



The Isig Analysis of Co-operation Networks  
between Minorities in North-Eastern Italy.

by Paolo Roseano

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## **The Isig Analysis of Co-operation Networks between Minorities in North-Eastern Italy.**

### **1. The Isig**

The Isig (Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia), a non-profit-making cultural institution, was founded in 1968 and has been recognised as a legal personality since 1985.

The statutory aims of the Institute are: to carry out studies and researches and organise conferences on the problems of the relations between states, nations, and ethnic groups and on the cultural, economic and social development of the populations; to furnish the authorities and the competent bodies with information tending to promote the cultural, economic and social development of the populations; to carry on seminars and specialisation courses for graduates and scholars engaged in work on the subjects that form the object of the Institute's research.

The scientific and cultural activity of the Institute is at present carried out in six departments, which in their turn are subdivided into research programmes, publications, the organisation of exhibitions and conferences, and teaching. The departments are: International sociology (international relations, interethnic relations), Technology and the future, Sociology of space (territory, town, community and home, environment, rural sociology), Mass emergencies, Sociosystemics, Social policies, social groups and altruism.

At the Isig operate a Forum of European Border Towns, an Observatory of European Ethnic Minorities and a Laboratory for the Analysis of Conflict Resolution. The Institute also publishes the journal *Futuribili* and the Magazine *Isig*. Finally, training activities are carried out oriented to the Eastern European societies and, in particular, a Summer School for the building of the new Europe.

### **2. The Researches of Isig in the field of ethnic minorities in North-Eastern Italy.**

Having its seat at Gorizia, a border town placed in an area where several ethnic groups are present, the Isig is a privileged standpoint to analyse the ethnic mosaic of that part of Europe. In fact the Isig has been dealing with ethnic and minority studies since the late '60s, it has published several books concerning this subject and has lead a plenty of sociological quantitative surveys about ethnic relations in north-eastern Italy and in Istria.

During my presentation I will focus only on some Isig surveys, and, specifically, I will tackle only the parts of those researches concerning either the co-operation between minorities in the field of culture, which is the central theme of this session, or the interethnic images, which constitute a factor strongly connected with such co-operation.

The first Isig survey concerning inter-ethnic relations in the border area between Italy and the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia dates back to the early '70s and was lead by R. Gubert. The questionnaires were submitted in the Italian provinces of Trieste and Gorizia and concerned three ethnic groups: Italians, Slovenes and Friulians, most of which were divided into sub-groups. Some items of the questionnaire aimed at detecting the inter-ethnic relations between those groups. The most interesting variable concerning the cultural co-operation between ethnic groups is the "*Degree of active participation in mixed Italo-Slovene associations in Italy*". 94% of the interviewees stated that they were "not active at all" in such associations, while for the answers "very", "moderately" and "little" the percentage was 2% each. Basing solely on these data, you might have inferred that the Italian and the Slovene groups in Italy were not integrated. Nevertheless, the questionnaire contained several items concerning the social relations of the individuals (family, friendship, business...). The answers given to these items showed that a share of population between 20 and 60% had social inter-ethnic relations, while only 10-15% had economic inter-ethnic relations. This lead the researchers to conclude that there was a discrepancy between inter-ethnic integration at an individual and at a collective level. This cleavage could be easily explained by the fact that associations, just because they operate at a collective level, recall

the social role of a person as a member of an ethnic group (as an Italian, as a Slovene...), thus having collective goals often defined on the bases of the ethnic self-ascription. Looking at the answers in detail, it became evident that although the integration at a collective level was not relevant, there was a significant asymmetry between the forms of collective integration of the Slovene minority and of the Italian majority: the net of social relations of the Slovene minority in Italy was widely included in that of the majority. The minority, therefore, was deeply integrated in the majority at a social level, while for the majority itself the relations with the minority were not equally important. Therefore this asymmetry was probably to be interpreted as a classical minority-dominance pattern.

Another extensive survey on ethnic relations in north-eastern Italy was lead by A.M. Boileau and E. Sussi on behalf of the Cnr and the Isig during the late '70s (published in 1981). The ethnic groups concerned, each subdivided in several sub-groups, were the Slovenes, Friulians, Germans and Italians living in the northern and eastern territory of the Italian region Friuli – Venezia Giulia. Through the questionnaires the researchers collected data relating, *inter alia*, to behaviours connected with the interethnic situation (linguistic abilities, social relations, sources of information). The most interesting pieces of information for our discussion are the following:

- *Linguistic abilities*: 25% of the interviewees lived at home in a condition of bilingualism (or diglossia). It is interesting to point out that the members of the dominant group tended to declare themselves diglossic (i.e. speaking standard Italian and a dialect), whereas the members of the minorities tended to use Italian and their own minority language. Many Slovenes of the province of Udine said they spoke Friulian as well.
- *Associations*: It was confirmed that participation in associations develops within ethnic minorities, since it probably has the function of maintaining and defending the values of one's group. Indeed, participation in the associations of one's group was more intensive among Slovenes (cultural associations 14-25%, religious associations 8-26%, sport associations 11-15%, the variations depending on the sub-group). But they were also among the most assiduous participants in pluralistic or mixed associations (10-12% took part "very or quite often"). At the date of the survey, the Friulian group did not show such a propensity, which perhaps developed later as a result of the so-called "second wave" of the Friulian ethnic movement.

	Self-ascription (sub-groups)								
Participation in multiethnic associations	Resiani	Slovenes Torre-Natisone	Slovenes	Friulians	Bisiachi	Istrians	Italians	Other	Tot.
Very or quite often	12.8%	6.5%	10.2%	5.0%	7.0%	6.9%	5.3%	9.4%	7.7%
Seldom or never	87.8%	93.5%	89.8%	95.0%	93.0%	93.1%	94.7%	90.6%	92.3%
Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	Self-ascription (sub-groups)								
Participation in multiethnic events	Resiani	Slovenes Torre-Natisone	Slovenes	Friulians	Bisiachi	Istrians	Italians	Other	Tot.
Very or quite often	25.6%	23.4%	22.0%	25.0%	23.0%	1.4%	11.3%	21.9%	19.0%
Sometimes	16.3%	29.9%	27.1%	20.0%	24.0%	13.7%	12.8%	25.0%	20.7%
Seldom or never	57.2%	46.7%	50.9%	55.0%	53.0%	84.9%	75.9%	53.1%	60.3%
Tot.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- *Mass media*: in general the minorities in Friuli – Venezia Giulia depended on the mass media in Italian; only the Slovene minority, to a certain extent, did not (because it could make use of both local and foreign mass media in Slovenian).
- *Inter-group relations*: On the basis of the pro-groups and anti-groups defined by the interviewees, a “map of inter-group ethnic relations” was traced. As you may see, solely on the bases of the differences in the images surveyed, it might be thought that friction and difficulties were more probable and frequent in the interpersonal relations in which Istrians and Slovenes resident in the provinces of Trieste and Gorizia were involved. Also the interpersonal relations that involved members of the Slovene and Italian ethnic groups were not exempt from the risk of conflict, although it was not so marked as in the previous case.

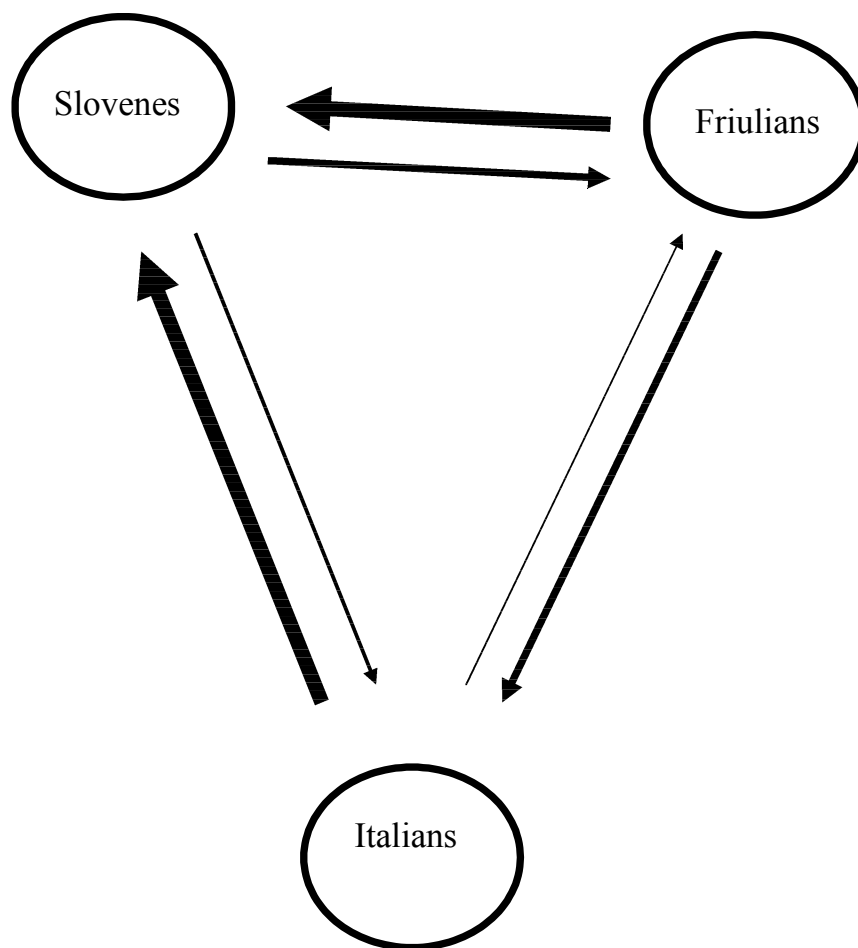
The above mentioned survey by Boileau and Sussi has been verified some years later by G. Delli Zotti<sup>1</sup>, using the data obtained in an Isig survey on “The weight of ethnic groups in the planning of integration in the New Europe”<sup>2</sup>. In general it has been observed that a) the degree of rejection was, once again, comparatively low, and that b) the ethnic groups revealed internally divergent attitudes towards questions of interethnic relations, depending on variables of gender, age, occupation, education and political ideology. In order to measure to what extent three “autochthonous” groups studied (Italians, Friulians, Slovenes) accepted/rejected each other, a series of question was put using the “social distance” scale. From the survey it emerged that the Italians rejected the Friulians (11.1%) more than the Friulians rejected the Italians (0.7%); the Slovenes rejected the Italians (3.8%) far less than the Italians rejected the Slovenes (17.8%); the Slovenes rejected the Friulians (11.1%) much less than the Friulians rejected the Slovenes (20.7)%. The main difference with the results of the preceding survey is the mutual rejection between Friulians and Slovenes, which had not been detected in the late ‘70s. The author suggested that the fact that the two minorities rejected each other more than they rejected the majority could depend on the circumstance that the relations between each minority and the majority were clear, while the minorities perceived each other as competitors for the allocation of certain resources (material or symbolic). Interesting differences in the acceptance/rejection attitudes among the various sub-groups have been pointed out, too.

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<sup>1</sup> Delli Zotti G., Vicinanze e distanze in una regione di frontiera, in: Gasparini A., Zago M. (eds.) *Al di là dei nuovi muri, L’Europa collaborativa che viene dalle città di confine*, Futuribili, 3, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> The survey was funded by the Cnr (CN 92.01742.10) and realised within the Isig by Gasparini A. (dir.), Delli Zotti G., Zago M., Bregantini L..

Fig. 2 – Degree of rejection (→) among ethnic groups.



Some other data about the cultural co-operation between the Italian majority and the Slovene minority in the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste may be found in some other researches by the Isig. During a survey which took place in 1986<sup>3</sup> and which focused on the associations in the province of Gorizia, it was found out that 82% of those associations were Italian, 11% were Slovene and 7% mixed.

A more qualitative approach to the subject of mixed Italo-Slovene associationism in the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste was developed by De Marchi, Del Zotto and Sussi in a research report published in 1991<sup>4</sup>. According to the results of that survey, being the two ethnic groups non rigidly separated, there was a certain number of associations aiming at promoting the mutual cultural

<sup>3</sup> Published in: Delli Zotti G., Rupel A. (eds.), *Etnia e sviluppo, Ruolo della presenza slovena nell'area goriziana*, Isig - Slori, Gorizia - Trieste, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> De Marchi B., Del Zotto M., Sussi E., *La Comunità etnica slovena residente nelle province di Gorizia e Trieste, Indagine svolta dall'Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia – I.S.I.G. per conto della Regione Friuli – Venezia Giulia nel quadro del progetto promosso dalla Comunità di lavoro Alpe Adria sulle minoranze delle Regioni componenti la Comunità, Regione Autonoma Friuli – Venezia Giulia, Trieste, 1991.*

exchanges and, above all, the mutual acquaintance. Among the most important institutions of such kind there were the Italian Association for the Knowledge of Slovene Culture and Language and the group named “Incontro ’85”.

A qualitative approach to the theme of cultural co-operation between minorities in Friuli has been developed in an Isig research published in 1999<sup>5</sup>. This research focused on the ethnic dynamics of the Friulian minority and, specifically, on the Friulian ethnic revival since the ‘950s. The results of this research showed that the cultural and intellectual *élites* of the Friulian, German and Slovene minorities living in the province of Udine were quite keen on developing common cultural initiatives. During the ‘80s and ‘90s this cultural co-operation among minorities took place at two levels. At a more local level there were forms of short or medium range co-operation in the areas where more than one ethnic minority was present. At a higher level the major cultural institutions of the minorities organised initiatives which took often the form of common documents or manifestations to claim for linguistic and cultural rights. Nevertheless these forms of interethnic co-operation seemed to be more frequent within the provincial borders, thus giving way to few initiatives involving the ethnic sub-groups living in different provinces (this exclusion is particularly evident in the case of the Slovenes of the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste, because the Friulian *élite* of the province of Udine claims to act on behalf of the Friulian sub-groups of the other provinces as well, while the Slovenes of the same province do not the same). Such forms of multiethnic co-operation were particularly interesting in the religious domain, and in fact a wide share of the Friulian *élite* found a legitimation for this “multiethnic approach” in the historical heritage of the Patriarchy of Aquileia, an ecclesiastical and secular institution which in the past centuries had somehow merged the ethnic groups of the region.

Besides these surveys on domestic interethnic relations and forms of co-operation, the Isig has published plenty of works on transfrontier relations, analysing also the interethnic aspects of those relations. A precise description of the Isig researches regarding this subject is to be found in a recent article by M. Zago on border communities<sup>6</sup>. A general review of the Isig studies concerning ethnic groups and minorities has been published in 1993 by Sussi and Meyr<sup>7</sup>. In those books you will find information about the researches and publications which I did not discuss here for the sake of brevity, especially about those regarding Istria.

As a conclusion we may say that, on one hand, the ISIG surveys provide a quantitative tool to analyse the interethnic dynamics in the region Friuli – Venezia Giulia, especially regarding the interethnic images and the phenomenon of ethnic associationism. The qualitative surveys of the ISIG, on the other hand, focused, *inter alia*, on the role of ethnic *élites* in the mobilisation processes, thus giving the possibility to better understand some forms of multiethnic co-operation.

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<sup>5</sup> Roseano P. (1999), *Identità friulana, Così è e così l’hanno creata i miti, i parroci, le élite locali*, Isig, Gorizia.

<sup>6</sup> Zago M. (2000), *Comunità di confine, Immagini e convivenze di ieri e di oggi*, in: A. Valussi, *Il confine nord-orientale*, Gorizia, Isig, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Sussi M., G. Meyr (1993), *Vent’anni di ricerche dell’Istituto di Sociologia internazionale di Gorizia (Isig) sulle relazioni etniche*, in L. Bergnach, E. Sussi (eds.), *Minoranze etniche ed immigrazione*, Angeli, Milano.



Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale Gorizia – ISIG

Via Mazzini, 13

I-34170 Gorizia (Italy)

Tel: +39.0481.53.36.32

Fax: +39.0481.53.20.94

Email: [isig@univ.trieste.it](mailto:isig@univ.trieste.it)

Webpage: <http://www.univ.trieste.it/~isig/>

## *Appendix*

### *Isig Publications on Ethnic Studies, Minorities and Local Cultures*

1. Barjaba K. (cur.) (1996), "Albania. Tutta d'un pezzo, in mille pezzi... E dopo?", *Futuribili*, 2-3.
2. Bergnach L. (cur.) (1995), *L'Istria come risorsa per nuove convivenze*, Isig, Gorizia.
3. Bergnach L. (cur.) (1995), *La minoranza italiana in Istria e Quarnero: identità e futuro*, Isig e Ministero affari esteri, Gorizia, Roma.
4. Bergnach L., G. Delli Zotti (cur.) (1994), *Etnie, confini*, Europa, Angeli, Milano.
5. Bergnach L., M. Komac (1993), *Le minoranze etniche e la sindrome permanente delle due identità*, in L. Bergnach, E. Sussi (cur.) (1993), *Minoranze etniche ed immigrazione. La sfida del pluralismo culturale*, Angeli, Milano.
6. Boileau A.M., E. Sussi (1981), *Dominanza e minoranze: immagini e rapporti interetnici al confine nordorientale*, Grillo, Udine.
7. Boileau A.M., R. Strassoldo, E. Sussi (1975), *Temi di sociologia delle relazioni etniche*, Isig, Gorizia.
8. Boileau A.M. (1976), *Etnocentrismo*, in: F. Demarchi, A. Ellena, B. Cattarinussi (cur.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Sociologia*, Paoline, Torino, 1987, pp. 804-819 (1° edizione 1976).
9. Boileau A.M. (1976), *Pregiudizio*, in: F. Demarchi, A. Ellena, B. Cattarinussi (cur.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Sociologia*, Paoline, Torino, 1987, pp. 1572-1587 (1° edizione 1976).
10. Boileau A.M. (1976), *Stereotipo*, in: F. Demarchi, A. Ellena, B. Cattarinussi (cur.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Sociologia*, Paoline, Torino, 1987, pp. 2064-2073 (1° edizione 1976).
11. Bregantini L. (cur.) (1997), *Osservatorio delle minoranze etniche europee. vol. I: I numeri e i luoghi delle minoranze etniche dall'Atlantico al Pacifico*, Isig, Gorizia.
12. Bregantini L., A. Pannuti (cur.) (1997), "Etnia? Sia se volete che sia", *Futuribili*, 1-2.
13. Bregantini L. (1996), *L'Osservatorio. I numeri e i luoghi delle minoranze etniche dall'Atlantico al Pacifico*, ISIG, Anno V, n. 1-2, ottobre, Gorizia.
14. Bregantini L. e Igor V. Bestuzhev-Lada (cur.) (1995), *Balkanizzazione euro-asiatica vs. nuovo impero russo*, *Futuribili*, 1-2 (1995), Milano, Franco Angeli.
15. Bregantini L. (1995), *Le discontinuità del federalismo russo: il dilemma Centro/Periferia in "Balkanizzazione euro-asiatica vs. nuovo impero russo"*, *Futuribili*, 1-2 (1995), Milano, Franco Angeli.
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17. Bregantini L. (1998), *I numeri e i luoghi delle minoranze etniche dall'Atlantico al Pacifico*, in "Etnia? Sia se volete che sia", *Futuribili*, 1-2 (1997), Milano, Franco Angeli.
18. Bregantini L. and M. Zago. (1995) *Gorizia-Nova Gorica: una possibile comunità virtuale nonostante il confine. ISIG - Realtà virtuale e progettazione del futuro / Virtual reality - designing the future. 1995; IV, (3-4/Dicembre): 8-10.*
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20. Cattarinussi B., M. Del Zotto, G. Delli Zotti, N. Molea, Cultura e territorio, Indagine sulle istituzioni e attività culturali nel Friuli – Venezia Giulia, Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia – Giulia, Direzione Regionale dell’Istruzione, della Formazione Professionale, delle Attività e Beni Culturali – Isig, Trieste – Gorizia, 1982.
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31. Gasparini A. (1992), Nuove etnie e modelli di integrazione: ha un futuro il melting pot?, Isig, Gorizia.
32. Gasparini A. (1996), A small territory. A limitation or a resource for the development of a small economy? An exploration of the junction of minority cultures and economic expansion, in Isig, Università di Trieste e di Udine (cur.), op. cit.
33. Gasparini A. (cur.) (1995), Il futuro di Trieste fra innovazione tecnologica e neo-cosmopolitismo, Isig, Gorizia.
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