Social Media Groups in Interaction With Contested Urban Narratives: The Case of Koper/Capodistria, Slovenia

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Abstract

Social media is arguably the most widespread tool for digital communication in Europe and worldwide, which makes it particularly important to investigate how this type of communication tool affects and reflects the processes that shape the urban physical and socio-cultural environment. Its influence on urban realities may be twofold: On one side we can use it as a reflection (or extension) of the processes that occur on the ground; on the other side, the specific ways in which social media operate might influence processes that shape the urban environment. This interaction between the urban and digital spaces is increasingly influencing how collective memory and related heritage discourses are shaped, transformed, and contested. In this article, we present the case of Koper (Italian: Capodistria), the main seaside harbour town of Slovenia, which faced a deep demographic and socio-cultural transformation in the aftermath of the Second World War. Its historic urban core became a deeply contested urban environment, where a hegemonic historical narrative clashed with several subaltern ones. The dissonance between contested narratives has re-emerged in the digital space through a handful of history-oriented Facebook groups in recent years. We analyse how digital tools have influenced the dynamics between the contested narratives and how these refer to specific locations within the town or to its historic urban core as a whole.

Keywords

Capodistria; contested spaces; dissonant heritage; Facebook groups; Koper; memory narrative; Slovenia

1. Introduction

Social media represent a pillar of participatory culture (H. Jenkins et al., 2006). They form "one of the most important platforms to promote the public participation process in urban heritage in the process of rapid urbanisation" (Liang et al., 2021, p. 1), primarily because they give a voice to a broad range of stakeholders. They can reveal how people interact with physical heritage and socially construct meanings and values (Giaccardi, 2012, p. 3; Liang et al., 2021, p. 1). As a polygon of "heritagisation" processes (Harvey, 2001), they allow subaltern and dissenting heritage discourses (Smith, 2006) to be voiced and shared. Digital technologies can also become facilitators of people-centred approaches to heritage (Liang et al., 2021, p. 1; Silberman & Purser, 2012, p. 13) since they carry the potential to promote mutual understanding among people and groups of different cultural or ethnic provenience (Psomadaki et al., 2019). They can also unveil a sense of place and place attachment as the "symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared affective meanings to a particular space that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relation to the environment" (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 165). Yet, heritage sites are inherently dissonant, often explicitly contested spaces "where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power" (Low & Lawrence-Zuñiga, 2003, p. 18). Contestation can take many forms (G. Jenkins, 2008; Plüschke-Altof & Sooväli-Sepping, 2022), but is especially frequent in multi-ethnic or multicultural contexts, as the urban centres of northern Istria, in Slovenia, clearly show. So, social media can take an inverse role, creating homogenised, exclusive online communities, and co-creating discourses of misrecognition in the politics of heritage (Smith, 2022). Social media can thus illustrate the heritage dimension of urban space and the underlying social and cultural dynamics; these can play a major role in addressing urban development and planning, especially in issues of management of historic urban areas, particularly participatory approaches in conservation (Madgin & Lesh, 2021; Wells & Stiefel, 2019).

In this contribution we observe two local history-oriented Facebook groups related to the town of Koper (Italian: Capodistria), Slovenia, to investigate how this digital tool influences the dynamics of heritage and memory discourses in relation to the historic core. We scrutinise which, if any, useful outcomes for conservation and urban planning can be detected. The scope of our contribution is thus limited to an exploratory investigation based on a limited number of case studies. On a local level, the topic has not yet been examined through the lens of social media, although recently through an in-depth ethnographic study (Hrobat Virloget, 2021).

2. Research Approach

In contemporary heritage theory, it is now accepted that heritage is discursively constructed and thus represents a cultural process or practice, rather than a material artefact (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006). Stakeholders and communities play a key role within it while confronting hierarchies within themselves. Heritage is negotiated through memory, performance, identity, place, and dissonance, mainly using language and discourse as primary vectors (Smith, 2006, p. 4). Thus, intrinsic to the heritagisation process are memory narratives as a specific discourse type (Forchtner, 2021), because "it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities" (Somers, 1994, p. 606). Memory narratives play a key role in the formation and reproduction of collective memory, while also using physical places as crucial references (Halbwachs,

2001). Group hierarchies within multicultural contested areas cause reactions where "hegemonic modes of claiming the past are contested and coexist with alternative heritage forms" (van de Port & Meyer, 2018, p. 2), the latter usually belonging to unheard or invisible social groups. Here we deal with "dissonant heritage," which "involves a discordance or a lack of agreement and consistency, which in turn immediately prompts the question, 'between what elements does dissonance occur?'" (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 20)—commonly between antagonistic memory narratives. Reproduction of official and authorised narratives is contested by dissenting counter-narratives or diasporic narratives within "communities of memory" of those formerly displaced (Silberman & Purser, 2012, p. 22). Within these discourse dynamics, emotion and affect seem to be central topics (Smith et al., 2019), with (mis)recognition performances (Smith, 2022).

In this democratisation process in the heritage field, people-centred approaches in built heritage conservation are gaining momentum (Wijesuriya et al., 2017), reflecting well-known issues of participatory planning (Sanoff, 2000) as well as trends in critical heritage theory. The potential of social media as a tool in such approaches, as well as for heritage research, was highlighted recently (Madgin & Lesh, 2021). In terms of methodology, critical heritage studies rely on critical discourse analysis, and thus on a broad interdisciplinary framework for linguistic analysis of texts concerning their social and cultural context (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), revealing power relations in society (Fairclough, 1989). Adapting Fairclough's (1989) framework to the scope of our inquiry, we scrutinised two local history-oriented Facebook groups, from which we selected four case studies (thematically connected selections of posts or comments) that we identified as dealing with dissonance in heritage and contested memory narratives. We use the three steps of description, interpretation, and explanation that reflect Fairclough's model of discourse with three concentric domains: text, (social) interaction, and (social) context. The formal linguistic analysis is covered here by text translations from Slovene with occasional pinpointing of significant formal features, and the language or dialect used. We focus here on the interpretation phase to detect discourse dynamics, text meanings, group affiliations, values, and emotional bonds. Following Fairclough's (1989) further subdivision of interpretation focused on "situational context" and "intertextual context," we focus on the latter. Situational context analysis is meaningful, especially since group rules, administrator activities, membership filtering, and the Facebook algorithm itself all introduce unequal power positions meant to structure communication within a group, commonly perceived as a community of equals. However, for our scope, we focus on intertextual context analysis, that is, linking the analysed discourse with the historical and cultural processes. The explanation phase structures the texts into dominant narratives and counter-narratives within the analysed cases. The three phases of analysis are used to form a matrix as a tool for text analysis.

3. A Contested Border Area

Northern Istria is part of the namesake peninsula in the Upper Adriatic. We use the term to refer to the sole coastal region of Slovenia, located between the Italian (northwest) and Croatian borders (south). Historically, the coastal strip with the towns of Koper, Izola, and Piran was inhabited by Romance-speaking populations, while the hilly hinterland was Slavic-speaking. Formally the area was part of the Venetian Republic until the end of the 18th century, which left a strong mark on historic urban architecture in the area. The last two centuries brought numerous shifts of borders and political regimes: The 19th century was marked by Austrian rule, which was followed by the Kingdom of Italy (1921–1943), a short German occupation (1943–1945), a period of temporary demarcation (1945–1947), the Free Territory of Trieste buffer-zone

state (1947–1954), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1954–1991), and from 1991 to the present, the Republic of Slovenia (Guštin & Žitko, 2021; Pirjevec, 2007). The wider period of the Second World War is the principal historical context that shaped the current socio-cultural identities and memory narratives of the region. The interwar period was marked by the Fascist regime in Italy, which led to violent ethnic homogenisation policies towards Slovenes and Croats, lasting throughout the period and ranging from material to cultural annihilation (Pirjevec, 2007, p. 116; Pupo, 2021, Chapter 3). The Second World War was followed by a decade of international negotiations about a new borderline between Italy and Yugoslavia, which brought the Free Territory of Trieste with its dual military administrations (Pirjevec, 2007, pp. 369–377). Its partition between Italy and Yugoslavia in 1954 fundamentally transformed the demography of the area: By 1956, more than 90% of the pre-war urban population of Koper—mainly Italian-speaking—had left. Yugoslav authorities immediately started an industrialisation and urbanisation policy by choosing Koper as Slovenia's main seaport and regional industrial centre. Several waves of economic immigration allowed the repopulation of the historic core and the erection of new modernist neighbourhoods, both overseen by state-appointed architect Edo Mihevc, who combined modernist ideals of progress (with skyscrapers in historic cores and other sanitation measures) with vernacularist aesthetics (Čebron Lipovec, 2019). The described cultural, economic, and urban changes can be interpreted as a part of the "Yugoslavisation" process of the Istrian region (Hrobat Virloget, 2021; Kalc, 2019).

The population change remains a point of dispute in historiography, especially in the official national discourses: Italian discourses conceive it as an "exodus," and the displaced people as *esuli*, thus as a forced displacement; while in the Slovene historiography, the displaced are called *optanti*, those who could choose whether to leave or stay. Recent ethnologic and historiographic research (Hrobat Virloget, 2021; Kalc, 2019) showed that a high number of people were indeed, directly and indirectly, instigated to leave, while it also shows that ethnicity was not the sole reason. The few Italians who remained from the northern Istrian towns (about 8%) were immediately (in 1955) recognised as a national minority. Thus, in the Yugoslav period, a new identity (or identities) formed in the Slovene part of Istria based also on symbolic boundaries (Hrobat Virloget, 2021), as discussed in Section 5. The urban heritage of Koper played a minor role in this respect, which is reflected in the material condition of its historic core. Single prominent buildings aside, the historic urban fabric lacks maintenance, infrastructure upgrades, a lively street life, and an integrated heritage conservation approach. This degradation was also identified by sociological surveys (Hočevar, 1998; Medarić, 2014). We can at least partly attribute this to the inhabitants experiencing a "lack of 'longue durée' type bond with the environment" (Hrobat Virloget, 2021, p. 224).

3.1. Northern Istrian Memory and Heritage Issues on Facebook

Since the early 2010s, Facebook emerged among the social media platforms with the widest audience worldwide (Brügger, 2015, pp. 7–8), arguably due to its versatility and accessibility. The Facebook groups feature, which allows communication spaces to form around a common topic or interest, is frequently mentioned in social research, but few analyse it in depth (Soukup, 2018, p. 6). By the middle of the decade, Facebook groups centred on local history became popular in Slovenia. They quickly developed into a medium for collective remembering of past places, events, and people, especially by sharing historic pictures. Posts tend to trigger diverse debates in the comment section, frequently about history, memories, and contemporary urban issues. Over time such groups evolved into significant public "proto-databases" of historical data and collective memory. Two such groups exist for Koper, listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Facebook groups centred on the history of Koper/Capodistria, Slovenia.

Name	Translated name	Date founded	Membership (as of July 2023)	Abbreviation
Koper, kot je bil nekoč–Capodistria com'era una volta	Koper, as it once was	July 16th, 2016	12,328	KKJBN
Kuopr anbot–Koper nekoč	Koper once upon a time	January 26th, 2020	5,916	KA–KN

In the following paragraphs, a preliminary characterisation of both groups is given, acknowledging the possibility that a large-scale discourse analysis of each group might offer different insights. The first Facebook group is called Koper, kot je bil nekoč–Capodistria com'era una volta (KKJBN) and it has a bilingual (Slovene and Italian) group description and rules section. Both aim to regulate and restrict content to pictures and information about the history of Koper, giving the administrators the authority to delete off-topic and inappropriate content, such as "postings not conforming to rules of communication in the media, advertising, political and ideological propaganda or disrespectful behaviour and insults among members" (KKJBN, n.d.). The group's founder was an Italian speaker (unclear whether a member of the local Italian minority or the *esuli*). Among the main post and comment contributors, we can find mainly Slovene majority members, but also occasionally some Italian minority members, and very rarely some of the *esuli*. The Slovene language is vastly prevalent; however, Italian appears occasionally. Interestingly, language use seems to be fluid and not strictly linked to group appurtenance, as Italian is used also by Slovene speakers, and vice versa. There are three administrators, who are among the most frequent contributors, but there are also numerous other frequent contributors marked as "top contributors" by Facebook's algorithm.

The second group, Kuopr anbot–Koper nekoč (KA–KN), has an exclusively Slovene description. The rules seem to be stricter here since unorganised and irrelevant pictures are deleted by the administrator. Also, contemporary pictures without historic counterparts are not accepted. The group does not sanction the posting of advertisements or political propaganda. However, the first sentence of the rules seems to be peculiar, since the group's aim is to provide "short descriptions of recent history—the official and the silenced one" (KA–KN, n.d.). A content overview reveals that the two administrators are the main daily contributors, with no other member playing a comparable role. The Slovene language is used almost exclusively, sometimes alternated with the local Slovene Istrian dialect. The circumstances of its creation deserve attention too. The founder and administrator of this group got involved in a heated debate within the KKJBN group. The debate crossed the line of acceptance by the group's administrators, and the related post was deleted, thus being inaccessible to us. Consequently, the founder of KA–KN declared that he was leaving the KKJBN group and starting a new one on January 26th, 2020. KA–KN can therefore be interpreted as a breakaway group from KKJBN, although many people are members of both.

4. Four Examples of (Conflicting) Narratives

4.1. The Statue of Nazario Sauro in Koper

The first example relates to the historical figure of Nazario Sauro (1880–1916), a native of Koper who became a fervent supporter of the Italian national movement, working extensively against Habsburg rule in

Istria and deserting the Italian navy during the First World War. His capture and execution by the Austrian authorities elevated him to a hero and a martyr in the Italian official discourse—the actual personification of Italian nationalism and irredentism in Istria. In 1935, the fascist-led municipality, supported by state authorities, erected a monument to Sauro in a prominent seaside location at the edge of the historic harbour. The monument was demolished by the German occupation authorities in 1944. Today the area is denominated as Ukmar Square, after the Slovene partisan hero Anton Ukmar (1900–1978). Currently, a parking lot and a small park occupy the square, with no trace of the monument. The figure of Nazario Sauro is a relatively unknown figure in the collective memory of the current population. There are no public commemorative efforts (monuments, tags, signs, street names) dedicated to him, not even on his house of birth in the historic Bošadraga quarter. It can be considered an example of "negative heritage" (Meskell, 2002, p. 558) for the Slovene majority, and therefore removed from public memory and discourse. On the other hand, nearby Trieste erected a monument to him in 1966, on an important part of the city's waterfront that also bears his name. A picture of the former monument in Koper was posted in the KKJBN group on February 13th, 2017, at 9:28 PM, collecting 52 comments in total. In Table 2 we analyse six representative ones.

Table 2. Selected comments from a post of the Nazario Sauro monument in KKJBN group from February 13th, 2017.

No.	Translated post	Timestamp	Interpretation	Explanation
1	Fu** it, you shouldn't have posted this irredentist and nationalist up here!	February 13th, 2017, 9:35 PM	1. Disapproves of the original post. 2. Condemns the historical personality and monument. 3. There's an association with Italian nationalism and hostility towards Slavs.	Dominant narrative
2	History should not be erased.	February 13th 2017, 9:46 PM	1. Recognises a multifaceted history and, implicitly, the right to remember a historical personality, regardless of its political connotation.	Counter-narrative
3	It was marvellous.	February 14th, 2017, 8:28 PM	1. Acknowledges the aesthetic quality of the monument.	Counter-narrative
4	It is interesting that Italians tend to ask through official channels when the monument will be re-erected. I was told so by the late prof. Valerij Novak, when he was still the president of the Social Activities Office at the Koper Municipality. I hope that we won't erect monuments to fascists in Koper, too.	February 19th, 2017, 10:58 AM	1. Designates the historical personality as a "fascist," condemning the tendency of the Italian state to continue publicly commemorating nationalist and irredentist figures. 2. The implications that a similar practice may take place in Koper is seen as negative.	Dominant narrative

Table 2. (Cont.) Selected comments from a post of the Nazario Sauro monument in KKJBN group from February 13th, 2017.

No.	Translated post	Timestamp	Interpretation	Explanation
5	Ljubo, Nazario Sauro 1880–2016, born in Koper, defector to Italy, hanged by the Austrians as an Italian irredentist after they caught the whole crew of the submarine that crashed on rocks in the Kvarner gulf. He wanted to attack the Rijeka harbour with it. It was WWI, we cannot be sure if he would become a fascist in 1922. However, if his monument had survived until 1945, it could have become a peculiar contrast to the fact and to the efforts of our side regarding the decision that Istria was annexed to Yugoslavia. A peculiar example of a tragic personality of that time, of that Europe.	February 19th, 2017, 7:19 PM	1. Reply to comment no. 4 (directly addressing the author). 2. Clarifies some historical facts about Sauro's death and problematises his designation as "fascist," since his death preceded the forming of the fascist party. 3. Outlines the contrast of the memorial against the dominant narrative after 1945. 4. Calls Sauro a "tragic historical figure."	Counter-narrative
6	A tragic personality? Are you sleepwalking? Educate yourself, come on.	February 19th, 2017, 7:32 PM	1. Reply to comment no. 5. 2. condemns the designation of Sauro as a "tragic historical figure" (in the form of a rhetorical question), reinforced by claims of poor rationality and education on the part of the commentator.	Dominant narrative

The former monument location (Ukmar Square) is thus a dissonant heritage site, being contested through discourse on Facebook. We identified two distinct memory narratives. The dominant narrative is congruent with the former Yugoslav and the current Slovene official historical narrative. It pictures Sauro not just as an irredentist and nationalist, but also as a fascist. It argues that memory of him is rightly ignored and erased in the public sphere, as he represented an ideology hostile to the Slovene population. The dominant narrative exhibits a high degree of coherence, where condemnation of Sauro (and of the ideology he is a symbol of) is perceivable by all its advocates. Its dominant position is reaffirmed in one case by calling into question the reasoning and education levels of an alternative reading proponent. On the other hand, we have the counter-narrative, which is much less coherent. Here we encounter calls to represent history objectively (including its negative sides), recognition of the monument's aesthetics, and calls for historical accuracy. However, no dissenting opinion gives an overtly positive outlook of Sauro's figure. It is also relevant to note that Italian minority members, usually active in the group, did not react to the post, which hints at a deliberate silence (Hrobat Virloget, 2021), while it illustrates alternative history readings within the Slovene majority itself. This is just a glimpse of the public discourse about the topic since the Sauro monument is a recurring theme within both

groups. A more comprehensive analysis would make sense to inform the planning activities of the municipality, which has already closed the parking lot in order to re-purpose and re-design the area ("Ukmarjev trg doživlja preobrazbo," 2023).

4.2. Main Square in Koper

The second example refers to Tito Square (named after Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito). It is the main town square and features the most prominent historic buildings (with clear Venetian character): the cathedral with the bell tower, the Praetorian Palace (seat of the city council), and the *loggia*, a former public gathering space currently serving as one of the central cafeterias. The square also retains a highly symbolic value, dominating the town's media image and symbolising urban continuity since the 6th century AD. Today, the square still retains the role of the primary public space of the town, remaining the main location of major events, protests, and gatherings. We can interpret Tito Square as the urban space where institutional relations of power are most directly symbolised. The architecture speaks of the former dominance of Italian-Venetian culture, while its name and uses speak of the current Slovene and former Yugoslav dominance. In the KKJBN group, a picture from 1952 was posted on March 30th, 2020, at 7:28 PM, depicting Yugoslav People's Army soldiers dancing a traditional Balkan *kolo* dance in front of the cathedral. The author of the post explained that she understood the picture as depicting liberation and freedom from oppression, wishing to soon experience such a liberation also from the oppressing Covid-19 epidemic. A debate developed with 73 comments, one of which disagreed with the picture description, initiating a small sub-debate with 10 replies. In Table 3 we present the initial comment (comment no. 1) and a selection of replies:

Table 3. Selection of comments from a post of Tito square in KKJBN group from March 30th, 2020.

No.	Translated post	Timestamp	Interpretation	Explanation
1	Well, this was not really a joy for Koper. Just before that, most of the autochthonous population moved out, this for me is first of all a tormented and a brutal image.	March 30th, 2020, 9:01 PM	1. Shares a very negative interpretation of the picture, connected primarily with the exodus of Italians after the Second World War.	Counter-narrative
2	I cannot share your views! In the Habsburg monarchy, ethnicities were mixed everywhere. If the *optanti* decided for their own Italian country, this was their own decision. Italians that remained got special privileges, that Slovenes in Italy got with the protective law for Slovenes in 2001. As far as I know, those who decided to leave regretted this and they would still like to return, since they were abandoned by Italy; they lived many years in camps, which surely was not a nice thing!	March 30th, 2020, 10:20 PM	1. Reply to comment no. 1 (disagreement). 2. Frames the exodus as an act of free choice of the *esuli*, not a forced expulsion, as they perceive it; alludes to Italian minority rights in Slovenia (recognised immediately) and Slovene minority rights in Italy (recognised only in 2001). 3. Uses the pejorative term "privileges," iterating that many Italians regretted emigrating and were seeking to return (reinforcing the free choice narrative).	Dominant narrative

Table 3. (Cont.) Selection of comments from a post of Tito square in KKJBN group from March 30th, 2020.

No.	Translated post	Timestamp	Interpretation	Explanation
3	I cannot refrain from commenting. For some it was a joyful one. My father hoped that after the slaughter he could return to his native Trieste. But since it remained out of Slovenia, he did not return there. The picture above represents the end of suffering for many. Freedom. Unity. Power. That's why I compared it with the joy that we will experience at the end of this current state. It does not have any political basis. I would be happy to see my father in the picture, who finally started to live freely.	March 31st, 2020, 8:09 AM	1. Reply to comment no. 1 (disagreement). 2. Agrees with the original post, reconnecting it with personal memories of a parent who wished to return to native Trieste (originally liberated by the Yugoslav army in 1945 but then ceded to the allies). 3. Posits the original post as a carrier of basic values: liberation from oppression, freedom, unity, power.	Dominant narrative
4	Don't make me laugh....Hahaha. Evidently, it's the easiest thing to believe those in power!!!! (The first part of the comment is in Italian)	March 31st, 2020, 11:24 AM	1. Reply to comment no. 2. 2. Rebuts the original post as laughable and suggests the presented story is untrue, artificially crafted by state propaganda.	Counter-narrative

The debate evolved around two main topics: feelings and values emanating from the image on one side, and the nature of the Italian exodus on the other. The dominant narrative connects the picture with positive feelings and values (such as freedom, unity, and power), and takes pride in Slovene and Yugoslav culture taking a position in the symbolic centre of the town. The exodus is also clearly defined as a voluntary choice of the former Italian-speaking inhabitants, who supposedly left without any coercion by Yugoslav authorities. Besides that, we also find comparisons between Slovene and Italian minority rights (that supposedly favour the Italians) and a latent grief for the fact that Trieste became part of Italy. All these are typical elements of the dominant history and memory narrative among the Slovene majority (Hrobat Virloget, 2021). The much less outspoken counter-narrative is nevertheless more coherent than previously. The partial use of Italian in one of the replies (Table 3, comment no. 4) could indicate an Italian minority member's contribution to the counter-narrative. It focuses on revealing the deceiving nature of the dominant narrative and on exposing more nuanced connotations (even if not negative and painful) of certain events linked to Tito Square. This points to its dissonant heritage nature, which should be taken into consideration when planning heritage conservation, interpretation activities, and future uses.

4.3. The Historic Core of Koper and Its Name

Next is the analysis of selected posts from the KA–KN group, which mostly refer to the historic urban core as a whole. As mentioned, the group was formed as a "breakaway" group from KKJBN in February 2020 to unveil "silenced recent history," as the founders claim. Table 4 reports three posts. The first one includes a

historic engraving of the waterfront. The second post is on a postcard from 1898 representing Brolo Square and includes original handwriting with personal names and a dedication. The third post is on a map of the local Italian dialectal area, taken from a book written by a locally residing dialectologist.

Table 4. Selection of posts from KA–KN group related to the historic core of Koper/Capodistria, Slovenia.

No.	Translated post	Timestamp	Interpretation	Explanation
1	Did you know, that the name Kuopr/Kopr/Copr is older than Capodistria? In Roman times Aegida became Capris. Later they renamed the town Iustinopolis in honour of the Byzantine emperor, but Capris stayed as the vernacular name until the official renaming to Caput Histriae by the Aquilea patriarchs, who had their own governor in the town in the early 13th century. Since Slovenes inhabited these lands at least since the 7th century, clearly Kuopr was derived from Capris much before Capodistria, which was adopted by the Venetians when they superseded the patriarchs at the end of the 13th century. Of course, this does not come from some communist books, neither was it recounted to me by some 100-year-old grandmother, as some "people of good will" insinuated to me. The source is a renowned 19th-century historian from Trieste.	January 26th, 2020, 6:47 PM	1. Frames the toponym "Koper" as older than the toponym "Capodistria," underlining the continuity of Slovene (not Slavic) inhabitation in Istria, while omitting the continuity of Romance-speaking communities.	Dominant narrative
2	A postcard of Brolo Square sent in 1898 to the city of Brescia, to Miss Golob with greetings from Slavica Pavlovič, Maršič Viktorija, etc. The media are convincing us that just Italians lived in Koper. Can we believe them?	April 24th, 2020, 9:39 AM	1. Transliterates names and surnames from the postcard into modern Slovene script. 2. Presents the etymology of surnames as a proof of national affiliation and presence of the Slovene community in Koper.	Dominant narrative

Table 4. (Cont.) Selection of posts from KA–KN group related to the historic core of Koper/Capodistria, Slovenia.

No.	Translated post	Timestamp	Interpretation	Explanation
3	Last time Stanko used the sentence: "Concealed history is the worst deception." This holds true also for this map of our area, with indication of spoken languages and dialect, the work of a known "coastal expert." Although, it's not clear for which era this holds true, I hope this is reported in her book, but this is not the main problem. I personally see a much bigger problem that the whole coastal area is represented as if there were no Slovenes here, even if they came before the Venetians. I think it is an extreme deception, since the author cared so much to mark such a small "enclave" as Valmarin, with just a few farms as exclusively Istro-Venetian, but hasn't designated Koper as Slovene-speaking or mixed, even if we know that over the centuries it always had from a few hundred to a few thousand Slovenes. We as Slovenes don't need an outside enemy!	July 26th 2021, 10:35 PM	1. Protests because the map does not represent Koper as a Slovene-speaking or ethnically mixed area. 2. Claims the continuous presence of a small Slovene-speaking minority in Koper for a longer historical period. 3. Asserts that Slovenes have an internal enemy, which is consciously concealing a part of history to the public.	Dominant narrative

The analysis unveils some common traits. One is a reinforced autochthonist interpretation of history, that seeks to anchor Slovenes in the culture of pre-exodus Koper, especially by arguing that a sizable Slovene minority was historically present, downplaying the role of Italian culture. Official historiography (including the latest research) does not deny Slovene presence in pre-war Koper, but it also overwhelmingly agrees about the predominant Romanic nature of the town continuously from the Romans to the Second World War. This narrative frames the official historiography as an enemy, explicitly referring to an inner enemy (Slovene counter-narrative adherents and the Italian minority), which also implies external enemies (the Italian state and the *esuli*). The Second World War-rooted antagonism between Italians and Slovenes is perpetuated into the present time by reinforcing a locally rooted defensive brand of Slovene nationalism that conceptualises Slovenes as blameless victims of Italians in perpetuity. Interestingly, the presented discourse seeks to reinforce the dominant narrative with a new element, a discursive reconstruction of the historic urban core as a Slovene "ancestral homeland" within the digital realm. We could interpret this as a possible answer to the "lack of 'longue durée' type bond" (Hrobat Virloget, 2021, p. 224). The presented discourse

also narrows opportunities to engage in intercultural dialogue to mediate new, more inclusive narratives, as the dissonant heritage is mobilised on a trajectory of misrecognition (Smith, 2022, p. 625), within a digital space that instead of transcending, reinforces symbolic boundaries, producing isolated and mutually disengaged groups (Silberman & Purser, 2012, p. 18).

4.4. Giardinetto

A rather different perspective on local memory narratives is provided by the so-called *Giardinet* or *Giardinetto* (Italian dialectal and standard forms for "small garden" and "children's playground"), a smaller open space, or square without an official denomination. Historically a kitchen garden, it was transformed into a park in the late 19th century, turned into a children's playground in the mid-1950s, and covered with asphalt in the early 1970s to become a car park. In 2022 the parking was removed, with a few benches and olive trees placed in the now pedestrianised space as a temporary intervention. As the new programme and aesthetics are not yet defined, it was taken as a case study of anthropological research (started in September 2022 and is ongoing) to promote a participatory approach to built heritage conservation. Since then, several *Giardinetto*-related posts have appeared on both Facebook groups; here we will report comments from three of them (Table 5). The first is from the KA–KN group and represents a picture of two children playing on a playground carousel (posted on October 12th, 2022, at 6:04 PM). The other two are from the KKJBN group (November 10th, 2022, at 11:49 AM, and May 25th, 2023, at 5:08 PM) and both contain past and contemporary pictures of the square.

Table 5. Selection of comments from different posts in both analysed Facebook groups related to the Giardinetto.

No.	Translated post	Location/Timestamp	Interpretation	Topics
1	This was the most beautiful place, where I played as a child. In the back there is a glimpse of the door of my home. Here I played, here I was at home. Nice memories.	KA–KN Post: October 12th, 2022, 6:04 PM Comment: October 13th, 2022, 1:02 AM	1. Speaks of memories of childhood playground and home.	Childhood memories
2	I remember this park. The door on the right is where Feručo Mikolič lived, the first window on the right is where Šare Milovan and Ivica lived. Above them there was Muto, as we called him. On the extreme left Leon Bradaševič.	KA–KN Post: October 12th, 2022, 6:04 PM Comment: October 13th, 2022, 7:12 PM	1. Speaks of memories of past inhabitants of surrounding buildings.	Childhood memories
3	Hey, you remember everything like they were standing right in front of you now, you forgot to write that next door there was your house, where we used to take a shortcut over the yard gate to Kidričeva street.	KA–KN Post: October 12th, 2022, 6:04 PM Comment: October 13th, 2022, 8:17 PM	1. Reply to comment no. 2, adding an account of a shortcut over a private courtyard to the nearby street.	Childhood memories

Table 5. (Cont.) Selection of comments from different posts in both analysed Facebook groups related to the Giardinetto.

No.	Translated post	Location/Timestamp	Interpretation	Topics
4	*Giardinetti = betonetti*…with olives, that are not and must not become decorative trees. An olive is an olive. A noble tree that rewards us. Besides that, the squares of Koper need shade, deciduous trees with large canopies.	KKJBN Post: November 10th, 2022, 11:49 AM Comment: November 10th, 2022, 2:57 PM	1. An utterance of the informal name of the place, a pun/rhyme to express criticism of the excessive use of concrete for shaping public urban surfaces. 2. Criticises the use of olive trees as decorative urban trees. 3. Proposes a vision of large, deciduous trees for the square.	Visions for the future
5	Terrible. The asphalt must be removed and the squares and streets must become paved again. I cannot stand asphalt, it's just for roads. The square needs more greenery, not these poor olives, but actual deciduous trees that will offer shade and embellish the place. Everything is possible if the will is there. Above the underground garage trees are thriving, then plant them here too! [five tree emojis]	KKJBN Post: November 10th, 2022, 11:49 AM Comment: November 10th, 2022, 11:27 PM	1. Criticises asphalt paving instead of stone paving on public urban surfaces. 2. Proposes a vision of large, deciduous trees for the square and compares them with the nearby Museum Square, where trees are planted in a limited depth above an underground garage. 3. Emojis are used to reinforce the commentator's opinion.	Visions for the future
6	The mandatory stop from JPV school to home.	KJKBN Post: May 25th, 2023, 5:08 PM Comment: May 25th, 2023, 5:51 PM	1. Shares memories of childhood, specifically of the path from elementary school to home, where a frequent stop was the playground.	Childhood memories
7	Via Garibaldi & Giardinetto [heart emoji]	KJKBN Post: May 25th, 2023, 5:08 PM Comment: May 26th, 2023, 12:00 PM	1. An utterance of the official street name and informal name of the square (both in the Italian language). 2. The emoji signifies a positive emotional bond.	Childhood memories

In this case, a different kind of discourse is present. There is hardly any dissonance between established memory narratives, but rather dissonance between childhood memories and the current setting. We can thus detect two recurring themes: memories of a bygone past and proposals for future urban design. Personal memory sharing, where certain memories help other users evoke theirs (comments no. 2 and 3), contributes to the collective remembering process: a clear example of "remembering together" (Simon, 2012) as the main discourse type. Memories included accounts of the playground, of people who lived and played nearby, or of walking paths the children used. Also, the unofficial place name (Giardinetto) is a recurring theme, representing an element of "membership in a social collectivity" (Silberman & Purser, 2012, p. 15), where members of the same community, or online memory community, share the same knowledge, the same perception of value.

The design proposals focus on increased greenery, especially large deciduous trees to provide shade. The dislike for asphalt surfaces is clearly expressed and put forward as an antithesis to past realities and future visions, which both include lush greenery. We can thus detect a sense of nostalgia that reconnects both themes: The "good old happy days of childhood" when the square was still a park point to a nostalgic past that could be recreated as a progressive future. The nostalgia could also be read as "progressive nostalgia," or "nostalgia for the future" (Smith & Campbell, 2017), namely:

> [A] particular and unashamedly overtly emotional way of remembering that actively and self-consciously aims to use the past to contextualise the achievements and gains of present day living and working conditions and to set a politically progressive agenda for the future. (Smith & Campbell, 2017, p. 613)

At the same time, the online memory community identified itself as a collaborative stewardship for its shared heritage (Silberman & Purser, 2012, p. 21).

5. Discussion

The presented cases expose diverse discourse dynamics. The first three cases illustrate contestation: On the one hand, there is a coherent dominant narrative, aligned with the Slovene official one, reinforced by a locally rooted defensive brand of Slovene nationalism, where self-victimisation plays a central role. On the other hand, we have a timid and less coherent counter-narrative opening space for alternative interpretations of history and potential recognition processes (Smith, 2022, p. 625). Recently analysed symbolic boundaries (Hrobat Virloget, 2021, Chapter 4) in the fragmented local population provide the explanatory framework. Beyond the ethnic divide, the Slovene majority is divided into first-wave immigrants from neighbouring border regions (occurring before and during the exodus), second-wave immigrants from continental Slovenia (coming after the exodus), and third-wave immigrants from former Yugoslav republics (coming in the 1960s and 1970s). First-wave newcomers integrated within a mostly Italian urban community, while the second wave of migrants already perceived Italians as a minority, a nuisance, a remnant of the "fascist past," becoming the principal promoters of the official narrative. The third wave of migrants usually have lower incomes and suffer marginalisation, representing the "ultimate other" from the Balkans. Ironically, they are the main inhabitants of the historic urban core of Koper, forming an almost "ghettoised" community, after the first two groups moved out to seek better accommodation in the outskirts. We can thus also observe a clear hierarchy of power positions along these symbolic boundaries (Hrobat Virloget, 2021, Chapter 4), identifying the authors of the reported dominant-narrative posts as the members or descendants of the second-wave migration.

The fourth case shows a nostalgia driven by "remembering together" (Simon, 2012) discursive practice, where a sense of belonging to a place of shared childhood memories takes precedence. Interestingly, the involved urban space is not a spatial or symbolic landmark, unlike in the first two cases, but an intimate and often overlooked square, degraded and without an official name. This process seems to have helped to transcend the symbolic boundaries at least temporarily, and the contestation of narratives, usually triggered by dissonant heritage, seems absent. By rediscovering a "lost space," social media encouraged the development of an emotional community, which in turn fostered social capital, through "progressive nostalgia" (Smith & Campbell, 2017), and civic engagement by highlighting tangible and, especially,

intangible qualities of this heritage site, otherwise overlooked by statutory heritage approaches (Gregory & Chambers, 2021, p. 61). Working on its revitalisation by engaging with places such as the *giardinetto*, the historic core of Koper, if recognised as an example of dissonant heritage, could work as a platform for mutual recognition of different heritage and memory narratives and identification of "shared heritage" (Küver, 2021) on a larger scale.

Readiness to redefine identities and the historic narratives that are backing them seems a requirement for the above, since "identity is fluid and can, and often must, change, particularly in the case of privileged groups, as part of the process of recognition" (Smith, 2022, p. 625). The re-engagement of the heritagisation process is where people-centred approaches could be at the forefront. The critical heritage studies framework is slowly entering the conservation practice (Avrami & Mason, 2019; Chitty, 2017), including the historic urban landscape approach (Bandarin, 2019; Wijesuriya et al., 2017), which offers a broader framework to introduce the rich existing corpus of methods and techniques (see Clark, 2019; Low, 2018) to feed the decision-making process within the urban planning process in relation to heritage preservation. Aside from the well-established methods and techniques (e.g., charette, focus groups, workshops) many of these can be transposed online (mapping, storytelling, memory sharing, etc.). Social media, if properly managed, may in this sense provide an inclusive and accessible tool to research and identify values that can inform the significance-assessment process (Liang et al., 2021, p. 1).

6. Conclusions

In this brief contribution, we confirmed the potential of local history-oriented Facebook groups as valuable resources to research contested memory narratives related to dissonant heritage sites, using discourse analysis. We observed how Facebook groups re-created the discourse dynamics in society, either by reflecting and amplifying existing narratives (while allowing open contestation) or by aiding collective remembering processes that go beyond them. During the process, implicit or explicit inputs for planning are generated, mainly by highlighting the intangible dimensions of the historic environment (Gregory & Chambers, 2021, p. 60). The analysed posts and comments, however, represent just a small part of all conversations present in the examined Facebook groups. For a more comprehensive understanding of their discourse dynamics, and to help understand the evolution of groups over time, a larger sample of texts and cases would be needed. Situational context analysis with a comprehensive assessment of administrators' roles is also a path for future research. Before exploiting Facebook groups as a tool for heritage conservation and management, more research is needed to define adequate methodologies for extrapolating insights and data for planning and intervention.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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