

Doing In-Between in the 19th Century in the Alps-Adriatic Region: Everyday Forms of Subjectivation Beyond Nationalising and Ethnicising Subject

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This paper lays the theoretical groundwork for exploring historical modes of subject/subjectivation in the context of hegemonic narratives of ethnicisation and nationalisation processes in the Alps-Adriatic region of the Habsburg Monarchy. We reconstruct a mode of subjectivation that is expressed through practices of the *in-between*. In-between serves as an umbrella term combining gender, class, religion, language affiliation and, towards the end of the 19th century, ethnic or national affiliation.

• **Keywords:** in-between, subjectivation, Eigen-Sinn, everyday practices, Alps-Adriatic region

V prispevku so razgrnjeni teoretični temelji za raziskovanje zgodovinskih načinov podrejanja/subjektivacije v hegemonskih narativih o procesih etnizacije in nacionalizacije na alpsko-jadranskem območju Habsburške monarhije. Avtorja rekonstruirata način subjektivacije, ki se izraža v praksah *vmesnosti*. Vmesnost služi kot krovni pojem, ki povezuje spol, razred, veroizpoved, jezikovno pripadnost in proti koncu 19. stoletja tudi etnično ali nacionalno pripadnost.

• **Ključne besede:** vmesnost, subjektivacija, Eigen-Sinn, vsakdanje prakse, alpsko-jadranska regija

This paper lays the theoretical groundwork for exploring historical modes of subject/subjectivation¹ in the context of hegemonic narratives of ethnicisation and nationalisation processes in the Alps-Adriatic region of the Habsburg Monarchy. We reconstruct

¹ Cf. Peball, Schönberger (2021: 59 and 2022: 17) on the *Dispositif Kärnten/Koroška* and the duality of the subject according to Michel Foucault, whereas subjectation as an expression of power over the individual and subjectivation in the sense of a person's relationship to themselves are closely related to one another. The project is approaching this dialectic between subjectation and subjectivation, attempting to balance this contradiction. Cf. the distinction in Nowicka (2013: 48ff.): "The ambivalence between subjectation as subjugation on the one hand, and subjectivation as a process of individuation on the other, whereby the one does not exclude but rather complements or even conditions the other" is apparent in Foucault's work: "There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1981: 781). Cf. also Wiede (2020): "Over the course of Foucault's writings, one can discern a 'genealogy' of subjectification, from assujettissement to subjectivation through self-empowerment. However, these apparatuses of power are neither sequential nor antipodal – the one, repressive; the other, productive. Rather they coexist and in so doing expand the spectra of power."

a mode of subjectivation that is expressed through practices of the *in-between*, and assume that this was widespread in the long 19th century.²

To analyse practices of the *in-between*, our aim is to shift the focus away from the nation as a model of order and identification. Instead of asking the question, “How crucial is the nation in guiding people’s behaviour?” (Ginderachter, Fox, 2019: 8), we move away from such an idea with the concept of *doing in-between*. The research focuses on subjective perspectives and situated everyday practices. These refer to contradictory, ambivalent, indifferent, resistant, and opportunistic modes of subjectivation and the associated processes of (non-)appropriation of nationalising or ethnicising attitudes.

The ‘doing’ in our conceptual framework indicates that the actions of historical subjects in the context of emerging nationalism were a process of constant oscillation. The approach emphasises that a specific condition is not inherent in everyday life, but is constantly being recreated.³ The term *in-between* lends itself as a theoretical reference, as it renders ambivalent and dynamic processes in spatial and cultural localisations and identifications visible.⁴ The concept has a broad notion and is multi-layered, and we apply it in order to break the national perspective suggesting one-sided positionings. The term expresses the attempt to think beyond established dualisms. *In-between* refers to a coexistence of different situations and practices that occurred under a variety of aspects, and serves as an umbrella term combining gender, class, religion, language affiliation and, towards the end of the 19th century, ethnic or national affiliation. In order to approach these complex processes, several theoretical approaches seem relevant to us, which are outlined below.

When we consider historical forms of subjectivation in this region from a perspective on everyday life, we draw on recent research on the Habsburg Monarchy over the last twenty years (King, 2002; Brubaker et al., 2006; Judson, 2006, 2016a; Zahra, 2008, 2010). This research builds on the critique of the totalising notion of a teleological nationalist narrative (Hobsbawm, 1990; Hirschhausen, Leonhard, 2001; Wingfield, 2003; Feichtinger, Cohen, 2014; Berger, Miller, 2015). This has rendered invisible the contradictions and ruptures in the development of the nation-state as an “imagined

² The Alps-Adriatic Region is just one example among regions that have become border areas as a result of global conflicts and is therefore a significant case for a global phenomenon.

³ We refer to approaches based on practice theory, emphasising that “a practice is a set of doings and sayings organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules, and a teleoaffective structure. Not just the doings and saying[s] involved, incidentally, but the understandings, rules, and teleoaffectivities that organize them, can change over time in response to contingent events” (Schatzki, 2001: 61).

⁴ From a postcolonial, literary and cultural theory perspective, Homi K. Bhabha “develops not only the approach of the fictional construction of nation through narration, but also demonstrates through the example of minority literatures the form in which the coexistence of cultures can and must be narrated” (Bonz, Struve, 2011: 133). He thus exposes the fractures inherent in the idea of a homogeneous national culture and places the “productivity of the inconsistent, of difference” (Bonz, Struve, 2011: 133) at the centre of his considerations, which gives rise to something new and is located between cultures. In this way, he uses the *in-between* to relate supposedly separate entities and reveals simultaneities that exist despite territorial and cultural boundaries.

community” (Anderson, 1983). A lot of recent research has placed historiography and national differentiation processes under the spotlight, and revealed transversal processes and dynamics (Kamusella, 2009; Bjork et al., 2016; Feichtinger, Uhl, 2016; Stergar, Scheer, 2018; Fellerer et al., 2020; Ginderachter, Fox, 2019; Ličen, 2023). The relevance of these studies lies in detailing the process of nationalisation from the perspective of its ruptures, difficulties, and contradictions. This is where our project comes in.

A constructive debate has developed in the field of Habsburg research around the concept of *national indifference* in the context of changes in political culture and the influence of nationalism on the subjects. While Habsburg research analyses the development of the monarchy retrospectively and from its demise, looking in detail at its slow dissolution, the transformation process through bureaucratic classification and nation-building (Stergar, Scheer, 2018), we would like to focus on the everyday lives of historical subjects. Starting from the assumption of a “multidirectional dimension of national indifference” (Ginderachter, Fox, 2019: 8), we take up two impulses from Pieter M. Judson. Firstly, Judson states for the Habsburg Monarchy: “We do not need a single narrative, but we do need large-scale alternative stories with the capacity to serve as branches on which we can array the superb new work of the past few decades” (2016a: 15). Secondly, he notes that there are contradictory identifications in the socialisation of historical subjects in the context of the hegemonic aspirations of nationalisms: “The point is not to ask ‘who is a nationalist?’ and ‘who is indifferent?’ but rather to ask ‘in what situation does a person see the world through the lens of a nation, and in what situations does that lens of nation lose its relevance?’” (Judson, 2016b: 153).

Judson’s references to the dynamics of self-positioning and the situational actions of historical subjects indicate a research perspective that we would like to pursue with the concept of *doing in-between*. However, we will not continue the debate on the explanatory power of the concept of *national indifference* (Egry, 2019; Ginderachter, Fox, 2019). Instead, our “inspection” focuses on aspects that are fruitful for a historical-anthropological approach. We want to contribute to the alternative narratives for which he calls. To this end, we analyse different forms of distinct identifications and complex self-positioning from a perspective on everyday life.

We assume that the national ideas that emerged during the *Vormärz* were not simply integrated into everyday life. On the contrary, ambivalent discourses and practices are evident in all subjects, regardless of their convictions. These cannot be read exclusively against the background of the transformation process towards bourgeois and nation-state societies. Since “*appropriation* does not necessarily mean *adaptation*” (Hörning, 2021: 494), we will deal with the situational actions and the historical subjects’ own *sense of purpose*. We conceptualise this *Eigen-Sinn* action or non-action as *doing in-between*. This opens up the possibility of a “more-than-national perspective” (King, 2002: 122) by focusing on ambiguous practices, intentional decisions or non-intentional, situative

actions regarding ideological attitudes in the Alps-Adriatic region, an area where micro-historical studies on this period are rare.

In a first step, we would like to recall the suppression of knowledge about trans-regional and transcultural modes of subjectivation associated with methodological nationalism. In a second step, we discuss some of the suggestions of recent Habsburg research from the debate on *national indifference* and discuss the points of criticism that are relevant to us. In a third step, we outline theoretical points of departure that we consider relevant for expanding our view of matters of identity politics and the everyday life of historical subjects: polyphony, hybridity, everyday ethnicity and *Eigen-Sinn*. In a fourth step, we outline the concept of *doing in-between*. This concept does not restrict social and cultural behaviour to the respective attitude towards the idea of the nation-state, it also reflects the social and economic framework conditions. Instead of adopting attitudes towards the nation-state (*indifference*) or ethnicising or nationalising practices as the overarching yardstick, we ask about practices of (*doing*) *in-between* that enable subjects to cope with their everyday lives. In a fifth step, we add some methodological remarks that arise from the proposed perspective.

Nation-state narrative as an evocation of a loss of memory

Numerous publications on the nation and the nation-state argue that the idea of an inevitable development towards nation-states does not provide an adequate description of the contradictory processes during their formation. “Concepts of empire and nation have always proved to be constructions and visions of small ruling elites” (Bachinger et al., 2020: 10).⁵ With regard to the Alps-Adriatic region, the growing hegemony of the nation-state narrative in the 20th century implied a considerable loss of knowledge about “the common history [...] of the border triangle” (Moritsch, 2001a: 9).⁶ Helmut Rumpler was one of the first⁷ in the German-speaking world to point out that the history of the region is “a largely ‘lost history’ for the historical consciousness” (2001: 517). Marta Verginella (2017: 83) criticises historiography that focuses on the national conflict as a result of ethnic antagonisms instead of pursuing a transnational and comparative history of the region. It is now being pointed out again that this mixed-language territory, which has been divided into several nation-states, was economically and culturally closely connected until the late 19th century (Bahovec, Domej, 2006; Panjek et al., 2017).

⁵ Carlo Ginzburg also assumes in principle: “In the creation of the modern nationalism or the twentieth century’s major ideological movements, collective memory has mainly been effective in virtue of all it has left out” (2003).

⁶ “This common history is withheld from the inhabitants of the border triangle and the Alps-Adriatic region” (Moritsch, 2001a: 9).

⁷ With reference to the town of Görz/Gorizia/Gorica, Hans Kitzmüller (1997) also pointed out the lack of knowledge about the diverse circumstances in the town before 1914.

The urban centre of Trieste in particular is said to have had a cosmopolitan, “inter-cultural” character until the early 20th century, which was characterised by ethnicised conflicts. Renate Lunzer refers to multiple, complex and contradictory negotiations and subject positionings “between irredentism and interculturality” (2002: 21). She diagnoses a dialectic between unifying ethnicisations and fluid practices in Trieste. Sergia Adamo speaks of a dynamising ambiguity and states that the multilingual urban context “rather resembled an arena where complex dynamics of identity construction took place through the emergence of tensions, contradictions, more or less open confrontations and conflicts” (2017: 4). Daša Ličen diagnoses the Trieste Minerva Association as a polyphonic organisation and a “coexistence of various, perhaps rival, tendencies” (2017: 50).

Johann Strutz emphasises the existing “intercultural dialogue” (2003: 216) in Trieste, which had developed “in reaction to the intensified nationalism” (ibid.) in the city. However, this “knowledge of mixing” had been “suppressed” from the public consciousness (ibid.: 227).⁸

Dominique Kirchner-Reill also takes up this aspect. She examines local writers and political actors who developed increasingly pluralised and differentiated ideas of an “Adriatic multi-nationalism” in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice: “First-stage nationalists have not been lost to the broader historical narrative, but their pluralism has” (Kirchner-Reill, 2012: 3). The breadth, contradictions, and diversity of their political positions vanished, as these actors were later integrated into the respective national historiography as leading figures: “Adriatic-multinationalism has been lost from the historical record” (ibid.: 241). Kirchner-Reill goes on to show that the nation and nation-state did not mean the same thing to all subjects in this early phase. The concept did not automatically imply the exclusion of the Other; there were definitely unifying elements. This facet was swallowed up by the later conflicts and corresponding reinterpretations, as well as the associated nationalist constriction of the concept. Kirchner-Reill, therefore, emphasises “the forgotten realities and lost possibilities” (ibid.: 13) with regard to the Adriatic region, which was once understood as a bridge. The suppression of these “forgotten realities” is a problematic legacy of methodological nationalism.⁹ It promoted the dubious idea of a linear history concerning the formation of the nation-state.¹⁰

⁸ All German-language quotations in this article have been translated into English by a translator.

⁹ Based on research on migration in sociology and the social sciences, criticism of so-called methodological nationalism became increasingly audible in the 2000s (cf. Beck, 2000; Beck, Grande, 2010). “It is purely methodological if the nation-state is regarded as the main unit of investigation for social phenomena, even if the focus is on phenomena beyond it” (Ansorg, 2013: 18).

¹⁰ “History and geography share the odium of having contributed significantly to the emergence and spread of nationalism as classical ‘national sciences’” (Moritsch, 2001b: 12).

Overcoming methodological nationalism

The problematisation of this legacy shifted the focus of research. Consequently, the question of the relevance of national ideology for the actions of subjects in everyday life also arose. Pieter M. Judson (2006) and Tara Zahra (2008, 2010) provide the impetus for this.

A relational understanding of culture, which has found its way into cultural and historical studies (Csáky, 2019: 31 ff.), has also established the realisation that subjects and their practices can only ever be understood “in their reciprocal relationships” (Lindner, 2003: 179). The meaning and significance of everyday practices can only be grasped by focusing on the relationships and practices of the subjects. Numerous regional historical studies in Habsburg research have also addressed the tension between nation-building and everyday life. Pieter M. Judson analysed nationalist strategies and identified forms of “national flexibility (or indifference)” amongst “non-national populations” (2006: 5). The concept of *national indifference*, which he was instrumental in shaping, established a new perspective on the process of nationalisation and ethnicisation in the Habsburg Monarchy. These studies centre on the interactions between nationalists and subjects or groups without established ideological attitudes.¹¹

In their approach to the term *national indifference*, authors turn their gaze to the indifferent coexistence of various groups and to manifold influences that defined factors such as language use and other everyday actions (Luthar, 2008). Judson (2016a: 10–11) assumes that the nationality conflict was not decisive for the end of the dual monarchy because the idea of the nation did not have the central importance ascribed to it in everyday life and local politics. Most people, therefore, did not have an established national “identity”. They identified more with local communities, their region, or with the monarchy or the emperor. Other self-attributions were religious or social.¹²

Tara Zahra pointed out that there have been many terms already in use to describe what research refers to as indifference, also in a dismissive way: “regionalism, cosmopolitanism, Catholicism, socialism, localism, bilingualism, intermarriage, opportunism, immorality, backwardness, stubbornness, false consciousness, to name a few” (Zahra, 2010: 98). Alongside this list, Zahra insists that some alternatives to the term *national indifference*, such as “national apathy, ambivalence, lability or binationalism hardly seem preferable – indifference can encompass but is not limited to any one of these phenomena” (ibid.: 98). This list emphasises the fact that national indifference is now regarded as a collective term for sometimes very complex and diverse processes.

¹¹ Meanwhile, the term and approach of *national indifference* are also being used beyond Habsburg studies regarding processes of national identification (cf. Orlić, 2019).

¹² This is reflected in various studies, e.g. Horel (2023) engages with multiple affiliations of people and multicultural identities of Habsburg cities such as Trieste. She also emphasises that social and national conflicts did not mutually exclude each other (2023: 493).

It encompasses not only alternative patterns of organisation and identification with the nation, but also contradictory, resistant and stubborn practices. However, these are only considered relevant in correlation with explicitly negative or indifferent ideological attitudes towards nationalism.

The concept of *national indifference* also implies that the non-adoption of national ideology indicates resistance. Nationalist activists were confronted with forms of non-national behaviour or evasion. This underlines the fact that nationalising and ethnicising subjectivation in the 19th century did not occur without contradiction. Ethnic distinctions did not have the significance in everyday life that the nationalist narrative ascribed to them.

Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl note a change in the historiographical perspective brought about by Judson. The latter provided the main impetus for “Habsburg research to abandon several previous guiding perspectives” (Feichtinger, Uhl, 2023: 10). These included the notion of a destructive conflict between nationalities as well as the positioning in an imagined East on the European periphery due to the Eurocentric modernisation narrative¹³ (Feichtinger, Uhl, 2016).

Notwithstanding this merit, the term indifference came under criticism due to its “multivalent nature” (Ginderachter, Fox, 2019: 7) and its different uses by authors either to emphasise non-national, binational, coexisting aspects regarding the people or as a term applied by nationalists themselves (Egry, 2019: 146–147). It is, therefore, also a concept from primary sources that functioned as a “nationalist category” in the historical context (Ginderachter, Fox, 2019: 4). It served to pejoratively devalue specific behaviour or non-behaviour in relation to the requirement to think nationally. Another criticism of its analytical use is that the implied attitudes or practices of the historical subjects remain too vague. They range from the “complete absence of national loyalties” (Zahra, 2008: 4 in Ginderachter, Fox, 2019: 4) to interethnic marriage practices, which do not necessarily have to be politically motivated. Ginderachter and Fox, therefore, ask whether it is expedient to attribute the significance to the category of nation that is implied by the term *national indifference*. The term denies historical subjects their agency, as they would be presented like “pawns on an elite chessboard” (ibid.: 9). They therefore plead to redirect the focus to the individual agency and voice historical actors adopt, practice and use. Similar to Ginderachter and Fox, we also find it problematic that the term refers implicitly to counter-attitudes, disinterest or ignorance that were created by nationalising actors in the first place.¹⁴ It was the nationalist elites, such as

¹³ Cf. Ginzburg: “The consistent element consists in the rejection of ethnocentrism and teleology, which – according to Furet – characterised the historiography handed down from the 19th century. The assertion of national unity, the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the civilising role of the white race or economic progress have provided historians with a unifying principle from time to time – depending on the point of view and the chosen level of observation – which represented both a conceptual and a narrative category” (1993: 179).

¹⁴ “The former ‘national sciences’, now known as ‘cultural studies’, will not be able to avoid subjecting the demarcation criteria they helped to install to a fundamental critique” (Moritsch, 2001b: 15).

“civically educated students and association leaders” (Judson, 2006: 217), who conjured up ethnic conflicts in order to realise their national ideas. It was in these conflicts that the nationalist argument emerged that it was normal and natural or relevant to feel that one belonged to an ethnic group or to declare oneself as such.

This debate contributes to a continuous expansion of knowledge and horizons. From a historical-anthropological perspective, however, the question of *national indifference* is less important. The focus is much more on the everyday practices of the population as a whole, which did not necessarily follow nationalising categories and strategies.

Starting points for a look at the subjects’ everyday lives

In the following section, we discuss those theoretical concepts and research that assist in avoiding the teleological implications of methodological nationalism (Wimmer, Glick Schiller, 2002). The focus is broadened from ideologies, attitudes or positions to practices. The aim is to understand processes of subjectivation and subjection as relationships that are embedded in social and economic contexts.

We discuss approaches that contribute to our conceptualisation and definition of *doing in-between*. Firstly, we take up the polyphony approach from comparative literature. We then consider the cultural anthropological perspective, which has, so far, received little attention in the historical debate. An examination of the historical concept of hybridism is useful here, as it points the way to a postcolonial understanding of hybridity. Further approaches such as *everyday ethnicity* and the everyday and micro-historical concept of *Eigen-Sinn* should help to concretise our understanding of practices of the in-between as *doing in-between*.

Polyphony and pluriculturality

The studies of multilingual literature in the “pluricultural and polyphonic” (Strutz, 2003: 8) Alps-Adriatic region offer approaches for analysing historical processes of subjectivation and subjection in the face of nationalism. Strutz is interested in the “problem of biculturality or transculturality” (ibid.: 263). He emphasises the “cross-border relations” of “inner-literary communities” (ibid.: 96–97) and states that “the time of monolingual and national literary histories [...] is over” (ibid.: 373). He is concerned with the “qualitative, affective, and aesthetic dimension of bicultural ‘everyday life’ in the Alps-Adriatic region, characterised by bilingualism and multilingualism” (ibid.: 63–64).

Strutz emphasises the “processes of reception and transfer of cultural elements” in “multilingual cultural system(s)”. For him, “polylogue or ‘polyphony’” refers to “active cultural reciprocity” (ibid.: 38). He highlights the importance of “everyday events and everyday behaviour”. These historical everyday events contradict the national narratives

and the “arranged” and “monological” (mass media) hegemonic narratives. However, lacking historical evidence, Strutz argues that these historical everyday lives were “characterised by various forms of regional ‘multilingualism’”: on “historical, social, political, linguistic, aesthetic, religious or other levels” (ibid.: 61–62).

His reference to “Istrian polyphony” (Strutz, 1996: 209) is particularly inspiring. This was associated with bilingualism or “diglossia and di-ethnicity” and promoted a “pre-national standpoint” (ibid.: 213–214). In addition, regional subjectivation undermined national language norms (ibid.): “All nationalist attempts to divide the population and pull it to one side or the other, however, initially failed due to the strong mixture of languages and cultures.” This was because “the kinship bond” was “more important [...] than the different origins” (ibid.). As evidence, he cites the difficulties of Italian irredentists (e.g. Carlo Combi), who found a hybrid situation in the region around Buje (Istria) and did not know “whether the inhabitants were Italianised Slavs or Slavicised Italians” (Strutz, 1996: 221–222).¹⁵ Strutz sees the “multilingualism of everyday Istrian life” as an expression of a “pronounced awareness of regional identity that runs through all linguistic and cultural groups” (2003: 140). Regarding Istria, he also writes of “national indifference”.¹⁶ Following Katja Sturm-Schnabl (2000: 34), Strutz refers to the “plurality and hybridity of this intercultural contact zone” (2003: 151) and a “transcultural regional consciousness” (ibid.: 140). In the tri-border region, he diagnoses three ways of “reacting to the ethnic and cultural polyphony: the nationalistic reaction of marginalising the other part of the population and personality (also via over-adaptation), the ambivalent attitude [...], and the conscious, consistent interculturality” (ibid.: 183–184). Without mentioning Ernst Bloch (1985 [1935]: 104ff.), Strutz describes everyday polyphonic pluriculturalism in the terminology of an “heritage of our times” (*Erbschaft dieser Zeit*). The spatial and temporal dimensions overlap in Trieste: “The spatial coexistence of several languages and cultures, traditions and ways of life, thus, also brings to light the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous as the simultaneity of the different; the already quite complex pattern of the surface structure of everyday cultural practices is supplemented and differentiated by the palimpsestic pattern of the overlapping and interference of two dissimilar cultures” (Strutz, 2003: 203). Strutz uses literary developments in the Alps-Adriatic region to show how, under the condition of cultural hybridity, linguistic practices emerge that we understand as

¹⁵ Cf. Johler, 2023, who identifies Angelo Vivante (1912) as the originator of this characterisation.

¹⁶ “One consequence of the centuries-long change of different centres of foreign influence and power and the resulting close contact between different languages, cultures and ways of life, was the gradual development of a culture of national indifference and non-affiliation, on the one hand, and the formation of a complementary, cross-cultural and cross-linguistic Istrian identity, on the other. All ethnic and cultural groups in Istria [...] initially refer to themselves as Istriani, and it is only secondarily that the national category is added for the three larger groups of Italians, Slovenes, and Croats. In recent years, this transnational concept of ‘Istria’ has become the cipher of a pluricultural regional identity for the various cultures of the country” (Strutz, 2003: 316).

doing in-between (see below). This interplay of the “cultural situation” (ibid.: 224) and linguistic self-situating (subjectivation) establishes an *in-between* resulting from everyday requirements and constellations. The historical situation and the possibilities for action are characterised by pluricultural overlaps and polyphonic interferences. Such a “place” is both self-evident and uncertain, unstable and fluid for the historical subjects. Theoretical-terminological as well as geographical connections are possible. Concepts such as hybridity, pluriculturality, polyphony, but also “[the] cultural situation” seem helpful to us beyond Istria or Trieste in order to analyse transcultural identifications and practices (*doing in-between*).

Hybridism – ibridismo – third space

Reinhard Johler has worked out the aspect of the culturally heterogeneous space of the Habsburg Monarchy from a cultural anthropological perspective, using the example of Istria (2012, 2023). He analyses how contemporary observers (ethnographers, linguists, and national activists) described the social or “cultural situation” (Strutz, 2003: 224) as “hybridism” or “*ibridismo di popolo*”.

The term hybridism emerged “almost simultaneously in the internal-colonial centre-periphery context of the Habsburg Monarchy” and referred to observable “mixtures” (Johler, 2012: 21). It referred to complex, contradictory processes of cultural mixing that ran in different directions: “‘Hybridism’ was [...] a concept of observation, not of theory” (ibid.; cf. also Johler, 2023: 117). Both linguists and ethnographers described the Istrian population as “indefinable tribes in a colourful mixture” or as a “tangle of ethnographic-linguistic mixtures” that could hardly be untangled (Johler, 2012: 21). Austrian folklore – in contrast to German folklore – had assessed the “mixing of the races”¹⁷ quite positively. Johler refers to Hugo Schuchardt who, in 1884, emphasised the regional “language mixtures” (e.g. *Kucheldeutsch*, ibid.: 10) and for whom there was no “unmixed language”, but only “hybrid forms” (ibid.).¹⁸ The linguistic mixtures in Istria were considered to be particularly pronounced and made the peninsula a “magnificent experimental site” (Schuchardt, 1884 in Johler, 2012: 12, 2023: 117). Josef Stradner¹⁹ (1893: 44ff.) developed the idea of a linguistically and culturally mixed “national Austrian” (Johler, 2012: 11). This perspective was often politically motivated in order “to promote a harmonious empire of peoples” (Ballinger, 2014: 105).

The term ‘hybridism’ was used to describe “cultural hybridisation processes” in the Habsburg Monarchy. These were “not the exception, but the rule” (Johler, 2012: 13). The term was used pejoratively in the German and Italian national movements

¹⁷ For the origin of this idea, see Johler (2023: 120).

¹⁸ Schuchardt and his writings on the term “mixture” are still only hesitantly received in the Istrian region itself, see Baskar (2020). He explains various reasons why current Slovenian social scientific literature speaks of “cultural interaction” instead of “mixture”.

¹⁹ Josef Stradner was a Trieste bookseller and journalist who was loyal to the monarchy.

(1848–1849).²⁰ Furthermore, the term *ibridismo del popolo* was used in Italian irredentism at the end of the 19th century – in conjunction with anti-Slavic resentment – to articulate their own (because it was imagined as “pure”) superiority (Toncich, 2020: 549; Johler, 2023: 137).

Johler sees the term ‘hybridism’/*ibridismo* as a prefiguration of the modern understanding of hybridity (2023: 137). This refers to Homi K. Bhabha’s postcolonial understanding of hybridity of the “in-between” (Bhabha, 1994, 1996). Bhabha uses the term “in-between spaces” to describe situations beyond the sphere of “narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (Bhabha, 1994: 1). We would like to connect our analyses of identities and identifications that can be described as “hybrid” in European border regions (e.g. Kwaschik, 2012: 387), where groups “use ‘hybrid’ languages or exist in ‘hybrid’ situations” (Fellerer et al., 2020: 4). This approach conceives of border regions as “linguistic, cultural, and ethnic areas of transition in which various different influences cross paths and often also mix together” (Ther, 2003: XI). Thus, the focus shifts to certain dynamics that function on a local level and demonstrate that it is necessary to understand “nation as a project and a process” (ibid.: XII), as members of several communities “display multiple or simultaneous practices of belonging” (Fellerer et al., 2020: 1).²¹

Everyday ethnicity “beyond politics”

We can further draw on Gábor Egry and his concept of *everyday ethnicity*. Egry already refers to a *beyond* (2019) in the title of his essay, where he expands the debate on *national indifference* and proposes categorising the concept as a subcategory of *everyday ethnicity* (ibid.: 157). Egry argues that the identification of subjects with an ethnicity is situational and context-dependent. He thus opposes the dichotomous juxtaposition (agreement/rejection; resistance/affirmation) implied by the concept of *national indifference*. Instead, Egry suggests starting from situational and contingent forms of identification or non-identification. His concept aims to capture the diversity and complexity of different contexts and interactions. *Everyday ethnicity* can be connected to our work because it goes beyond programmatically interpreted ideas and objectified attitudes and is interested in situations and practices. Egry assumes that subjects in historical everyday life sometimes acted or thought nationally or even nationalistically and, at other times, disregarded this ideological horizon when it did not seem opportune or appropriate. Egry points out that “ethnicity is neither an apolitical nor a political form of groupness in itself”, but rather “a way of cognition, although

²⁰ On the genesis of the term and its initially negative implications, see also Francesco Toncich (2020: 546).

²¹ Cf. Mitterbauer, who emphasises that the term ‘third space’ is by no means geographically localisable: “Rather, it forms a discursive framework for the permanent construction of meanings and attributions” (2003: 57).

its recognition could be politicised” (ibid.: 147). Egry proceeds from a contingent understanding of identification with ethnic (self-)attributions in everyday situations and “complex interactions” (ibid.: 158). He does not assume homogeneous subjectivation, but emphasises situational action and the potential agency of the subjects.

Egry’s concept seems to us to be applicable regarding *doing in-between*, because in the process of subjectivation, agency is granted here. Namely, whether and in what way actors attribute fundamental meaning to ethnicity in their practices and social interactions or, under certain circumstances, only appropriate it in certain situations. However, he sees the concept as “related to banal nationalism” (ibid.: 158) and fundamentally presumes that ethnicity also plays a central role in situational processes, as “people are aware of differences” (ibid.: 258).²²

Eigen-Sinn – practices of everyday life

We assume (as do Judson, Zahra and Egry, *inter alia*) that national ideologies played, if not a subordinate role in the everyday lives of the population, then, at least, only one among many other invocations or attributions that framed or even guided the actions of the subjects. However, in order to move away from the analysis of (politically instrumentalisable) categories, such as nation and ethnicity, as patterns of order and identification, we turn to the methods and theoretical concepts of historical anthropology and historical ethnography, and particularly to micro and everyday history and cultural studies.

We refer to those “forms of unruly sociality” (Hörning, Winter, 1999), to Michel de Certeau’s “practice of everyday life” (1988 [1980]) and the practice-theoretical “scope of also being able to do things differently” (Hörning, 2021: 495) of the subjects.

The concept of *Eigen-Sinn* operationalises an everyday oscillation between adaptation and resistance. In its “original definition”, it “cannot be reduced to one or the other, and this ambiguity is part of its ‘message’”. Thus, the term is not clearly defined “according to the methodological self-image of everyday historians”: “Its ‘discovery’ by Alf Lüdtke rather deliberately linked to the ambiguities found in the traditional language of earlier centuries” (Lindenberger, 2014: 2).

Therefore, *Eigen-Sinn* and *Eigensinniges Handeln* (Lüdtke, 1993) seem to us to be a suitable concept for historically contextualising ambiguities in *doing in-between*. The term attempts to operationalise the relationship between social conditions and the subjective world of experience. It is important to emphasise that *Eigen-Sinn* is not a collective term “for adaptation, participation, and opportunism” (Lindenberger, 2014: 8). *Eigen-Sinn* also means “not a neutral neither-nor”. It implies “the desire to learn something about the attitude and standpoint of the actors to the respective rule”, at

²² This concept is also based on a problematic a priori, as the category of ethnicity is assumed to have an overriding power in everyday life.

the same time “always also the expectation placed on the actors from the outside that they can fulfil the imperative ‘tell-me-where-you-stand’ contained therein” (ibid.). *Eigen-Sinn* means that the endeavours of the subjects to be “‘with themselves’, but also ‘with the others’, ignores those calculations [...] that were related to larger contexts” (Lüdtke, 1993: 380).²³

Concept and fields of application

Based on the suggestions from the debate on *national indifference* and the starting points outlined above, we would like to propose a historical-anthropological perspective on the assumption of subjectivation associated with *doing in-between*. Furthermore, we also outline some fields of action.

Historical ethnography, a theoretical and methodical expansion (Kienitz, 2012) of historical anthropology, proceeds on the idea of “applying methods and basic interpretative assumptions to historical material from the contemporary perspective of cultural research, which is organised around field studies” (Maase, 2001: 256). This means reading sources against the grain, looking closely at things that seem insignificant, examining and comprehensively contextualising the actors who appear in the sources and their behavioural practices on a micro-perspective level. The goal is to carve out the various actors’ behavioural logic and horizon of meaning (*Handlungslogiken und Sinnhorizonte*) (Lipp, 2013: 222–224). It is not about writing history in a homogeneous or holistic manner. Quite the opposite: contradictions, obscurities and the unspoken can and should be addressed explicitly. This enables the research to reflect the multiple affiliations within which the historical subjects moved (Maase, 2001: 270).

Doing in-between as subjection and subjectivation

We believe that *doing in-between* makes it possible to *think of the subjects’ actions in terms of negotiation and hybridity*. They were hybrid in the sense that all subjects, regardless of which political stance or conviction they represented, navigated in everyday life in a field of tension between transregional contact and everyday politically framed conflicts. In many cases, they followed their own social or economic logics independently of the increasingly hegemonic national mode of subjection. We thus emphasise the processual character, the ambivalences, and the situational logic of actions and attitudes (subjectivation) that all subjects in different constellations and contexts repeatedly pursue – whether nationalist or not. We do not regard the invocation of the nation and ethnic categorisation as the fundamental, binding criterion for identification

²³ Cf. Lüdtke (1994: 146–147): “*Eigen-Sinn* proves to be a third, a behaviour that does not submit to the logic of the either-or of domination and resistance.”

and counter-identification in everyday life. Rather, we ask: How did historical subjects act (or react) in the long 19th century in the Alps-Adriatic region? Or in Homi Bhabha's words: What "strategies of selfhood" (1994: 2) did the subjects pursue? *Doing in-between* is based on an everyday life with contingent situations, dynamics and processes beyond homogenising, nationalising or ethnicising attributions.

Looking at the historical processes of subjectivation and subjection in the Alps-Adriatic region in the light of the available sources on everyday culture in the 19th century, we encounter practices of language, religion, economy, mobility and social networks. These practices are less the result of ideology or an expression of national positioning or antagonism; rather, they arise from the necessity of social action under conditions that could only be influenced to a limited extent by the subjects (subjection). By focusing on the subjects and their actions (subjectivation), we try to overcome binary patterns and approaches. In doing so, we start from forms of subjectivation in which hybrid or transcultural practices of a "mixed cultural heritage" (Kirchner-Reill, 2012: 9) appear.

We will, therefore, focus below on *doing in-between*. The aim is to make the mixtures or contingencies of identifications, self-attributions, and inscriptions beyond the hegemonic nationalising order of knowledge in individual and meaningful everyday life understandable. Transcending the hegemonic nationalising order of knowledge means understanding everyday social and cultural practices not as a direct reaction (apology, indifference or defence against political movements) to it. Instead, they should be analysed as intrinsically meaningful and self-evidently contradictory forms of subjectivation. In view of the polyphonic situation in Trieste, Johann Strutz called for an overcoming of the "excluding either/or through the dialogical figure of both/and" (2003: 213).

Such an understanding of the "cultural situation" and its contradictory asynchronicity seems to us to go further. In this respect, we ask less about attitudes, views, convictions or opinions. Instead, we concentrate on contingent situations and the practices associated with them. In doing so, action cannot correspond to an either/or, but to this contradictory both/and. We start from the subject's *Eigen-Sinn* of meaning.

The *Eigen-Sinn* of *doing in-between* can take on different forms, which leads us to expect different modes in which the subjects act or do not act. Intentional and non-intentional modes can be expected in *doing in-between*: 1) not knowing to act in-between, as one has multiple points of reference and orientation; 2) ignoring, tolerating, or implicitly doing in-between, as it fulfils a specific purpose at that point; and 3) strategic or opportunistic in-between, being aware of and doing actively and intentionally in-between. Such an approach can be an interesting way of adding new perspectives to the debate. The dimensions of private and public also need to be considered here.

We therefore understand *doing in-between* as situational or contingent action. It produces contradictory to idiosyncratic forms and subjectivations (such as identifications) in socio-cultural contexts characterised by hybridity, transculturality, and difference.

Such a subjectivation relates neither positively nor negatively to an ethnic or national identification; it is not the yardstick at all. This thesis states that there was a pragmatic behaviour that was at odds with the antagonism between the Habsburg Monarchy and the emerging nationalism. Moreover, at the level of identification, there exists a simultaneity of the non-simultaneous. Such situational behaviour is not coherent in the sense of any kind of identification. Rather, it pursues primarily its own social or economic interests – in an idiosyncratic and sometimes contradictory way. *Doing in-between*, thus, refers to the “third space”, in which ethnic and national categories are not central references and which offers “space for difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 2000: 5).

It is also important to emphasise that the perspective of *doing in-between* does not lead to further reification. The *doing* emphasises the constant process of negotiation. *Doing in-between* does not mean a clearly or unambiguously localised attitude or even world view. *Doing in-between* can always also mean simultaneously exercising nationalising or ethnicising practices or distancing oneself from them, or not being interested in one or the other at all.

This form of subjectivation is based on the use of a “more varied practical experiential knowledge” (Hörning, 2021: 495–496). The extent to which this became increasingly precarious towards the end of the Habsburg Monarchy and the nationalists’ increasing quest for hegemony is a legitimate question. However, the expansion of ideological efforts by nationalist activists also testifies implicitly to a situation of simultaneity of the non-simultaneous (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*).²⁴

Areas of activity

Numerous references to *doing in-between* can be found in various areas of activity. We will outline below some examples of everyday cultural contexts that we have come across in the literature.

Consider *language practices*. We assume that language and code-switching used in everyday life aim at a mutual understanding and successful communication instead of demonstrating hegemony and belonging and can be seen as being contrary to the ethnicising and nationalising imperative (Pisk, 2018; Almasy et al., 2020). Therefore, the interplay of non-intentional and intentional language use will be analysed, as well as code-switching (simultaneous use of different languages, language changes in writing and speech in a text, songs, or in conversations) (cf. Pisk, 2022, and the other articles in this issue of *Traditiones*). In addition, *child swapping*, for example, was a common practice in the Habsburg Monarchy “for the purpose of better interethnic communication

²⁴ The result of the plebiscite of 1920 could also be seen as a consequence or result of an in-between situation within the Slovenian language group in Kärnten/Koroška. A significant percentage of the Slovenian-speaking population in southern Carinthia decided in favour of belonging to Austria. For possible reasons, see Tiemann (2020).

in the context of labour relations between the linguistic ‘minorities’” (Wolf, 2012: 98ff.) and is also documented for Upper Carniola (Fielhauer, 1978: 118). Moreover, consider *mobility practices and transcultural and transregional mobility behaviour*. Mobility is connected with the overstepping of manifold boundaries (e.g. socio-economic, territorial, religious, or for the purpose of migration or marriage), which follows both free/forced and personal/professional motivations (Kalc, 2017). Additional evidence can be found in *network practices in associations* and the *transcultural reception and articulation of literature, theatre, and opera*. The Schillerverein in Trieste, for example, shows that it cannot be adequately characterised by Germanness, but has to “be regarded as typical of a mixture that allowed both ethnic exclusiveness and indifferent transversal practices of in-betweenness” (Holfelder et al., 2017: 28). In addition, there are also indications of *doing in-between* in *economic* and *professional practices* that circumvent ethnicising loyalties. The same applies to religious practices or the practices of identifying with regional characteristics (see, e.g., Stergar, 2018: 19).²⁵

Methodological implications – sources and securing evidence

A central problem for the analysis of *doing in-between* or the study of historical everyday life generally is the availability of meaningful sources. The “lost history” noted by Rumpler (2001) is also the expression of a difficult situation regarding the sources. However, the nature of the surviving sources that are considered worth preserving has also contributed to the fact that the narrative of nation, nation-state and nationalism has become hegemonic. Another reason for the loss of memory observed (see above) could be related to the concept of culture and the disregard for everyday culture. Culture, at least in German-speaking countries, primarily meant high culture, from which everyday life was excluded. Cultural history was viewed primarily as the history of ideas. In this sense, with reference to Michel de Certeau, we pursue a historiography that aims at heterologies²⁶ (2000 [1986]) and focuses on the other, the absent, the separated, or even the suppressed.

The everyday life of *doing in-between* has hardly survived, and it will not be easy to track down evidence from sources.²⁷ Many situations during *doing in-between* only left a paper trail when a conflict became a matter of record. Supposedly self-evident

²⁵ Cf. e.g. Istria: “On the other hand, Istria still appears in the 19th century sources mostly as a mental place through which a variety of actors express their different ideas, desires and interests regarding the regional order of Istria” (Toncich, 2021: 4).

²⁶ “This call to do justice to the other, the unidentical, could also stand as a motto for the post-structuralist commitment, which is why Michel de Certeau coined the term ‘heterology’, the doctrine of the other, for post-structuralism” (Münker, Roesler, 2000: XIII).

²⁷ Egry also mentions the generalisation problem resulting from the source situation: “The historical sources of everyday ethnicity highlight specific persons only in relation to one (or maybe a few) cases and situations, but the typologies built upon them not only allow for conclusions concerning broader social spheres [...], but these truly present ordinary people’s experiences (Egry, 2019: 158).

facts had a hard time being thematised at all, let alone becoming sources. Moreover, the “tiny lives” (Foucault in Ammerer, 2003: 16) had a hard time surviving in “historical reality as well as in the archival tradition” (ibid.).

Zahra not only notes an inadequate source situation, but also refers, for example, to the limited perspective of statistical surveys in the 19th century, as, for example, bilingualism did not feature in the census, whereas ethnic affiliations manifested on ethnographic maps (2010: 106). This means that contradictions and also the ruptures inherent in the national activists themselves are levelled out or (made) invisible. This favoured a teleological understanding of the historical as national development.

In seeking to uncover forgotten and faded elements concealed by historical accounts that are influenced by methodological nationalism, it seems promising to choose a micro-historical approach that reflects the lack of sources. Using the method of reading and securing evidence, historical anthropology enables readings of the sources that can be used to scrutinise a linear and seemingly logical turn towards the nation-state. Multiple and (from the point of view of nationalist activists) contradictory affiliations, identifications and attributions can usually only be deciphered implicitly and by means of a reverse reading. This requires an evidence-securing approach to the traditional hegemonic production of sources. These sources, which were produced by administrators, educated elites, or priests, must be read against the grain (Kaschuba, 2006: 217). Using Carlo Ginzburg’s (1988) paradigm of circumstantial evidence, inconspicuous and implicit horizons of meaning in past lifeworlds can be revealed. Ginzburg describes this approach as securing evidence, which helps to organise deviating readings and identify intrinsic meaning. This means that the *doing in-between* must be sought out discursively in reverse conclusions by means of securing evidence. Such an examination of sources reverses the hegemonic reading and asks to what extent, for example, nationalising activities, such as those of the German School Association (Deutscher Schulverein), do not also indicate the weakness of a nationalist discourse that is not yet hegemonic.

In-between – and beyond nationalising and ethnicising subjectation

Concluding, it should be emphasised that the term *doing in-between* is aimed primarily at an epistemological perspective. Taking up and building on recent research on the Habsburg Monarchy, we understand this concept as an extended research programme. *Doing in-between* is based on an everyday life with contingent situations, dynamics and processes *beyond* ideological, homogenising and polarising attributions. We, therefore, propose a broader conceptual framework and shift in the focus of analysis. Instead of starting from commitments to or conflicts over nation and ethnicity and their implications as categories of order, we should look at everyday life between subjectivation and subjection. Ultimately, we assume that historical subjects acted pragmatically and

situationally in everyday life in the area of tension between the Habsburg Monarchy and emerging nationalism. By investigating everyday intentional and unintentional practices and non-identifications (*doing in-between*), we aim to identify and understand those forms of subjectivation that point to a history *beyond* nationalising und ethnicising subjection. By proposing a new concept, we want to contribute to the reconstruction of a more complex history of the Alps-Adriatic region.

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Prakse vmesnosti v 19. stoletju na alpsko-jadranskem območju: vsakdanje oblike subjektivacije onkraj nacionalizirajočega in etnizirajočega podrejanja

V prispevku so razgrnjeni teoretični temelji za raziskovanje zgodovinskih načinov podrejanja/subjektivacije v hegemonskih narativih o etnizacijskih in nacionalizacijskih procesih na alpsko-jadranskem območju Habsburške monarhije. Rekonstruirani so načini subjektivacije, ki se izraža v praksah vmesnosti, s podmeno o njeni razširjenosti v dolgem 19. stoletju.

V habsburških raziskavah se je razvila konstruktivna razprava o konceptu nacionalne ravnodušnosti v kontekstu sprememb politične kulture in vpliva nacionalizma na posameznike (King, 2002; Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, Grancea, 2006; Judson, 2006, 2016a; Zahra, 2008, 2010 in drugi). Medtem ko sta v habsburških raziskavah retrospektivno preučena razvoj monarhije in njen postopni razpad, je fokus članka na vsakdanje življenje zgodovinskih subjektov. Cilj je premakniti pozornost od naroda kot glavnega modela reda in identifikacije ter se osrediniti na subjektivne perspektive in vsakdanje prakse v specifičnih družbenih in kulturnih kontekstih. Te prakse so lahko protislovne, ambivalentne, indiferentne, protestne ali oportunistične ter vključujejo procese (ne)prisvajanja nacionalizirajočih in etnizirajočih stališč.

Prispevek najprej opozarja na obrobnost znanja o transregionalnih in transkulturnih načinih subjektivacije, ki je posledica metodološkega nacionalizma. V primeru območja Alpe-Jadran je naraščajoča prevlada pripovedi o nacionalni državi v 20. stoletju povzročila precejšnjo izgubo znanja o skupni zgodovini tega mejnega območja. Kljub temu obstajajo študije o transnacionalni in primerjalni zgodovini območja in opozarjajo na dejstvo, da je bilo večjezično območje, ki

je pozneje pripadlo več nacionalnim državam, vse do 1. svetovne vojne gospodarsko in kulturno tesno povezano.

V nadaljevanju avtorja obravnavata nekatere predloge sodobnih raziskovalcev Habsburške monarhije o nacionalni indiferentnosti in vsakdanjih identifikacijskih praksah. Z zgodovinsko-antropološkega vidika trdita, da je nacionalna indiferentnost manj pomembna od vsakdanjih praks prebivalstva, ki niso nujno sledile nacionalizirajočim kategorijam in strategijam. Predlagata teoretična izhodišča, ki so po njunem mnenju pomembna za razširitev pogleda na politike identitete in vsakdanje življenje zgodovinskih subjektov, vključno s polifonijo, hibridnostjo, vsakdanjo etničnostjo in samosvojostjo (*Eigen-Sinn*). Sledi predstavitev koncepta »praks vmesnosti« (*doing in-between*), ki ne omejuje družbenega in kulturnega vedenja le na stališče do naroda in ideje nacionalne države, temveč upošteva tudi socialne in ekonomske okoliščine. Namesto da bi obravnavali zgolj odnos do nacionalne države (indiferentnost) ali etnizirajoče in nacionalizirajoče prakse, nas zanima, kako s praksami vmesnosti subjekti obvladujejo vsakdanje življenje. V sklepu je še nekaj metodoloških pripomb, ki izhajajo iz te perspektive.