

The Multicultural Past and Present of an Adriatic Port City

Anja Iveković Martinis, Anita Sujoldžić
Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb

Research projects



- *Historical Perspectives on Transnationalism and Intercultural Dialogue in the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (HRZZ-3914), Croatian Science Foundation
- LINEE project (Languages in a Network of European Excellence, 2006-2010, FP6) – 80 in-depth interviews

Pula (Pola)



History of Pula/Istria



- 1813-1918: Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire
 - 1850's: main naval port of the Empire, immigration
- 1918-1943: Italy – emigration of Slavic population, italianisation
- 1945-1991: Yugoslavia – emigration of Italian population, immigration from Yugoslavia
- 1991: Republic of Croatia – tourism, multiculturalism, bilingualism

Austro-Hungarian period



- dominant discourses in the public sphere
- newspapers – monolingual, associated with national groups
- central role of nationality and language in the public sphere
- national discourses (Italian and Croatian)
- navy and state – supranational imperial patriotism
- hybrid identities, multiple/ambiguous national loyalties

National groups



- Italian, Croatian, German
- overlapping with socioeconomic strata and education levels:
 - German upper classes, aristocracy
 - Italian bourgeoisie
 - Croatian and Italian working class, Croatian peasantry
 - development of Croatian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia

Newspapers



- *Polaer Morgenblatt / Polaer Tagblatt* – German
- *Giornaletto di Pola* – Italian
- *Naša sloga* – Croatian
- *Diritto Croato* – Italian language, pro-Croatian
- *Omnibus* – Italian+German+Croatian language, pro-Croatian

National discourses



- other ethnic group(s) as a **threat** to one's own group

“[The German] will not follow the flute of a political rat-catcher, who would like to lead him into the night of non-existence. He doesn't bow down before those who want to bring about his downfall, he rises up proudly and demands his right.”

(Polaer Morgenblatt, no. 1, October 15 1905, p 1)

Croatian and Italian national discourses



- population size, proof of historical presence – asserting the Italian or Croatian/Slavic character of Istria
- founding elementary schools – Lega Nazionale, Družba Sv. Ćirila i Metoda za Istru
- ingroups described in positive terms, outgroups in negative terms (van Dijk 1995: 143):
 - patriots - Irredentists
 - “clowning around”, “the thievish Lega”
- insults
- prototype examples of ideological discourse

Hybrid and/or anational identities



- not mentioned, avoided
- no discourse of hybridity as such – represented as a **lack** of clear, unambiguous national loyalty
- “erasure” – rendering certain persons, groups or activities invisible by forcing attention only on one part of the social field (Gal 1998: 253)

Hybridity in newspaper discourse



- Croatian-language papers
- represented very negatively - lack of national awareness, lack of consistency, conformism, opportunism, disloyalty, being “lost”
- Niccolò Tommaseo – “...always kept in his breast an honestly Slavic heart...”
- aggressive discursive strategies – shaming individuals for not speaking Croatian, encouraging an unambiguous Croatian national identity

Contemporary period



- 1990's: nationalist narratives, centralisation
- Istria: orientation towards the “West”/EU
- strong regional identity
- multiculturalism, multilingualism
- politicisation of Istrian identity → now no longer a contested issue

Contemporary period



- Pula – culturally heterogeneous city
- Croats, Italians, Serbs, Albanians, Hungarians, Bosniacs, Macedonians, Slovenes...
- non-Croatian Yugoslav citizens became national minorities
- special status of the Italian minority
- Croatian-Italian bilingualism, mixed families

Language practices and “Istrian mentality”



- language practices (local speech varieties, code-switching, receptive multilingualism)
 - distinction from monolingual neighbours
 - connotations of tolerance, openness, accommodation
 - “Istrian mentality”

Convivenza



- *convivenza* = co-existence and mutual respect and acceptance of Slavic and Italian people
- seen as difficult to understand for non-Istrians

“If there is anything that is autochthonous here, it is asparagus, truffles and Croatian, Slovenian and Italian people living in this region... Those who know, those who have lived with us in this region for many decades, even centuries, do not ask themselves this question. We are all part of this milieu. Those who come from the outside, without the basic information, they will need a certain amount of time to get used to the idea.”

“They often think that we are Italians. I do have an Italian name and I speak Italian, but I am Istrian Croatian...”

Limits of Istrian diversity



- linguistic practices of non-Istrians excluded from the open and accepting attitude
- distinction between “true Istrians” and other communities

“If they [the newcomers] spoke Chakavian, it would be easier to accept them as Istrians. For me it is inconceivable to consider someone an Istrian if he doesn’t speak Chakavian.”

“... I don't feel like an Istrian in the sense of... indigenous, which means that I don't speak the dialect... so I don't have my roots here.”

Othering



- hierarchy of othering: Croats from other parts of Croatia, Italians from Italy, other ex-Yugoslav ethnic groups
- perception of immigrant groups as “closed off”, lacking in local knowledge, unwilling to adapt

“I don’t go to pubs and restaurants where waiters don’t know what biska is... Newcomers exploit this openness and tolerance [of Istrians] and don't accept it as a value.”

“They just stubbornly stick to their ways, they do not learn our dialects and should adapt to our ways...”

Immigrants' view



- conditional and selective openness

”It’s an unwritten rule... Here you have to eat three bags of salt [to become Istrian] and in one life you can’t eat three bags. They will accept you only after it becomes certain that you live whole-heartedly here, which means being integrated in the whole system, and not just formal integration in different institutions and so forth, but also in communication with people and in private communication.”

Limits of openness



- differences between official regional discourses and vernacular ones

“This multiculturalism, it is an outside word which we don’t experience on the inside. We don’t have a feeling of multiculturalism...”

- symbolic prestige of “Istrian identity” – essentialist assumptions, expecting immigrants to assimilate

Conclusion



- Italian-Slavic conflict resolved, critique of Croatian nationalist discourse
- *convivenza* – central to self-ascribed Istrian identity
- discourse of *cultural hybridity* – as positive, not negative characteristic
- essentialisation of hybridity
 - homogenised heterogeneity (Sujoldžić 2009)
 - “authentic hybrids” (Ballinger 2004)
- status of Other shifted to more recent immigrants

Conclusion (continued)



- immigrants from ex-Yugoslav countries – similar position as Croatian peasants and workers in Austro-Hungarian Pula – expected to assimilate
- orientation to the “West”/EU – encourages discrimination against ex-Yugoslav ethnic groups
- high criteria for assimilation – discouraging
- critique of idealising “cosmopolitan past” and of narratives of progress from nationalism to *convivenza*



Thank you for your attention!

aimartinis@inantro.hr