinary Italian port city" (Baedeker 2023, 606), the potency of Italy's touristic myth remains effective in attracting visitors to the area. During the fieldwork the city's "*Italian way of life*" was often praised and desired. The Triestine '*dolce vita*' is portrayed as eating good food, drinking the good triestine coffee and wine or aperitivo at any hour of the day without stressing and chatting with everybody. As highlighted in the following quote, Trieste, compared to other former Habsburg cities with a "*familiar Austrian*" flair ("*dieses vertraute österreichische*" Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:40:47), is more desirable as it is Italian:

"I think it is more attractive than Budapest because it is Italian. That's the second thing, and this austrian familiar [flair]. But is nonetheless Italian, nonetheless. This Italian way of life, which makes you glad you have it!"
(Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:40:53)⁷⁶

The interviewee highlights Trieste's appeal compared to Budapest, attributing it to its Italian character, which resonates deeply with Austrian visitors. They note that the city's

⁷⁶ "Und ich glaube, das macht halt mehr Anziehungskraft aus als Budapest, weil es halt italienisch ist. Das ist diese zweite. Und dieses vertraute österreichische. Diese italienische Lebensart, wo man froh ist, dass man die hat."

blend of Italian and Austrian influences creates both a sense of familiarity and ‘novelty’ while still embodying the desirable and romanticised ‘Italian way of life,’ characterised by enjoyment and leisure. The reason why the Italian way of life attracts Austrians is because “*Italy is, after all, a land of longing for Austrians*” (“*Italien ist halt ein Sehnsuchtsland für Österreicher*” Interview 6, Interviewee 1, 00:40:53). However, on the other side, the city deliberately does not mark itself as a typical Italian destination. Rather than promoting itself as a stereotypically Italian coastal city or as a “*Italian party mile*,” Trieste emphasises its historical connection to Vienna and its café culture tradition (Interview 4. 00:32:10). The phrase “Vienna by the sea” (Wien am Meer) is used to describe Trieste's character, suggesting a blend of Austrian elegance and Mediterranean charm. In fact, the city could not compete with other coastal cities with beach resorts or with clubs as they are present in a small number.

The affinity of Austrians for Italy is a well-established phenomenon. More interviewees know Italy since their childhood as they spend their family vacations. Those who went to the beaches of Caorle (Interview 6, Interviewee 1) and the Adriatic Riviera, those who went to Tuscany, the Lake Garda and Milan (Interview 4), and those who started out in Italy during their youth, travelling throughout the years from the south to the north (Interview 1, Interviewee 2, 00:06:00). Venice was also often mentioned as one of the most visited Italian cities and for Austrians is really near. One interviewee reflected on the changing dynamics of tourism in Italy, particularly focusing on Venice and Trieste. She suggests that Venice has become so popular that it has become almost unbearable for visitors. Furthermore, Venice is so touristic that it is “not authentic at all” (Interview 3; 00:14:02) and houses there are much more expensive (Interview 3; 00:12:22). As a result, they believe that tourist interest is shifting towards Trieste (Interview 2). The speaker notes that Trieste now embodies the image of an Italian city much more than it did 20 years ago (Interview 2). This observation implies that Trieste has undergone a transformation in recent years, possibly becoming more aligned with the stereotypical expectations of an Italian urban experience that tourists often seek.

In discussing perceptions of cultural and geographical boundaries of Italy, one interviewee offered a personal perspective based on his experiences in the Carnic

region. Their account provides insight into how individuals may construct mental maps of national identities in border areas. The interviewee stated:

“I frequently travelled to the Carnic region and spent considerable time there. In one particular location where I regularly stayed during both summer and winter, I encountered a woman. We engaged in conversation, and I expressed that while the Carnic area was undeniably beautiful, it felt somewhat too Austrian in its mountainous character. I mentioned that I didn't necessarily always want to hike and then inquired about where Italy truly begins. For me, Italy was conceptualised as an imaginary line starting approximately at Turin, extending across, and terminating at Trieste. Everything south of Trieste, in my perception, constituted Italy, while everything north of it was ‘jöö’... mountains [laughing]”
(Interview 1, Interviewee 2, 00:08:42)⁷⁷

The account provides an insight into how individuals construct mental maps of national identities in border areas. He stated that the mountainous character of the Carnic region reminds him too much of Austria to be perceived as Italy.

“Italianità”

Trieste's urban fabric is a palimpsest of historical periods, reflecting its unique position at the intersection of Italian and Habsburg spheres of influence. While the city centre's architecture predominantly dates from the Habsburg era, there are notable exceptions that assert an Italian character. Among these are structures built in the Fascist architectural style, which serve as bold statements of 20th-century Italian nationalism within the urban landscape. As the city's monuments and street names serve as tangible links to various historical epochs, the toponymy evolved in the last century creating a

⁷⁷ “Und bin dann aber sehr viel gefahren in ihn hinauf ins Karnischen. Okay, auch sehr viel Zeit verbracht. Ja, und da gab es in dem einen Ort, wo ich wirklich Sommer und Winter mich immer wieder aufgehalten habe. Gab es eine Frau. Und wir haben so ins Reden kommen und... Und.. Und. [00:08:00] Dann habe ich gesagt ja, das ist wahnsinnig schön im Karnischen, Aber es ist mir schon ein bisserl zu österreichisch aus den Bergen. Ich will nicht unbedingt immer wandern ...und habe gesagt, aber eigentlich ja. Und dann muss ich mal fragen, wo fängt eigentlich Italien an? Italien? Okay, ja, dieses Italien, das war wie gesagt für mich, ob ich so eine imaginäre Linie und die fängt in etwa an bei Turin an und zieht sich herüber und endet da in Triest. Okay, und alles ab Triest ist es für mich Italien. Okay, Alles, was oben ist..... Jö. [00:08:42]: Berge ,HAHAH”

rich tapestry of cultural memory. Interestingly, even monuments directly associated with Trieste's Habsburg past have been recontextualized through new lenses: some reread the former Austrian rulers as figures of a unitary Mitteleuropa or Europa. This process of reinterpretation demonstrates the city's complex negotiation of its historical identity. A prime example of this nuanced approach to historical representation is the monument dedicated to Josef Ressel, a forest engineer who served in the Imperial and Royal Navy. The inscription on the monument is particularly telling: under the name is written "Alle nostre Terre" (To our lands). This carefully crafted text exemplifies a diplomatic approach to historical commemoration. By omitting explicit references to either Italian or Austrian allegiances, the monument's creators have navigated the potentially contentious waters of national sentiment. As one interviewee observed, this wording "avoids taking sides here pro-Italian or pro-Austrian" (Interview 3, 00:43:02).

The perception of Trieste's "italianità" (Italianness) remains a subject of debate and with the political right narrating that the city's Italian identity is frequently "under threat". Following these concerns, the municipal administration has undertaken various initiatives and toponymic decisions that reflect a deliberate strategy to assert and solidify the city's connection to Italy. One notable example of this approach is the installation of a statue honouring Gabriele D'Annunzio in Piazza della Borsa. The timing of the statue's inauguration on September 12, 2019, was highly significant, as it marked the centenary of the Italian occupation of Rijeka/Fiume. The commemoration of D'Annunzio, an Italian poet and prominent figure in the early Fascist movement who played a direct role in the invasion of Rijeka, makes the commemoration particularly controversial.

The semiotic significance of symbols reveals complex attitudes towards the city's Habsburg past and present-day ethnic dynamics. Some Triestines exhibit nostalgia for the Habsburg era, while others harbour negative sentiments. These divergent perspectives and tensions are elucidated in anecdotes from the interview with a Viennese family that brought a sailing boat. Their red and white gennaker and obligatory Austrian flag elicited discomfort from a Triestine friend, who felt embarrassed by the prominent display of Austrian colours: *"I'm required to put this red-white-red flag on it and as we sailed across, it was somehow embarrassing for him:*

What's a huge red-white-red flag doing there?" (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 01:21:44)⁷⁸. Conversely, a port authority official complimented the boat and flag in German, demonstrating a very welcoming attitude towards Austrian symbols. The interviewee's decision to moor his boat at a Slovene minority sailing club in Trieste provoked questioning from Italian acquaintances. While the Austrian family chose the club for practical reasons, their Italian friends exhibited unease, behaving as if entering "*enemy territory*" ("*Feindesland*") and as anticipating "*something uncanny*" ("*etwas ganz Unheimliches*") (Interview 3, Interviewee 2, 01:04:01). This reaction was described as "*Berührungssängste*" (fear of contact) by the interviewee's wife (Interview 3, Interviewee 1, 01:04:04). The interviewee noted feeling welcome at most sailing clubs, with one exception being an elite club in the city centre. This club's founders were irredentists who deliberately chose green and red as their colours to represent, along with the white of the sails, the Italian tricolour - a symbol the Habsburg authorities sought to suppress. These anecdotes illustrate the enduring impact of historical tensions on contemporary social interactions in Trieste, particularly in relation to national and ethnic symbols that Austrians who decide to buy a second home there need to learn. The varying responses to Austrian, Slovene, and Italian emblems reflect the complex interplay of identity, memory, and politics in this border region. Another example of the historical complexities and the different semiotic significance of specific signifiers could be related to clothing choices, is the black shirt. While in Vienna such attire might be perceived as a mere fashion statement, in Trieste and throughout Italy, it carries profound historical connotations (Interview 1, 00:22:30; Interview 3, 00:44:58). The "*camicia nera*" (black shirt) is inextricably linked to the armed squads of Italian Fascism under Benito Mussolini's regime. In Austria and Germany it is not the black, but the brown colour that is associated with Nazism.

“Italian Charm”

The construction of Italy's touristic mythos has created a strong allure for international visitors. The Italian charm is multifaceted, encompassing various elements of cultural and aesthetic appeal. It is manifested, for example, through architectural

⁷⁸ Ich bin verpflichtet, diese rot-weiß-rot Flagge drauf zu tun und wie wir darüber segeln war, kommt ja ja, dass das für ihn zu schämen war, irgendwie: Was tut eine riesige rot weiße rote Flagge da.

aesthetics, sartorial elegance, and the romanticised concept of the "Italian way of life," often encapsulated in the phrase "la dolce vita" (the sweet life). Gastronomy and enology play pivotal roles in this myth making process. Italian dishes, particularly those featuring pasta and pizza, have become globally recognized symbols of Italian cuisine. Similarly, Italian coffee culture and viticulture contribute significantly to the country's gastronomic reputation. The Italian language, perceived as melodic, and the nation's musical heritage further enhance this image. Speaking about Italian culture and language, one interview participant, an Austrian writer, expressed a longstanding affinity for Italy rooted in childhood experiences, which has created a fondness for the Italian language and its musical traditions:

*“I've always liked Italy and because I've been there since I was a child, I really like the language, the Italian music, not so much the Cantautori, because the lyrics aren't so easy to understand, but the Italian pop and rock music. And Lucio Dalla.”*⁷⁹ (Interview 4, 00:08).

The quote shows an interviewee's appreciation for Italian language and music. All the interviewees expressed a strong interest for the Italian language, most of them speak it fluently and others seem actively engaged in learning it. This trend was further confirmed during fieldwork observations in a wine and gastronomy shop, where numerous clients demonstrated their fondness for the Italian language. However, it is noteworthy that some individuals' attempts to emulate Italian pronunciation often resulted in exaggerated mimicry of the accent. This behaviour, while potentially intended as humorous, is sometimes perceived as insensitive and potentially offensive.

The carefully curated representation of Italian culture has been instrumental in shaping international perceptions and expectations, thereby fostering a robust tourism industry centred around these idealised notions of Italian life, culture and aesthetic. An interviewee expresses a deep appreciation for the Italian approach to preserving historical architecture, and also in Trieste (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:24:41). He

⁷⁹ "Italien immer schon getaugt und weil ich eben von Kind an dort war, mir die Sprache sehr gefallen, die die italienische Musik jetzt weniger die Cantautore, weil so gut verständlich, die Texte ja nicht, aber durchaus die italienische Pop und Rockmusik. und Lucio Dalla, Da ist die Grenze. Der ist modern, der hat etwas, der er ist eigentlich, ein Cantautore hat aber eine sehr, sage ich einmal, eine sehr crossover Musik, weil halt wirklich mit allen ...Strömen gesungen"

notes that in Italy, old, beautiful buildings are often maintained in their original state, even if it takes decades to restore them. This is contrasted with the Austrian tendency to demolish old structures deemed too dilapidated, replacing them with less attractive modern buildings (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:25:00). He admires what he calls the "*Italian charm*" of slightly decaying buildings, suggesting that this imperfection adds to the authenticity of the place. He continues illustrating this point by comparing the Italian side of Lake Como to the Swiss side, describing the latter as "*a Disneyland*" ("*ein Disneyland*") due to its overly perfect renovations (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:25:13). The interviewee argues that some degree of decay is necessary to maintain charm and authenticity, stating that "*the decay also creates charm*" ("*der Verfall macht auch einen Charme aus*"). This perspective highlights the interviewee's preference for the Italian approach to urban preservation, which he sees as more respectful of history and more aesthetically pleasing than the modernising tendencies he observes in Austria. While explaining why they chose to buy an apartment in Trieste, the interviewee and his partner described the Triestine atmosphere as a blend of 'familiar Austrian flair' and 'Italian charm'. Comparing the city to Udine, they note that Trieste possesses a "more southern flair" despite its northern location whereas Udine resembles the "orderly Veneto" found further north (Interview 6, 00:27:17). This observation suggests a cultural gradient that does not strictly follow geographical lines, with Trieste embodying characteristics more commonly associated with southern Italian cities.

‘La dolce vita’ & ‘no se pol’

"*La dolce vita*" (the sweet life) is a phrase that is often used in the tourism industry when describing the "Italian lifestyle". This romanticised and fabricated lifestyle is characterised by the pursuit of pleasure, contentment, and stress avoidance. This concept emphasises the appreciation of culinary excellence, social engagement, familial bonds, passionate relationships, and artistic enjoyment. The concept of "*dolce vita*" was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews or during the fieldwork. Nevertheless, elements associated with this lifestyle paradigm frequently emerged in the data. Austrian respondents consistently reported that the inhabitants of Trieste seem to

exhibit a more relaxed approach to daily life, characterised by a willingness to find time for leisure activities, even during conventional working hours.

Specifically, interviewees noted the prevalent custom of enjoying coffee or aperitifs, such as spritz, as a regular part of the diurnal routine. In describing the lifestyle in Trieste, an interview participant asserted that people there are “*entspannter*” - *more relaxed* (Interview 1, 00:16:25). The interviewee, who has spent extended periods in Trieste over the past decade and has formed numerous friendships with local residents, describes a nuanced perspective on the city's social dynamics. They observe that the people of Trieste exhibit a relatively relaxed attitude toward various situations, often embodying the sentiment that “*it is what it is.*” This outlook is encapsulated in the local motto “*no se pol,*” which reflects a cultural acceptance of circumstances beyond one's control (Interview 1, 01:24:51).

The interviewee recounted an episode that happened a few days before when her former colleagues from Vienna were visiting her in Trieste. They wanted to go to the seaside in Barcola but the bus ride turned out to be particularly chaotic. The bus was overcrowded and the front door malfunctioned, which led to a humorous confrontation among passengers, ultimately illustrating the communicative and lighthearted nature of social interactions in Trieste, contrasting sharply with the more serious demeanour often observed in Vienna. The interviewee's former coworkers expressed their astonishment at the communicative nature of the Triestines. However, she noted that these same individuals would not find such interactions amusing in Vienna (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 01:27:20).

In discussing the social atmosphere of Trieste, the interviewee offered a comparison to Vienna. She acknowledged Vienna's status as a larger metropolis in comparison to Trieste, however she noted in the latter a much higher frequency of causal interactions. According to her, people communicate much more:

“It's more communication. Quickly for once. Yes, people are quicker to ask how you're doing. And it's like that, maybe it stays on the surface and isn't as deep. That may be the case, but on the whole it's enough to feel good. Yes, I don't need to make 100 new friends really intensively, because you can't do that anyway. We have our friends anyway, with whom we can then socialise on a very personal

level. But it's generally quick, somehow so nice, a bit of a chat and you're not sitting alone, it happens very quickly. And what I particularly appreciate is that there are no age differences. So either... You're not asked how old you are, so yes, either they're nice and you can talk to them, then it doesn't matter how old you are or it doesn't work. But then it doesn't matter if they are younger. Yes, and that's the big difference. The really big difference" (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 00:43:15)⁸⁰

The interviewee described that in Trieste people tend to communicate much more also with strangers. While recognizing that these interactions might be superficial, the interviewee posited that such encounters are sufficient for fostering a sense of belonging and well-being. A particularly noteworthy observation was the perceived absence of age-based discrimination in such causal social settings. Instead, she suggested that the quality of conversation and personal compatibility are prioritised. This age-inclusive social dynamic was highlighted as a "*really big difference*" distinguishing Vienna's social landscape from other urban environments. In the course of the interview, the participant's partner reiterated similar sentiments, noting that as an older couple in Trieste, they frequently engage in casual conversations with various individuals, including younger people. He remarked, "*It operates differently here today. Vienna remains somewhat more ...closed off*" ("*Das läuft hier heute alles anders. Wien ist schon nach wie vor noch ein bisserl.... Geschlossener.*" Interview 1, Interviewee 2, 00:46:30). He further indicated that the only venue in Vienna where such informal exchanges might occur is at a Heuriger. The couple further elaborated on their observations regarding social interactions, expressing that individuals in their community possess a remarkable capacity for memory. They noted, "*You often get the impression that it is somewhat superficial, but then it is not. Often, you do not see someone for a while, and when you suddenly inquire about something you mentioned*

⁸⁰ "es ist mehr Kommunikation. Schnell einmal. Ja, also es wird schneller mal gefragt, wie es dir geht. Und es ist so, es bleibt vielleicht an der Oberfläche und ist nicht so tief. Das mag schon sein, aber im Großen und Ganzen reicht es ja auch, sich wohl zu fühlen. Ja, ich brauche jetzt nicht 100 neue Freunde wirklich intensiv, weil das kann man eh nicht. Man hat eh seine Freunde, mit denen man sich dann sehr persönlich austauscht. Aber so allgemein schnell, irgendwie so nett, Ein bisschen plaudern und man sitzt nicht allein, geht das sehr schnell. Und was ich besonders schätze, ist eigentlich, dass es keine Altersunterschiede. Also entweder... Es wird nicht gefragt, wie alt jemand ist, also ja, entweder ist er nett, man kann sich mit ihm unterhalten, dann ist es egal wie alt er ist oder es geht halt nicht. Aber dann isst auch wurscht, wenn er jünger ist. Ja, und das ist der große Unterschied. Das wirklich große Unterschied"

previously, it feels quite endearing. Yes, that is a very nice gesture.”⁸¹ (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 00:48:30). In a similar vein, another couple in a separate interview observed that Triestines make a concerted effort to remember names. They specifically mentioned that upon entering a shop near their vacation home, the staff members actively attempted to recall their names. While the employees successfully remembered one partner's name, they encountered more difficulty with the other partner's name, which was of Austrian origin and bore little resemblance to typical Italian names (Interview 6, 00:07:02). The effort made by shop employees to remember names reflects a broader social practice in Trieste that values interpersonal relationships and community engagement. The couple also emphasised the warmth and immediacy of personal connections. In the neighbourhood they live in Trieste they experience often that people greet one another as they pass by, whereas *“In Vienna, no one greets you”* (Interview 6, Interviewee 1, 00:31:27)⁸². Furthermore, the couple indicated that Triestines often warmly welcomed them in their city. They recounted an instance where even the notary expressed, *“Benvenuti in Italia/in Trieste,”* which they noted *“would never happen in Vienna.”* (Interview 6, 00:31:20) This observation underscores the cultural differences in hospitality and community engagement between the two cities. It is interesting that Viennese residents perceive Trieste as embodying warmth and hospitality. One interviewee remarked that such cordiality is “not present at all” in Vienna (Interview 6, 00: 30:00). On the other side, Italians often describe Trieste as one of the most unfriendly cities in Italy (URL 7). However, it is important to note that Vienna has consistently been ranked as one of the least friendly cities globally (ORF 2022), which may contribute to the perception that Trieste appears significantly friendlier in comparison.

Gastronomy & Oenology

The culinary mythology surrounding Italy is deeply intertwined with the romanticised image of the country's refined gastronomy and oenology. This perception was particularly pronounced in the specialty shop where I conducted my research,

⁸¹ “Du hast so oft den Eindruck, dass es ein bisschen oberflächlich ist, aber dann nicht. Man sieht dann ja oft jemanden länger nicht. Und man weiß, wenn man auf einmal nachgefragt für etwas und man hat sich das gemerkt, bin ich ja richtig süß. Ja, also das ist ein sehr netter Zug”

⁸² “In Wien grüßt dich kein Mensch.”

which is unsurprising given its focus on regional wines, coffees, cured meats, and cheeses. Italian cuisine enjoys widespread popularity in Austria, but its representation often suffers from oversimplification. From an outsider's perspective, Italian food is frequently portrayed as consisting primarily of pasta and pizza with these dishes erroneously presented as ubiquitous local fare throughout the country. In his 2015 publication "Fine pasto" (End of the Meal), anthropologist Vito Teti presents a critical analysis of the contemporary understanding of Italian cuisine. Teti posits that the notion of Italian culinary tradition is precariously positioned between two conceptual constructs, both of which he argues are essentially fictitious: the Mediterranean diet and regional cuisine. The Mediterranean diet was invented by the American physiologist Ancel Keys and is therefore more a product of 20th century nutritional science than an authentic representation of historical eating habits in the Mediterranean region (Teti 2024). The regional cuisines are a postmodern construction that incorporate diverse, fragmented, and heterogeneous elements, originating from various localities within individual regions and from the communities of emigrants themselves (Teti 2015). Teti (2015) writes that the 'Italian cuisine' was largely invented abroad when emigrants reproduced foods from their place of origin as a way to ease feelings of nostalgia. This phenomenon suggests that, in conjunction with the transportation of culinary practices and dietary habits, emigrants metaphorically conveyed elements of their homeland to their new environments. In the Americas, Italian immigrants constructed their new identity through old food modified by new practices and ingredients they discovered in their new home. These immigrants, upon returning to their native countries for holidays, brought back novel culinary preparations that had been refined through American production methods. Consequently, in the post-World War II era, recipes began to emerge and proliferate that are now perceived as timeless or traditional. The culinary mythology surrounding Italian cuisine, as posited by food historian Alberto Grandi, is a construct designed to capitalise on romanticised notions of tradition and authenticity. Grandi argues that many dishes widely perceived as time-honoured Italian staples are, in fact, relatively recent inventions, strategically marketed to evoke a sense of cultural heritage and culinary legacy.

A touristic guide writes that in Italy food is not only “*to eat one’s fill*” but is “*culture*” (Werner 2023, 337)⁸³. The mythologization and marketing of Italian cuisine have demonstrated remarkable efficacy in shaping global perceptions. This phenomenon is increasingly evident in Trieste, a city experiencing a surge in tourism. As visitor numbers rise annually, there has been a notable proliferation of restaurants in the urban centre that diverge significantly from the “traditional” Triestine culinary heritage. Instead, these new eateries cater to stereotypical Italian gastronomic expectations. The city centre has witnessed a marked increase in pizzerias and pasta-restaurants. This trend reflects a broader pattern of culinary homogenization often observed in tourist-oriented locales

An intriguing phenomenon observed repeatedly during my fieldwork at the establishment where I was employed involved certain clients requesting bread, olive oil, and salt as an appetiser, telling me that “*In Italy they always bring you them*”. This practice, however, elicited considerable perplexity on my part, as I had never encountered it in Trieste, my birthplace and hometown, nor in any other location I had visited over the years. Subsequent discussions with Italian colleagues and acquaintances revealed that they too were unfamiliar with this custom. Upon further reflection, I realised that while it is common in Italian restaurants for condiments, including olive oil and salt, to be pre-set on tables, along with bread, as many Italians consume bread alongside their meals, the specific practice of using these items to create an “appetiser” by drizzling oil and sprinkling salt on bread is for me “strange”. Neither at my own table nor at those of adjacent diners did I witness anyone engaging in this behaviour as a prelude to their meal. Italians mostly perceive the presence of these condiments on tables to serve a different purpose: they are intended to adjust the seasoning of their ordered dishes if found to be insufficiently salted or peppered, or to dress salads according to personal preference. It is interesting how the same objects are perceived so differently in various locations. Taking the purpose of the condiments for granted, it took me three years of working there to comprehend what those Austrian clients meant when they told me that in Italy “*you always receive olive oil, bread and salt.*” Furthermore, putting oil on the plate to then collect it with the bread in more formal settings could be perceived in Italian dining culture as inelegant.

⁸³ “Essen in Italien ist nicht nur Sattwerden, essen ist Kultur.”

The people I interviewed, having been acquainted with Trieste for several years and having travelled to various parts of Italy, demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the country's culinary landscape. Analysis of the interview data revealed several recurring tropes associated with the perceived culinary preeminence of Italian cuisine. These narratives, embedded within the respondents' discourse, reflect and reinforce widely held perceptions about Italian gastronomy's global standing and cultural significance. During an interview with a family who had purchased property in Trieste, the topic of Italian food came out. While they did not perceive Trieste as conforming to the archetypal Italian aesthetic, they nonetheless affirmed that the cuisine was Italian and therefore superior. Specifically, they characterised Italian cuisine as "*finer and better*" ("*Die Italienische Küche ist feiner und besser*" Interview 3, 00:11:20) in comparison to Croatian cuisine. The Croatian coastline represents in fact another place that Viennese traditionally go on holidays. The husband stated that the wife, who spoke Italian and knew Italy, had to work on him to appreciate the finer Italian kitchen to the rougher and more difficult to digest Croatian food as Cevapcici with onion and garlic he preferred before (Interview 3, 00:13:10). Another interviewee expressed appreciation for the Italian dining experience, encompassing not only the cuisine but also the broader cultural and aesthetic elements associated with it. The respondent's statement can be translated and paraphrased as follows: "*I find the food in Italy simply delightful, along with the Italian style, the soft, white, starched tablecloths, and such things, as well as the excellent coffee.*" (Interview 6, 00:04:30)⁸⁴

The interviewee expressed a strong preference for Trieste, describing it as a "*perfect city*" (Interview 6, 00:32:27). They compared Trieste favourably to other Italian cities they had visited, emphasising its charm and the ease of daily life there. The respondent particularly appreciated the local customs and practices in Trieste, highlighting the accessibility and affordability of cafes and bars. They noted the convenience of finding places to enjoy a quick espresso or an inexpensive glass of wine or beer. The interviewee's comments reflect a preference for the more relaxed, accessible lifestyle they perceived in Trieste, as opposed to the potentially more hectic and expensive experiences in larger Italian cities like Milan (Interview 6, 00:33:00).

⁸⁴ "Und so finde ich das Essen einfach nett in Italien und den italienischen Stil und das weiche, weiße, gestärkte Tischtuch und und solche Sachen und der gute Kaffee."

Furthermore, the interviewees observed, food in Trieste aligns more with their expectations:

“The food is somehow what you would expect. Because my parents are very often in Sicily, because my sister has a flat in Syracuse, and she says she's always disappointed with the whole thing, because, um, the wine costs well over €5 a glass, no matter where you go, and there's breadcrumbs everywhere and this with dried grapes and so on. And there in Trieste, for me it's these fish dishes... It's all just the way you want it.” (Interview 6, 00:33:02)⁸⁵

The quote provides valuable insight into the subjective nature of culinary expectations and experiences across different regions of Italy. The speaker juxtaposes their family's experiences in Sicily with their own perceptions of dining in Trieste. The speaker prefers Triestine cuisine as this aligns more with his expectations of a fish dish, whereas in Sicily they put ingredients as breadcrumbs and dried grapes that he and his family do not like, or are not used to eat in such combination. The mention of wine prices exceeding 5 euros per glass in Sicily indicates a concern both with the economic aspects of dining and drinking habits. In fact, in Trieste drinking alcohol is much more common than in the south of Italy.

The drinking customs in Trieste were referenced in multiple interviews, providing insight into local cultural practices. One interviewee offered a particularly illustrative description of the city's distinctive social habits:

“When you go to the market hall in Trieste, older women come with shopping bags, buy something, then they go to the bar in the market hall, drink ‘ein Achterl’ (1/8 of litre) and then they go on shopping. Yes, that doesn't happen in Vienna, for example. It's much more relaxed.” (Interview 1, 00:27:14)⁸⁶

⁸⁵ “Das Essen entspricht halt irgendwie auch dem erwarten. Weil meine Eltern sind sehr oft in Sizilien, weil meine Schwester hat eine Wohnung in Syrakus, und sagt sie ist immer enttäuscht bei dem ganzen, weil ähm, der Wein kostet weit über 5 € das Glas, egal wo es hingeht und undes ist überall Semmelbrösel drinnen und dieses mit Rosinen usw. Und da in Triest, ist für mich dieses Fischessen... Es ist alles so genauso abgestimmt, wie man es haben will”

⁸⁶ “wenn man da in Triest in die Markthalle geht. Und es kommen ältere Frauen mit Einkaufstaschen, kaufen was, dann gehen sie in der Bar, in der Markthalle, trinken 1/8 und dann gehen sie weiter einkaufen. Ja, das gibt es im Wien zum Beispiel nicht. Da ist viel entspannter.”

This account highlights the integration of alcohol consumption into daily routines and social interactions in Trieste. It also suggests a cultural difference between Trieste and Vienna in terms of public drinking habits and social norms surrounding alcohol consumption during daytime activities. A bit further in the interview, the speaker recounted an episode he observed on the same day:

“So there are the old men sitting and drinking their wine and such, and then suddenly two younger or older women, white-haired older women, sit at the neighbouring table and drink an eighth of wine. And they said, yes, in Vienna, if you do that, then you're immediately labelled as a 'drinker', or what you'd call 'a drangla' in the Viennese dialect. Here it's all completely normal.” (Interview 1, 00:41:55)⁸⁷

The quote highlights the difference with the casual public drinking in Trieste, where the speaker thinks such behaviour is considered normal, contrasting it with Vienna, where similar actions would lead to negative labelling as "drinkers." The interview continued with the interviewee's wife who added an important difference in her eyes:

“Yes, but it's not just that people drink, it's simply that people are very communicative. And what I've noticed is that people aren't so ignorant of their surroundings. There are more interpersonal conversations, like that, in passing. There's always time for that” (Interview 1, 00:42:00)⁸⁸

The quote highlights the vibrant social dynamics of a particular locale, emphasising that the prevalence of communication among people transcends mere alcohol consumption. The interviewee notes that individuals are not only engaged in drinking but are also highly communicative and aware of their surroundings, leading to more interpersonal

⁸⁷ Da sitzen also die, die alten Männer und trinken halt ihre Weinl und so, und dann setzt sich am Nebentisch plötzlich zwei jüngere oder ältere Frau, weißhaarige ältere Frau und trinkt ein Achterl Wein. Und da haben sie gesagt Ja, in Wien, wenn du das machst, dann habe ich zuerst schon mal so gleich a Säuferl, oder was 'a drangla' wie man so schön im Wiener Dialekt hast. Hier ist das alles ganz normal.

⁸⁸ "Ja, aber es ist nicht nur das, das die Leute trinken, sondern es geht einfach, dass man sehr kommunikativ ist. Und was mir schon auffällt, ist, dass man nicht so ignorant der Umwelt gegenüber ist. Es sind so mehr zwischenmenschliche Gespräche, so zwischen Tür und Angel. Dafür ist immer Zeit.

conversations in public spaces. This reflects a strong sense of community and social cohesion, suggesting that the urban environment encourages casual interactions. Having worked in bars in both Trieste and Vienna, I suggest that alcohol consumption quantity may not significantly differ between these locations, caution must be exercised in drawing definitive conclusions without empirical data. The interpersonal dynamics within Viennese social spaces appear to exhibit a lack of propensity for spontaneous socialisation. It is, however, noteworthy to highlight certain regional drinking customs that demonstrate cultural similarities between these areas. In Trieste and its surrounding regions, ordering a "spritz" results in the serving of a beverage composed of equal parts wine and water. This practice is unique to this area and not commonly observed in other Italian regions. Interestingly, a comparable drink exists in Vienna under the name "*Weißer Spritzer*," indicating a cultural connection or parallel development. Furthermore, there exists a linguistic and volumetric similarity between the Viennese "*Achterl*" and the Triestine "*ottava*." Both terms refer to a specific serving size of wine, typically one-eighth of a litre.

“A Domicile in the South”

*“A few years ago, we had the idea that we would actually like to have a flat there as a base, so that we could just see the sea and then be there at the weekend or on extended weekends during the holidays and then have a base again for Istria, Friuli, Veneto, for everything. So, a domicile in the South!”*⁸⁹
(Interview 6, interviewee 1, 00:02)

The majority of people interviewed own a flat in Trieste. The reasons behind the choice are manifold. One of the reasons is the proximity of the two cities: the distance is approximately 475 kilometres. The ease of travel, with a four-hour car journey, makes the city an attractive destination for long weekend getaways. The city's rich history, the blend of Italian and Austrian-Hungarian cultural influences, the architecture, and

⁸⁹ “Vor ein paar Jahren war die Idee da, dass wir dort eigentlich gerne eine Wohnung hätten als Ausgangspunkt und so als einfach nur das Meer zu sehen und dann am Wochenende dort zu sein oder in verlängerten Wochenenden in den Ferien und dann wieder einen Ausgangspunkt zu haben für Istrien, für Friaul, fürs Veneto, für alles. Also, ein Domizil im Süden!”

picturesque coastal scenery also contribute to its appeal. Furthermore, Trieste's relaxed atmosphere and Mediterranean climate provide a welcome respite from the bustling city life of Vienna. Trieste also offers several advantages compared to other Italian cities, such as Venice. For instance, it does not suffer (yet) from overtourism and the property prices are lower in Trieste, making it a more affordable option for those looking to invest in a second home. In comparison to popular summer destinations such as Grado, Lignano or Jesolo, Trieste is a city that also has a more vibrant atmosphere during the winter months. The proximity of the sea, rich history, good food and wine, and good geographical location for travelling to both the Croatian seaside and other parts of Italy are also major attractions for Viennese residents.

According to the owner of the shop who has many contacts with Viennese people who bought an apartment in Trieste, in the early 2000s the housing market was highly restricted with very limited options available. She personally does not have a second home there, but often searches for interesting houses or hears about them from her clients. At a certain point the Italian government significantly increased the tax on second homes. As a consequence, many landlords decided to sell unused apartments and in Trieste there was a visible reinvigoration of the real estate market. Otherwise, these apartments became available on platforms such as Arbnb for short term rentals. Discussing the increase in owners of secondary residences in Trieste, it has emerged that there are real estate agencies specialising in the sale of Italian properties to the Austrian market. As demand has increased, so too have the prices of houses for sale:

“Yes, there are entire architecture agencies [in Vienna] that buy and renovate flats. Yes, and then they rent something out [...] But that's what happens in holiday areas, that young [local] people can't find a flat and other flats are empty half the time.” (Interview 2, 00:28)⁹⁰.

The real estate market in Trieste is undergoing a big change. This phenomenon is characteristic of tourist destinations, where locals often struggle to secure affordable housing due to the influx of external demand. Conversely, a significant proportion of

⁹⁰ “Ja, es gibt [in Wien] ganze Architekturbüros, die Wohnungen kaufen und herrichten. Ja, und dann vermieten ja die schon was [...] Aber das ist, was überhaupt passiert in Urlaubsgegenden, dass die jungen Leute keine Wohnung finden und andere Wohnungen stehen ja dann leer die halbe Zeit.”

properties remain vacant for extended periods, exacerbating the housing shortage and further marginalising the local population. However, in the case of Trieste, this phenomenon is not happening in the whole city, but only in the central areas:

“She: But what I find interesting here is that everyone is more or less looking for flats in the centre. There's hardly anyone who would say, I want a flat in Servola, right?”

Me: No, I think it's because you're on holiday, so if you're looking for a second flat, you want to be in the centre.

She: Exactly. You virtually want to walk out of the front door and sip your first Aperol.” (Interview 2, 00:30).⁹¹

Austrians who buy a second home in Trieste tend to stay near the city centre so that they can reach the inner city by foot or with public transport. However, these areas are often residential areas that were not so “cleaned up” as the very centre. One of the interviewed couples who brought their second home a bit further out of this area stated that the locals accept them really well also because they do not live in a touristic area, so it shows that they really wanted to be there and that they love the city (Interview 6, Interviewee 2, 00:05).

One of the interviewed recounted a suggestion made by a friend during a visit to Trieste, Italy, regarding the city's real estate market. The friend advised him to consider purchasing an apartment in Trieste, however, he initially dismissed the idea, citing a lack of personal connection to the city (Interview 4, 00:06). Nonetheless, the idea started to grow in his and his partner's mind. Soon they inherited some money and started to search for an apartment near the city centre. Being an Italy enthusiast since his childhood, the dream of a house in this country was strong. The love for Trieste started to grow quickly: it is in Italy, it is not too far from Vienna allowing weekend trips, and the city apartment can be used in winter too which would not be as feasible with the apartment in Grado, which is described as being “dead” in the winter. The family I interviewed wanted also “to get a foot on the sea again” (*“Ich möchte wieder einen Fuß*

⁹¹“Aber was ich hier spannend finde, dass ja alle irgendwie mehr oder weniger im Zentrum Wohnungen suchen. Es ist kaum jemand, der sagt, ich möchte eine Wohnung in Servola oder?/Ich: Ich glaube, weil man in Urlaub.., also wenn man eine zweite Wohnung sucht, will man auch so im Zentrum./ Ja genau. Da möchte man quasi bei der Haustür rausgehen und schon den ersten Aperol schlürfen”

ans Meer bekommen”) while to live and to build a home (Interview 3, 00:12:10). The father of the family stated that he spent a winter googling to realise that Trieste was much cheaper to Venice, a city where their friends lived. However, Venice is “too touristy” and there is no point to invest there in “*palaces that are sinking*” (“Paläste die versinken”) and “*ultimately there is hardly any authentic Venice left*” (“und letztlich es gibt kaum ein authentisches Venedig mehr”) (Interview 3, 00:14:40).

Another interviewer, an artist, told me that he was visiting Trieste often. When he met his wife, they often went there together and when the opportunity came that she managed to save enough money to think about buying an apartment they bought a relatively affordable apartment, especially if compared with Viennese prices. He then expressed frustration with the Viennese real estate market, stating that they had viewed many flats before finding one they could afford in a gentrified area. According to him in that neighbourhood German students from rich families often dominate the market, making it challenging for others to find suitable properties:

“We're irritated in Vienna about that...I mean, we looked at 20 flats before we came to XXXXplatz. In Vienna, it's the German students who snatch everything away. Or you walk into a flat that's 100 square metres and costs €1,400. And you think 1400? And that's now. And the students only say 1400, Dad pays, right?” (Interview 7, 00:21)⁹²

If in Vienna the rich German students buy apartments, in Trieste, there are also transnational gentrifiers who are doing the same. The artist continued that he noticed that Serbs and Russians and a few Austrians are the ones who buy houses there (Interview 7, 00:22). The Austrians he knows who brought an apartment in Trieste “are people who really want to be there” and who “*actually almost go there with a guilty conscience and say now I'm taking a flat, and now I'm the gentrifier*” (Interview 7, 00:22)⁹³:

⁹² “Wir ärgern uns in Wien über....Ich meine, wir haben uns 20 Wohnungen angeschaut, bevor wir jetzt zum XXXXplatz gekommen sind. In Wien sind die deutschen Studenten, die alles wegschnappen. Oder du gehst in eine Wohnung rein, die 100 Quadratmeter hat, die 1.400 € kostet.. Und du denkst 1400? Und das ist jetzt. Und die Studenten sagen nur 1400, Der Papa zahlt, ne?”

⁹³ “Die, die ich kenne, sind dann schon Leute, die wirklich dort sein wollen, die das, dass die eigentlich fast mit einem schlechten Gewissen dort hingehen und sagen, jetzt nehme ich eine Wohnung, weil jetzt bin ich der Gentrifizierer.”

"I now know seven or eight people who have bought a flat [in Trieste] and there's one of them who has money. The others are just normal people who buy a flat for €70-80-90, - 1.000.000. And of course we know that we're taking the flat away from the Triestine. Trieste isn't so blessed in terms of flats, is it? And you've noticed since we've had the flat, for three and a half years now, that suddenly in the last three years, precisely because of the pandemic, prices have risen really radically, which has hardly happened in Trieste in the last ten years." (Interview 7, 00:21)⁹⁴

The artist reported knowing several people who have purchased flats in Trieste, with only one being wealthy. He further underlined the fact later in the interview stating: *"Yes, and they're not all rich people. No, no, it's more the people who could never afford anything in Vienna. And in Trieste a bit yes"* (Interview 7, 00:38)⁹⁵ They acknowledged that this has taken flats away from locals and noted a significant price increase over the past three years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a rare phenomenon in Trieste. The price increase affected also the apartment his wife brought:

"Then you suddenly start speculating yourself, our flat cost €87,000 in total with all taxes, would have been €110-115 by now. That's really weird. Yes, I've never thought about my life, now I have a flat, I can sell it in five years. We'll never do that. No, no, no. Well, only if you really need money or something, then we'll decide that. [...] But never buy speculatively and nobody in our circle of friends has done that, they've all said they really want to be there." (Interview 7, 00:39)⁹⁶

⁹⁴ "Ich kenne jetzt mittlerweile sieben, acht Leute, die Interesse eine Wohnung gekauft und da ist einer davon, der hat Geld. Die anderen sind ganz normale Leute, die sich um 70-80-90 1.000 € eine Wohnung kaufen. Und natürlich weißt du, dass wir die Wohnung vom Triestiner wegnehmen. Triest ist schon von den Wohnungen her auch nicht so übergesegnet, ne? Und du merkst schon, seit wir die Wohnung haben, jetzt seit dreieinhalb Jahren, dass plötzlich jetzt in den letzten drei Jahren Genau Pandemie, dass die Preise wirklich radikal steigen was ist eigentlich in Triest in den letzten zehn Jahre kaum gegeben hat."

⁹⁵ "Ja, und das sind alles aber keine Geldleute. Nein, nein, also eher sind es die Leute, die sich in Wien nie was leisten könnten. Und in Triest ein bisschen ja."

⁹⁶ "Dann fängst du plötzlich selber spekulieren, unsere Wohnung hat in Summe mit allen Steuern 87.000 € gekostet, wäre jetzt schon 110-115 geworden. Das ist voll schräg. Ja, ich habe mir nie an mein Leben g'dacht, jetzt habe ich eine Wohnung, kann ich in fünf Jahren verkaufen. Werden wir nie machen. Nein, nein, nein. Also, nur wenn man jetzt wirklich Geld braucht oder sowas, dann werden wir das

The artist and his wife noticed the increase of the value of their apartment but do not think it ethical to speculate on real estate. They also firmly decided to not transform their apartment in an Airbnb and make the life of the neighbours miserable:

“Now I'm the gentrifier? So I don't really want to be, help! And that's why we are explicitly nice and good to our neighbours. And we've also put up a little sign outside our flat. I put it up saying that if there's anyone in our flat apart from us, then they're very, very, very, very good friends who are here. But we will never be a new Airbnb Forever” (Interview 7 00:22)⁹⁷.

The artist expressed concern about being perceived as a gentrifier, stating that they do not wish to be seen in this light. To alleviate this concern, they have made an effort to be friendly towards their neighbours and placed a sign outside their flat, indicating that any visitors are close friends, but emphasising that they will not turn their flat into a permanent Airbnb. He continued adding that he feels guilty as the flat is empty for eight months of the year and *“but it's true that you are suddenly [a gentrifier] yourself. In Vienna you're annoyed by who's blocking everything and suddenly it's you.”* (Interview 7, 00:21)⁹⁸. However, he does not believe that Trieste will ever suffer of overtourism as the beaches are not really accessible:

“[Barcola] is very democratic, which is great. No, you'll never really, really get mass tourism down there at certain times, because.... Because there's no access to the sea at all. But I'm all the more afraid of this stretch between the railway station and the first and under promenade... That there is something really bad coming. That the first row will really become a hotel front and there will be something behind it, but it has to be really parcelled out democratically” (Interview 7, 00:38)⁹⁹.

entscheiden. [...] Also aber nie spekulativ kaufen und es dort bei uns im Freundeskreis hat das keiner gemacht, haben alle gesagt, sie wollen da wirklich sein.”

⁹⁷ “Jetzt bin ich der Gentrifizierer? Also, Hilfe will ich eigentlich gar nicht sein und deswegen sind wir mit unseren Nachbarn explizit lieb und gut. Und wir haben auch bei uns ein kleines Schild gemacht. Ich habe gesagt, wenn in unserer Wohnung jemand außer uns ist, dann sind es sehr, sehr, sehr, sehr gute Freunde, die hier sind. Aber wir werden nie eine neue Airbnb Forever.”

⁹⁸ “Aber es ist schon so, dass du auch plötzlich selber bist. In Wien ärgert es dich, wer da alles blockiert und so und plötzlich bist du das selber.”

⁹⁹ “[Barcola] ist sehr demokratisch, was super ist. Nee, du wirst jetzt da unten nie den Massentourismus wirklich, wirklich kriegen zu bestimmten Zeiten, weil.... Weil es den Zugang zum Meer gar nicht gibt. Aber umso mehr habe ich Angst, dass das Stück dieses Stück zwischen Bahnhof und

Conclusion

“But well, so we can say... that what is being created is not just an image that we have of a city, but rather a dynamic process that we are helping to shape by being there. It's somehow a funny feeling that a kind of new identity is being created, which is getting closer to the way it used to be, namely that all these different cultures and languages work well and the whole thing is somehow growing and becoming richer as a result - which in turn attracts tourism. And even the cruise ships and the Chinese with their containers: it's becoming a big harbour again! Last weekend I was very touched again - there is actually a huge cruise ship here for the first time facing the city: it is the Holland America Line and Americans are being embarked here who are probably travelling to New York. Again! Just as it used to be with the Austro-Americana Line. Up to now, there have just been cruise ships travelling to Santorini or Ragusa or something like that, but the fact that there is an ocean liner sailing into the Atlantic, oh, it's going back to the way it used to be!” (Interview 3, 00:27:03)¹⁰⁰

The research has explored the intricate process of image construction for the city of Trieste within the Viennese context, revealing a complex interplay of narratives and representations. Drawing on Marcus's (1995) multi-sited ethnographic approach, this study started by tracing the presence of Trieste across various sites and media in Vienna,

dem ersten und unter Promenade..... Das da, das da ja wirklich Schlimmes kommt. Nicht, dass die erste Reihe dann wirklich eine Hotelfront wird und dahinter ist irgendwas, sondern das muss echt parzelliert demokratisch werden.”

¹⁰⁰ “Aber tja, somit kann man sagen... dass das, was da entsteht, das ist ja nicht nur ein Bild, das man hat von einer Stadt, sondern das ist ein dynamischer Prozess den wir mitgestalten indem wir dort vor Ort sind. Es ist irgendwie ein Lustige Gefühl, dass quasi eine Art neue Identität mit erschaffen wird, die sich wieder dem annähert, wie es früher mal war, nämlich dass all diese verschiedenen Kulturen und Sprachen gut funktionieren und das Ganze irgendwie wächst und dadurch reicher wird - und dadurch Tourismus. Und selbst die Kreuzfahrtschiffe und die Chinesen mit ihren Containern: Es wird wieder ein großer Hafen! Letztes Wochenende hat mich wieder sehr berührt - steht doch tatsächlich erstmals hier ein riesiges Kreuzfahrtschiff mit dem Bord zur Stadt: Holland-America-Line und hier werden Amerikaner eingeschifft, die wahrscheinlich nach New York fahren. Wieder! So wie es früher üblich war, bei der aus der Austro-Americana Linie. Bisher waren halt irgendwelche Kreuzfahrtschiffe die nach Santorini fahren oder nach Ragusa oder so, aber dass sa ein Ozeanriese steht der in den Atlantik fährt, Oh, es wir wieder so wie es mal war!”

offering a nuanced understanding of how the city's image is shaped and perceived. The methodological framework of this research was significantly influenced by the concept of "patchwork ethnography" as proposed by Günel, Varna, and Watanabe (2020). Marcus's (1995) multi-sited ethnography and Günel, Varma, and Watanabe's (2020) patchwork ethnography both challenge traditional single-location ethnographic methods by advocating for more flexible, interconnected approaches to studying complex phenomena across different sites and contexts. While multi-sited ethnography focuses on physically following people, things, or narratives across locations, patchwork ethnography further adapts this approach by embracing fragmented fieldwork, digital technologies, and the constraints of contemporary academic life. In fact, the patchwork ethnography approach acknowledges the neoliberal context and the multifaceted constraints—personal, financial, and political—that impact contemporary research and knowledge production (Günel et al., 2020; Cardoza et al., 2021). By reimagining traditional fieldwork in both temporal and spatial dimensions, their approach embraces a diverse array of research sites, situations, and data sources. Rather than resulting in superficial analysis, this fragmented approach facilitates a more comprehensive examination, expanding the scope of materials and objects under scrutiny. It allows for sustained engagement with the field, enhanced language proficiency, and deep contextual knowledge, all of which contribute to a rigorous and valuable data collection process (Günel et al., 2020).

The multi-method approach proved particularly effective in addressing the primary research objective of my Master Thesis: understanding the construction of Trieste's image in Vienna. The ethnographic fieldwork, conducted in a Viennese wine and delicatessen shop specialising in Triestine products, incorporated participant observation and ethnographic interviews. This was complemented by eight in-depth interviews with Austrian Viennese who either visit Trieste regularly or have acquired second homes there. These interviews were conducted in both Vienna and Trieste, providing a rich, comparative perspective. Furthermore, the study encompassed a thorough analysis of diverse materials, including tourist brochures and guides, newspaper and magazine articles (both print and digital) about Trieste in Austrian media, and photographic evidence. Particular attention was paid to guidebooks and

tourist literature written in German, preferably by Austrian authors, as these historically play a crucial role in shaping expectations and framing the tourist gaze.

The patchwork ethnography approach encourages researchers to "make the seams visible," explicitly highlighting various editorial decisions in the writing process (Yeh in Cardoza et al., 2021). In this study, the "seams" that warrant particular attention are those related to the linguistic dimensions of data collection and analysis. The predominant language during fieldwork and interviews was German; however, the multilingual nature of the research context was evident in the frequent interjection of Italian terms, and, less commonly, Triestine or Slovene expressions when discussing specific aspects of Trieste. The fieldwork diary and personal notes were primarily composed in Slovene, interspersed with direct quotations in German, Italian, and English. Given that the academic literature is predominantly in English, most of the academic literature analysis was conducted in this language. As translation can encompass elements of conflict and disparate power dynamics (Simon 2016, 7), this study provides quotations in their original language alongside English translations. However, to ensure the readability of the research, a deliberate decision was made to present the English translations in the main body of the text, while relegating the original transcripts to footnotes. This approach strikes a balance between maintaining linguistic authenticity and ensuring accessibility for a broader audience.

The significance of acknowledging language's role in shaping knowledge production is particularly crucial in the context of Triest(e)/Trst. In this region, fluctuating geopolitical borders have heightened linguistic awareness and underscored the importance of language in shaping perceptions and (divided) histories/memories. Trieste's unique position at the ethnic frontier between Latin and Slavic settlers, coupled with its five-century-long Habsburg rule, has profoundly influenced its cultural and linguistic landscape.

The final decades of Habsburg governance are often described as Trieste's "golden age," marked by the flourishing of its harbour and commerce. Following the collapse of the Habsburg Empire after World War I, the city's history was characterised by tumultuous changes and border shifts. Within less than four decades, Trieste experienced a succession of administrations: Liberal Italian, Italian Fascist, Nazi, Yugoslav, and Anglo-American Allied Military rule, before finally joining the Italian

Republic in 1954. Each transition left an indelible mark on Trieste's inhabitants and manifested tangibly in the city's urban spaces.

Trieste has been described as a city "where the past remains remarkably present" (Carabelli, Kirbis, and Walton 2018, 1). The multilayered history of the city allows both residents and visitors to search for signs of their own past or for their expectations, and different perspectives form multiple narrations on the city. This research focused on the narratives constructing Trieste's image in Vienna. Data gathered through participant observation, interviews, and media analysis reveals two interwoven prevalent narratives: Habsburg nostalgia and the touristic Myth of Italy.

For a Viennese, Trieste resonates as part of their own historical narrative as it represents a "*shared history*" (Interview 1, 00:05:21). The coastal city appears "*more Viennese than Vienna*" with its monuments, buildings, coffeehouses, depictions of Franz Joseph and Sisi, and Mitteleuropean cuisine. Trieste has a "*familiar Austrian*" atmosphere, evoking a sense of déjà vu "*as if one has lived there forever*". Local dishes and traditions, such as the Osmica, often evoke childhood memories of Viennese Heurigers. The city's apparent resistance to rapid change, globalisation, and modern neoliberalism contributes to its nostalgic appeal. Heidi Schlipphacke characterises nostalgia as a "disease of the modern age," stemming from rapid technological advancements and contemporary focus on utility and efficiency (Schlipphacke 2014, 4). Habsburg nostalgia, in particular, embodies "a longing for a feeling of home that traverses cultural and ethnic spaces" (Schlipphacke 2014). Habsburg nostalgia reflects contemporary concerns with identity and nationhood, reinterpreting historical concepts through modern understandings (Ballinger 2003). Nostalgic narratives of Trieste's mercantile golden age align perfectly with contemporary narratives of cosmopolitanism and tolerance. For those who view multi-ethnicity positively, a nostalgic view of Habsburg Trieste serves as a model for shaping the future. Trieste itself often engages with these narratives, re-erecting monuments and attempting to escape Italian peripherality to reclaim a prominent position in Central Europe. Consequently, many Triestines welcome Viennese second-home buyers, sharing stories of their common former ruler. However, Habsburg nostalgia is not the sole narrative of Trieste in Vienna and is often interwoven with narratives connected to Italy.

The touristic myth of Italy has a long history formed over centuries through phenomena like the Grand Tour and the very origin of organised vacations (Hom 2015). The most common tourist narratives nowadays romanticise Italy as the country of the '*dolce vita*' (sweet life) and '*authentic*' lifestyle and cuisine. These notions create an illusion that contrasts with the "anxiety and ennui of modernity," modern capitalism, and globalisation (Hom 2015). This portrayal of Italy as a land of leisure transforms it into a "*Sehnsuchtsland*" (land of longing, Interview 6) for Austrians, where they can indulge in fine food, wine, and seaside pleasures. Despite Trieste's 500-year history under Habsburg rule, the allure of the Italian tourist myth holds a potent position. In fact, this 'Italianness' imbues an otherwise "*familiar*" city with a hint of "*exoticism*" (Interview 3), making it desirable to visit in the eyes of Viennese tourists. They often describe Triestine life as less stressful than that in Vienna, where people enjoy good food, excellent coffee, and wine while engaging in conversations at any hour of the day. However, upon spending more time in Trieste, visitors encounter a more nuanced narrative. Not all residents are Habsburg nostalgics; some assert the city's Italian identity. This duality in Trieste's character – its Habsburg heritage and Italian essence – creates a complex landscape.

Trieste is often characterised by a competition between Mitteleuropean and Mediterranean narratives, with the former rooted in a Habsburg imperial genealogy and the latter stemming from a Venetian legacy (Baskar 2002). Ara and Magris (2015) posit that the fundamental nature of the city is encapsulated in the juxtaposition of these concurrent yet conflicting narratives. In this context, the two narratives never reach a synthesis but rather coexist "*nebeneinander*" (side by side) within the city (Ara and Magris 2015). This conceptual duality manifests in material objects throughout Trieste's urban landscape. A striking example is the recent installation of two contrasting monuments within close proximity: a coin commemorating the Habsburg ruler Maria Theresa, and a statue of Gabriele D'Annunzio, a renowned Italian poet associated with the fascist movement. In contrast to other memorials, the monument dedicated to Joseph Ressel, a forestry engineer of the Habsburg navy, presents the city's attempt to navigate its complex heritage without fully committing to one national narrative. The memorial is notable for its lack of clear identifiers aligning it with either Italy or Austria. The inscription merely states that Ressel arrived in Trieste as an experimenter of naval

propellers and a forestry engineer, without specifying his national affiliation or the country for which he worked.

While Mitteleuropean and Mediterranean narratives coexist "*nebeneinander*" (side by side) within Trieste itself, the narratives of the city in Vienna present a different dynamic. This research demonstrates that these two narratives are largely inseparable in Viennese perceptions, forming a synthesis. Only together the Habsburg narrative and the touristic myth of Italy render the city desirable and provide a sense of escapism from Viennese urban life. Indeed, if (Habsburg) nostalgia is characterised by a longing for an idealised past in contrast to an unsatisfactory present, the touristic myth of Italy represents a yearning for a romanticised country where interpersonal relations, 'tradition,' and 'authenticity' offer respite from the anxieties of the neoliberal world. One interviewee noted, even if the city is "*straight-er*" than one might expect from Italy (Interview 1, Interviewee 1, 00:40:02), what is "*fascinating*" ("*faszinierend*") is "*this relaxation, just saying, okay, I'm going for a coffee and then see*"¹⁰¹ (Interview 1, Interviewee 00:40:30). Those who visit Trieste are not necessarily monarchists; rather, they enjoy "*the flair of the past*" alongside "*the Italian life*" (Interview 6, 00:37:30)¹⁰². They prefer the Italian "*Carabinieri or Polizia*" over an "*overweight Viennese policeman*" that might remind them of their everyday life in Vienna (Interview 6, 00:37:30). Both Habsburg nostalgia and the Italian tourist myth represent a respite from shift changes and hectic rhythms of life, offering a place where food is still 'authentic' and tastes as it did in childhood. This contrasts sharply with the perception of Vienna, where "*people are so swallowed up, they go to the office in the morning and are spat out again in the evening and nothing happens in between*" (Interview 1, 00:41:06)¹⁰³. In the more relaxed atmosphere of Trieste, even interpersonal relations are perceived as more 'authentic'. Conversely, Vienna is seen as becoming increasingly anonymous (Interview 1, 00:49:00), where social interactions such as greetings have become rare (Interview 6).

¹⁰¹“diese Entspannung, einfach zu sagen, okay, jetzt gehe mal einen Kaffee trinken und dann schau ma mal.”

¹⁰² “sind aber nicht Monarchisten und sagen wir hängen an der Monarchie, sondern sie genießen es, den Flair von früher aber trotzdem das italienische Leben”

¹⁰³ “In Wien, werden die Leute so verschluckt, gehen in der Früh ins Büro und am Abend werden sie wieder ausgespuckt und passiert dazwischen nichts.”

Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover (2020) posit that cities in Southern Europe are often historically portrayed as fun destinations with a high quality of life. Due to the spatial division of labour within Europe, the peripheral South has traditionally represented an area of leisure for transnational mobile populations, including visitors, second-home buyers, and lifestyle migrants, particularly from Western Europe (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020). The findings of this research align with their description of a transnational mobile population seeking a simpler, slower vacation-lifestyle in response to the stresses of everyday life in their home urban contexts. When describing Trieste, Viennese interviewees consistently reported a 'more relaxed' and 'authentic' atmosphere compared to Vienna. On the other hand, the comparison was also made with the 'overcrowded' Venice. Despite their significant differences in history, aesthetics, and popularity, both Trieste and Venice share proximity to Austria and a coastal location. For Viennese second-home buyers, indeed, the proximity to Vienna emerged as a dominant factor in their decision to purchase a second home on the Italian seaside. Venice, located only 160 km from Trieste, was portrayed as significantly more expensive and overly commercialised in the international tourist circuit. One interviewee stated that Venice suffers from over-tourism to the extent that *"ultimately there is hardly any authentic Venice left"* (*"und letztlich es gibt kaum ein authentisches Venedig mehr"*) (Interview 3, 00:14:40). Another interviewee asserted that people who visit Trieste do so consciously (*"gehen bewusst hin"*), rather than because it is a must-see destination like Venice or New York (Interview 6, 00:36:30). Indeed, his partner noted that while you can spot people who love Trieste in Venice, *"Trieste fans don't sit on the San Marco square; they sit on an island"* in less touristified areas (*"Triest-fan sitzen nicht am Markusplatz; die sitzen wieder auf irgendeiner Insel, oder?"*, Interview 6, 00:36:53).

Trieste appears to attract *"an audience of its own"* (*"ein ganz eigenes Publikum"* Interview 6, 00:37:02) that is *"historically aware, interested in history,"* and *"educated"* (*"Geschichte interessiert, Geschichtsbewusst"* und *"gebildet in dieser Hinsicht"* Interview 6, 00:36:10). This aligns with Zago's (2020) observation of an emerging shift in tourist behaviour. While mass tourism remains dominant, a significant trend shows some tourists rejecting standardised itineraries in favour of more individualised, differentiated experiences that prioritise *"knowledge, relationality, authenticity and*

slowness" (Zago 2020, 226). Zago (2020) further posits that this transnational mobile population desires to 'blend in' with the local population, exploring personal identity and autonomy. This perspective offers valuable insight into the appeal of Trieste for Viennese visitors and second-home buyers, suggesting that the city's perceived less commercialised nature and authenticity contribute significantly to its attractiveness as a destination.

'Trieste-fans' appreciate engaging with local residents and tend to avoid the city when it becomes overly crowded. As one interviewee noted in spring 2023, the influx of Austrian and Viennese tourists was so significant that they avoided the city centre as Piazza Grande (Piazza Unità) and the Canal Grande (Interview, 00:27:41). Paradoxically, while seeking to distance themselves from tourist crowds, Viennese second-home buyers contribute to the city's increasing popularity in their hometown. Despite lacking world-famous landmarks, major cultural institutions, or extensive beach infrastructure that typically attract mass tourism, Trieste is experiencing noticeable changes due to touristification and gentrification. The rising number of tourists in the city centre has altered the socioeconomic fabric: for instance, the Cavana district has seen its traditional craft and sailing shops replaced by restaurants and bars that align with tourist expectations on Italian cuisine. This transformation of the commercial landscape transcends mere economic change, creating tourist monocultures that displace both lower and middle-class residents for economic and/or social reasons (Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover 2020). Zilli and Modaffari (2020) reported that within a short period, the number of tourist accommodations in Trieste doubled, both in hotels and short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb. The increased tourist demand for apartments, coupled with interest from transnational buyers and investors, has led to a surge in rents and property prices. As Cocola-Gant, Gago, and Jover (2020) assert, tourism and second-home buyers contribute significantly to the gentrification process.

In 2018, anthropologist Daša Ličen conducted fieldwork in Trieste, concluding that while recognizing Habsburg nostalgia is crucial, "what it will bring, if anything besides Austrian tourists, is still unclear" (Ličen 2018). The present research findings suggest that the influx of Austrian tourists has led to an increase in second-home buyers and investors, significantly altering the socio-economic fabric of the city, particularly in its centre. These findings further prove the notion that narratives such as Habsburg

nostalgia and the Italian tourist myth exert a significant influence on contemporary perceptions and experiences. The narratives shape not only the way Trieste is perceived but also impact the lives of individuals who engage with the city, whether as transient visitors or permanent residents.

Ličen (2018) correctly notes that the city continually transforms its image, as "identities of places are, after all, as dynamic and unfixed as any other identities". The new inhabitants of Trieste actively participate in this process of identity reformation. However, within a neoliberal context, this transformation could potentially lead to the displacement of local populations. Calls for stronger regulations on short-term rentals and real estate market speculations remain limited to small groups that struggle to gain traction with the local administration. This situation underscores the need for further research specifically focused on gentrification and touristification in Trieste, as these aspects remain understudied in the context of this city.

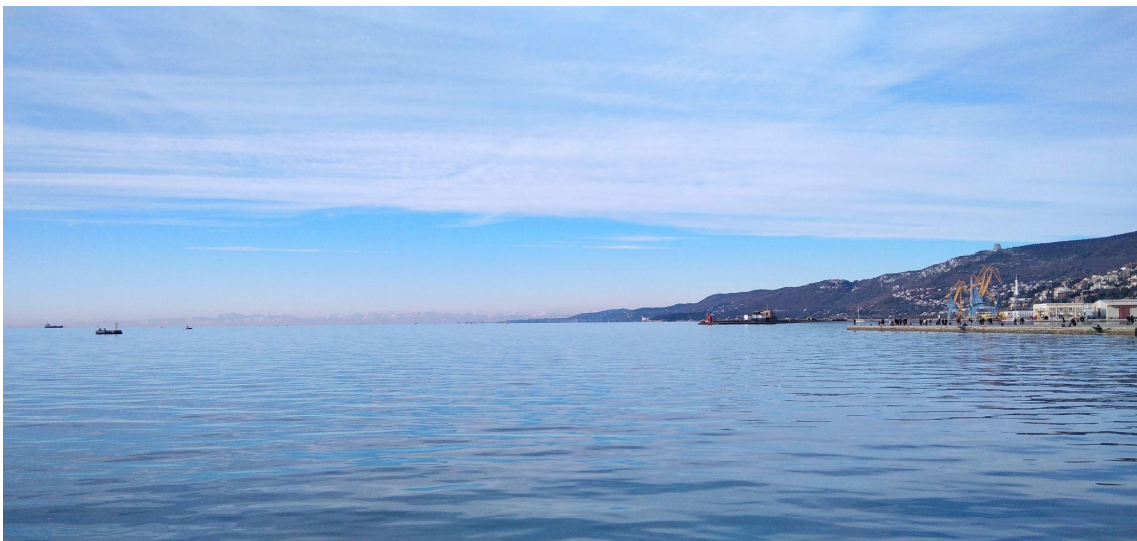


Figure 17: Triestine sea

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Abstract - English

This thesis explores the construction of Trieste's idealised image in Vienna, examining the city's growing popularity among Austrian tourists and second-home buyers. The research aims to go beyond commonplace assertions of Trieste as “a little Vienna on the seaside” or of a romanticised Italian tourist destination. The research methodology is inspired by Marcus's (1995) multi-sited ethnographic approach and employs Günel, Varna, and Watanabe's (2020) concept of "patchwork ethnography," combining ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and analysis of various media such as tourist guidebooks and newspaper articles. The research results consistently demonstrate the recurrence of two predominant narratives that shape Trieste's image in Vienna: the "familiar" Habsburg nostalgia and the "exotic" touristic Myth of Italy. In Trieste itself, the two narratives are mirrored in similar concepts, respectively in Habsburg nostalgia or Mitteleuropean narratives, and in Mediterranean narratives or the notion of Italianità. In this city, the two concepts remain separated from each other, living '*nebeneinander*' (side by side). From the Viennese perspective, however, the two narratives reach a synthesis as they share a common core. Both the idealised Habsburg past and the romanticised Italy represent a respite from the anxieties of the neoliberal world. The research results reveal that Viennese visitors and second-home buyers are drawn to Trieste's "relaxed" atmosphere in sharp contrast with their perception of a “hectic” and “anonymous Vienna”. According to them, the Triestine life goes slower and is coloured by spontaneous and friendly encounters, 'tradition', and 'authenticity'. The wide proliferation of narratives about Trieste has brought an influx of Austrian tourists, second-home buyers, and investors. The findings raise critical questions regarding the consequences of the renewed Austrian interest that has started to significantly alter the socio-economic fabric of Trieste.

Abstract - Deutsch

Die Masterarbeit untersucht die Konstruktion eines idealisierten Bilds von Triest in Wien anhand von Narrativen über die wachsende Beliebtheit der Stadt bei österreichischen Tourist*innen und Zweitwohnungskäufer*innen. Die Forschung zielt darauf, gängige Vorstellungen von Triest als 'ein kleines Wien am Meer' oder als romantisiertes italienisches Reiseziel, um differenzierte Narrative zu erweitern. Die Forschungsmethode ist von Marcus' (1995) "Multi-Sited Ethnography" inspiriert und bezieht sich auf Günels, Varnas und Watanabes (2020) Konzept der "Patchwork-Ethnography", wobei ethnographische Feldforschung, Tiefeninterviews sowie die Analyse verschiedener Medien, wie z. B. Reiseführer und Zeitungsartikeln, kombiniert werden. Die Forschungsergebnisse zeigen durchgehend die Wiederholung von zwei dominanten Narrativen, die das Bild von Triest in Wien prägen: die "vertraute" Habsburger Nostalgie und der "exotische" Mythos des Urlaubslandes Italien. In Triest selbst spiegeln sich die beiden Narrative in ähnlichen Konzepten wider, nämlich in der Habsburger Nostalgie bzw. im mitteleuropäischen Narrativ und im mediterranen Narrativ bzw. im Begriff der Italianità. In der Stadt bleiben die beiden Konzepte voneinander getrennt und existieren „*nebeneinander*“. Aus der Wiener Perspektive erreichen die beiden Narrative jedoch eine Synthese, da sie einen gemeinsamen Kern haben. Sowohl die idealisierte habsburgische Vergangenheit als auch das romantiserte Italien verkörpern eine Flucht vor den Ängsten der neoliberalen Welt. Die Forschungsergebnisse zeigen, dass Wiener Tourist*innen und Zweitwohnungskäufer*innen von der entspannten Atmosphäre in Triest fasziniert sind, die in scharfem Kontrast zu ihrer Wahrnehmung eines "hektischen" und "anonymen Wiens" steht. Nach ihrer Auffassung verläuft der triestinische Alltag langsamer und ist geprägt von spontanen und freundschaftlichen Begegnungen, 'Tradition' und 'Authentizität'. Die weite Verbreitung von Triest- Narrativen hat einen Anstieg von österreichischen Tourist*innen, Zweitwohnungskäufer*innen und Investor*innen bewirkt. Die Erkenntnisse der Studie werfen kritische Fragen zu den Konsequenzen des wiederbelebten österreichischen Interesses an Triest auf, welches die sozioökonomische Struktur der Stadt erheblich zu verändern beginnt.