

## 6 “Trento, the last chance for a beer”

### Mobility, material culture, and urban space in an early modern transit city<sup>1</sup>

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#### **Walking around a frontier transit city**

In 1673, travelling into Italy after crossing the Alps, Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger noted in his travel journal: “Here [in Trento] was your last chance for a beer”.<sup>2</sup> It was thanks to the presence of German innkeepers and tavern landlords that northern travellers descending from the Alps were still able to enjoy a good tankard of beer in Trento. The architect noted an important geo-cultural shift, the transition from a beer-drinking to a wine-drinking country. This anecdote epitomizes the complex nature of Trento in the early modern period, a gateway city and a transit point between different cultures, languages, urban layouts, and political regimes.

Trento was an important urban node in a network of trans-regional, long-distance transport infrastructures (integrating roads, alpine passes, rivers, postal services, inns, etc.) linking the Habsburg Empire with the northern Italian states. The city lay on the main road to the Brenner Pass, midway along a commercial route that led north to Bolzano, Innsbruck, Augsburg, and Nuremberg, and south to Mantua, Milan, Brescia, Verona, and Venice.<sup>3</sup> The perception of being astride the German and Italian worlds was very clear to *ancien régime* visitors, in terms of infrastructure and mobility no less than of food and drink. An example of this hybrid identity was an inn located on the road to Trento from the north, in the hamlet of San Michele all’Adige, right on the border between the Bishopric of Trento and the county of Tyrol. Recent restoration work on the building revealed an external fifteenth-century decoration depicting two characters, a female German innkeeper and a (potential) Italian male customer, along with two inscriptions. One, in German, was meant for those coming from the north (“*Gasthaus*”)

1 This chapter is the result of a collaborative project and it owes much to the work done by Serena Luzzi, Alessandro Paris, and Rosa Salzberg.

2 Giuseppe Osti, *Attraverso la regione trentino-tirolese nel Seicento. Con due appendici per il Quattrocento e il Cinquecento* (Rovereto: Osiride, 2017), 631.

3 Jean-François Bergier and Gauro Coppola, eds., *Vie di terra e d’acqua. Infrastrutture viarie e sistemi di relazioni in area alpina (secoli XIII-XVI)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008).

and the other, in Italian, for those arriving from the south (“*Hostaria all’Aquila*”) (Fig. 6.1). These images and texts were a form of public advertising aimed at travellers or merchants following the Imperial road between Italy and the Holy Roman Empire, or “*Lombardia*” and “*Alemania*” as they were identified in the signs. This bilingual advertising is material testimony to the importance of this area as a transit zone.<sup>4</sup> Recent historiography has suggested that internal political borders of the Holy Roman Empire had relatively limited influence on the channelling of trade flows and everyday forms of travel up until the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the case study of early modern Trento remains an interesting one precisely because of its strategic position within crucial transport infrastructures.

The monumental and architectural aspects of the city of Trento today still reveal glimpses of this fluidity between cultures, sometimes marked by profound differences. Wandering around the medieval streets in the northern sector of the city, one comes across the bell tower on the church of San Pietro that strongly recalls German and Tyrolean aesthetic models.<sup>6</sup> Some old views of the city, like those depicted in ex-votos from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, emphasize the unusual nature of this bell tower and its strong northern associations.<sup>7</sup> From the late medieval period until well into the modern era, the most important migrant community in Trento, of Germanic origin, lived close to this bell tower. Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bell tower was a fully-fledged material symbol for the German-speaking immigrants based in the city, perceived by many as a frontier between the Italian and German worlds.

Trento’s geographic position required it to provide hospitality for numerous Italian and foreign travellers, who stayed for variable periods of time. Already in the early modern period this liminal geopolitical status led chroniclers, travellers, and intellectuals to ask whether Trento should be considered a German or an Italian city. In 1577, the Venetian ambassador, Leonardo Donà, reached Trento on the way to Vienna and noted the linguistic divide in the city in his travel journal:

All of the city speaks Italian, although there is one quarter inhabited by Germans and called the German Quarter that speaks the German idiom together with Italian. The Germans consider this a city of Germany, but it is not, either in its language or its site, which is located on this side of the Alps.<sup>8</sup>

4 Federica Rigotti, ‘Gli affreschi dell’Osteria di S. Michele all’Adige e la committenza quattrocentesca della famiglia Thun’, in *Sigismondo Thun l’Oratore*, eds. Alberto Mosca and Alessandro Paris (Trento: Associazione Castelli del Trentino, 2021), 73–90; Lucia Longo-Endres, ‘Note di buon costume negli affreschi di un’osteria di confine. I dipinti all’Aquila Nera di San Michele all’Adige nel Quattrocento’, in *Artisti e mercanti in viaggio. Oltre le Alpi, attraverso il Tirolo*, ed. Ead. (Bologna: Pàtron, 2020), 167–186.

5 Luca Scholz, *Borders and Freedom of Movement in the Holy Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2020.

6 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-pietro-parish/s-pietro-church](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-pietro-parish/s-pietro-church) (accessed May 27, 2021).

7 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/s-martino-gate](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/s-martino-gate) (accessed May 27, 2021).

8 Umberto Chiaromanni, ed., *Il viaggio a Vienna di Leonardo Donà, ambasciatore della Repubblica veneta, nell’anno 1577. Diario* (Padova: CLEUP, 2003), 56.



Figure 6.1a Fresco paintings on the *Osteria all'Aquila Rossa*, fifteenth century, San Michele all'Adige (Trento). © Alessandro Paris

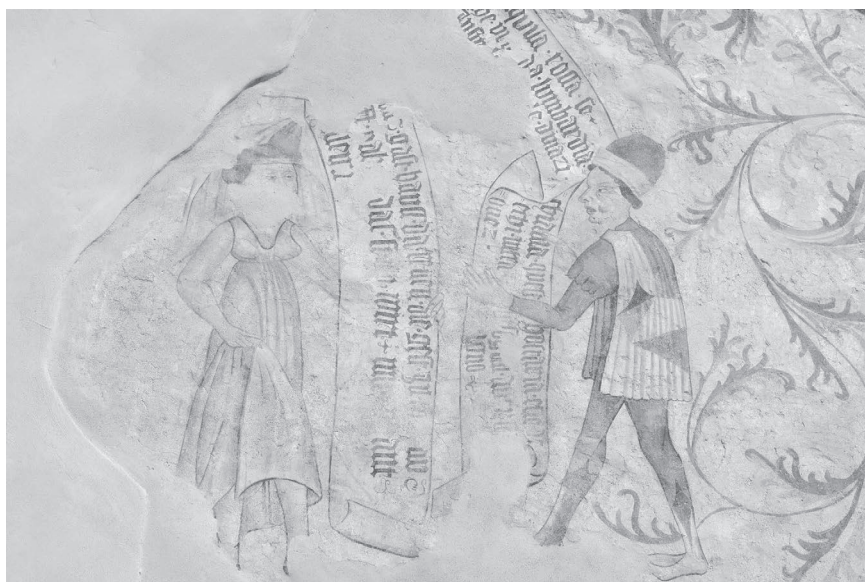


Figure 6.1b Fresco paintings on the *Osteria all'Aquila Rossa* (detail). © Alessandro Paris

In 1673, the clergyman Michelangelo Mariani, in his work *Trento con il sacro Concilio*, stated that “in formal terms, it is effectively part of Germany”, referring to its geopolitical location within the borders of the polycentric Holy Roman Empire.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, chroniclers referred to Trento as a “mixed frontier city”, an urban, linguistic, and cultural reality that intermingled two worlds.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, those passing through or living permanently in Trento between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were aware that, while politically the city was part of the Empire, from a linguistic perspective it was mainly Italian. In border zones and multi-ethnic cities, language represented a decisive element for the definition of cultural identity. The most recent studies have confirmed that in the early modern period, Italian was the most common mother tongue for the population of Trento. The image of a city “ethnically” divided in two, between German and Italian residents, is effectively just a stereotype, perpetuated in chronicles at least up to the beginning of the 1700s and fuelled by the strong impact of the German community (resident or transitory) on everyday life.<sup>11</sup>

Demographic data also confirm that between the 1400s and 1500s, Trento was mainly populated by Italians. In the period between 1440 and 1500, the Germans registered in the city numbered 284, about 1/15 of the total population, which was estimated at around 5,000 inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of numbers, the impact that German immigration had on the economic fabric and society of Trento helped define certain characteristic traits of the city.<sup>13</sup> In terms of administration, Trento was a prince-bishopric from the eleventh century with powers of secular governance within the larger political framework of the Holy Roman Empire. The geopolitical position and commercial role of Trento made it an attractive destination for migrants arriving from both the Po plain to the south and from transalpine territories, in particular from Tyrol, Bavaria, and Franconia. Miners from the north had come to Trentino in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to exploit the mineral resources around Trento, often basing themselves in the city. In 1278–1279, they founded a professional association, the *Hauerbruderschaft* (Confraternity of Miners), in the city centre. This was the first core of the local German community’s associative and cultural life.<sup>14</sup> German immigration became more substantial from the 1400s. The attraction of the urban centre cannot be explained solely in economic terms. The court of the

9 Michelangelo Mariani, *Trento con il sacro Concilio et altri notabili* (Trento: Carlo Zanetti, 1673), 191.

10 Mariani, *Trento con il sacro Concilio*, 191.

11 Serena Luzzi, *Stranieri in città. Presenza tedesca e società urbana a Trento (secoli XV–XVIII)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2003), 47–52. For an English summary of this research, see now Ead., ‘Migration, Identity, Urban Society: The German Community of Trento’, in *Migration and the European City: Early Modern and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Beat Kümin, Christoph Cornelissen, and Massimo Rospocher (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 51–70.

12 Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 56–57.

13 Marco Bellabarba, *La giustizia ai confini. Il principato vescovile di Trento agli inizi dell’età moderna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1996).

14 Serena Luzzi, ‘Confraternite e aristocrazie: l’élite tirolese e tedesca nella Hauerbruderschaft di Trento (secc. XV-inizi XVII)’, *Geschichte und Region / Storia e Regione* 5 (1996): 317–343.

prince bishop became a focal point, attracting the Trentino and Tyrolean aristocracy along with numerous officials, humanists, and even some bishops from the German sphere. The influence of the German community in Trento in the early modern period thus derived more from its strong political and cultural identity than from numbers. Furthermore, while the resident population was mainly Italian, a constant traffic of temporary travellers, merchants, and migrants from German-speaking areas encouraged a perception of the city as being hybrid in nature.

The attention of historians on the impact of German immigration on Trento’s social and urban fabric is mainly a result of Serena Luzzi’s seminal work which inspired the development of the experiment in digital public history described here.<sup>15</sup> Her in-depth studies were the starting point for the conception throughout 2019 and 2020 of the first walking tour for the *Hidden Trento* smartphone app, titled *Ursula. Innkeepers, princes, and migrants*. The aim of the tour was to disseminate historical research that had never been used for a communication project aimed at the wider public. The research team aimed to narrate the impact of mobility on the life and public spaces of Trento at the start of the sixteenth century, through the voice of a female innkeeper of German origins. Ursula is a fictional character, but one constructed from a patchwork of real or credible information and events. Attention was centred in particular on the relationship between material culture (which still testifies to the presence of the German minority in Trento) and a new way of experiencing cultural heritage on the part of citizens and visitors. *Hidden Trento* specifically wanted to showcase the connections between architectural and urban design elements still visible today in the old “German” district of San Pietro, and artefacts connected with these places but now preserved in the main local museums. Given the emphasis on the material dimension of mobility, special attention was dedicated to three themes connected with everyday life in the city of Trento around 1520: geographic and social mobility; public spaces as places for socializing and communicating; and facilities for hospitality and accommodation.

With the help of locative media and the methodologies developed in the field of digital and public history, the research team was able to show how the past is revealed in the material traces left in urban public spaces.<sup>16</sup> In addition to ensuring a historically reliable account, *Hidden Trento* also gives users a fully immersive, densely detailed historical experience of the Renaissance city. Movement and rhythm play a key role in this experiment from the historiographic, experiential, and educational perspectives. While urban walking was a social activity for people in the past, walking through the historic centre of a small city is in itself an

15 Serena Luzzi, ‘Immigrati tedeschi a Trento tra identità etnica e auto-rappresentazione (secc. XV–XVII)’, *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 115, no. 1 (2003): 211–226.

16 Thomas Cauvin, *Public History: A Textbook of Practice*, London: Routledge, 2016; David Dean, ed., *A Companion to Public History* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2018); Hannu Salmi, *What Is Digital History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).

immersive experience for contemporary visitors.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, walking is both a distinctive learning experience and a kinetic activity that can be used to connect past and present:<sup>18</sup> users are encouraged to empathize with the character of Ursula, walking side by side with her around town and integrating her everyday experiences and personal memories into their own journey. Ursula's story in turn reflects the social and cultural environment of a transit city in the early sixteenth century.

The choice of this historical theme was intended to shed light on a little-known aspect of Trento's history, the material heritage of a minority otherwise not particularly obvious to present-day citizens and visitors. The heart of the tour is the German quarter of San Pietro, a part of the city less frequented by visitors compared to more iconic venues on the traditional tourist itinerary, such as the Buonconsiglio Castle or the Cathedral and its square. Though present, the city's more monumental components form only a backdrop for Ursula's narrative, which instead concentrates on recounting the everyday lives of men and women from the lower social classes. Artisans, town-criers, domestic servants, and guards are featured as co-protagonists in the story, more so than members of the social elites of the city, orbiting around a female innkeeper from the German minority. This choice of focusing on a migrant community and on an artisan female character was also made with the aim of reassessing an often neglected aspect in the narration of *ancien régime* societies in the cultural heritage sector, and in tourist promotion of Renaissance cities in general.

### **Ursula: a female innkeeper in sixteenth-century Trento**

The guide-protagonist, Ursula, is pitched as a woman about 30 years old who migrated to Trento with her family at a young age, around the end of the fifteenth century. Ursula becomes a paradigmatic figure representing and embodying many of the salient features (both historic and historiographic) that the narrative strives to bring to light. In order to shape the image of a young *ostessa*, or innkeeper, dressed appropriately for her state, a detail depicting a domestic servant was selected from *Cena in Emmaus* (c. 1525) by the Lombard painter Alessandro Bonvicino, also known as "*il Moretto*" (Fig. 6.2).

The use of a female narrative voice is intended to highlight a very important element in the history of German immigration to Trento in the early modern period. The workers arriving in Trentino from German-speaking areas included numerous women from the beginning. Apart from their role within the nuclear family, little was known about how they fitted into urban society and the labour market. Luzzi's studies, in particular, have demonstrated that German female immigrants

17 Filippo De Vivo, 'Walking in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Mobilizing the Early Modern City', *I Tatti Studies* 19, no. 1 (2016): 115–141.

18 Michel de Certeau, *Walking in the City*, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 91–109.



Figure 6.2 Alessandro Bonvicino, also known as “il Moretto”, *Cena in Emmaus*, c. 1525, Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo (detail). © Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo – courtesy Fondazione Brescia Musei

responded dynamically to the demand for services in their new urban context. Their most common occupation in early modern Trento was domestic service. There was no shortage of opportunities in the city, thanks to the presence of the court of the prince-bishop and other aristocratic palaces, some of which were located in the district of San Pietro, mainly along the street of *Contrada Larga*, the end point of the walking tour. Female labour was also in demand in shops, markets, and other commercial activities, while some women worked in the sex trade. All worked mainly to meet expenses and, in the absence of parents who

would normally handle dotal obligations, to set aside the necessary money for a dowry and subsequently marriage.<sup>19</sup>

However, the context of Trentino presented some peculiarities that this project aims to reveal through the figure of Ursula. Numerous German female immigrants between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries are documented in work roles that are not at all marginal or subordinate within the familiar patriarchal organization of European society in the early modern period. Many of the city's inns were run by women like Ursula, who were responsible for managing and organizing them, and even directed male workers, such as barmen and inn hosts. Even though they normally worked alongside their husbands or sons, the German female innkeepers of Trento played an important social role, due to the public and civic responsibilities associated with catering and accommodation. Inns were multifunctional spaces with a central role in everyday urban life. Innkeepers performed multiple tasks, which included maintaining public order, identifying foreign travellers, contributing to urban sanitation, and even providing credit.<sup>20</sup> This is demonstrated by the city statutes of 1528, by which landlords of public houses and inns were forbidden from extending credit to wives, people under 25 years, and the children of respectable families in general.<sup>21</sup> To underline this, the *Innkeepers, princes and migrants* walk includes a simulation of a situation that was rather frequent in early modern European society: in a world in which life expectancy was low and widowhood or the absence of a husband was common, we decided to leave Ursula alone to manage her inn, the *Osteria alla Rosa*. The realism of this condition is supported by various pieces of documentary evidence and the name Ursula appears in listings and registers dating back to this period.<sup>22</sup> In the storyboard, Ursula is alone because her husband, Kaspar, has been imprisoned for disregarding a civic proclamation mandating that innkeepers clean the public areas around their premises, in particular removing manure, stones, straw, and refuse. An analogous episcopal proclamation from 1590 was backdated for narrative purposes. Today the document is preserved in the Trento Public Library and it made it mandatory for innkeepers to maintain public sanitation and cleanliness in the areas around their establishments.<sup>23</sup> Ursula thus finds herself in the difficult emotional and economic situation of having to manage the family business without the support of her husband: Kaspar is, in fact, imprisoned in the civic bell tower overlooking the main city square, the city's gaol during the early modern period.<sup>24</sup>

19 Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 76–92.

20 Rosa Salzberg, 'Controlling and Documenting Migration via Urban "Spaces of Arrival" in Early Modern Venice', in *Migration Policies and the Materiality of Identification in European Cities, 1500–1930s: Papers and Gates*, eds. Hilde Greefs and Anne Winter (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 27–45; Teresa Bernardi and Matteo Pompermaier, 'Hospitality and Registration of Foreigners in Early Modern Venice: The Role of Women within Inns and Lodging Houses', *Gender & History* 31, no. 3 (2019): 624–645.

21 <https://bdt.bibcom.trento.it/Testi-a-stampa/6#page/n3> (accessed May 27, 2021).

22 Trento, Biblioteca Comunale, Archivio della Congregazione di Carità, n. 909.

23 Trento, Biblioteca Comunale, ms. 2112.

24 Franco Cagol, Silvano Groff, and Serena Luzzi, eds., *La torre di piazza nella storia di Trento* (Trento: Società di studi trentini di scienze storiche-Comune di Trento, 2014).



In *Innkeepers, princes and migrants*, the user is urged to join Ursula on a typical day in her life in 1520, articulated by the demands of work, the relationship between city dwellers and the authorities, and the need to deliver a letter to the police captain of the city begging for the liberation of her husband. Along the way, Ursula reveals a cross section of public life in her community, in particular the activity in the busy streets, piazzas, and at street corners. As we shall see in more detail subsequently, one aspect that emerges strongly from Ursula’s narrative is the role of the local parish and church of San Pietro as the most important public place for migrants of German origin as they arrived in Trento in various migratory waves and settled in the district surrounding this church.

### **Mobility and urban space in Renaissance Trento**

In recent years, historians have investigated how movement and mobility shaped urban space and animated everyday life in early modern cities.<sup>25</sup> Within this broad historiographic trend, Trento is an interesting case study revealing how mobility directly affected the social and material fabric of the city. Obviously, Trento lacks the social and economic complexity of Florence or the cultural and linguistic variety of Venice, but it nevertheless represents a valuable laboratory for investigating these dynamics in depth.

The mobility of the Germanic immigrants had a concrete effect not only on Trento’s social life, but also on material culture and urban development, leaving clear traces in the street and place names of the contemporary city.<sup>26</sup> Unlike other foreign communities, most Germans settled in a specific section of the city, the district of San Pietro. This northern quadrant of the city was never imposed as a residential enclave for German-speakers by public authorities; the district seems to have developed organically. The presence of Germans in the area, especially from the first half of the fifteenth century, was the result of a combination of environmental conditions, the professional profiles of the immigrants, and the strategically favourable position of the district – close to a commercial street that connected to the main Brenner road and to the river port on the Adige river, not far from the residence of the prince bishop in the Buonconsiglio Castle.<sup>27</sup> The natural environment must also have played an important role in the settlement of Germanic workers in the parish of San Pietro. The streams running through the area, fed by the Fersina creek, supplied the water required for the commercial activities of German immigrants, which included hide tanning and butchery. A number of

25 Luca Zenobi, ‘Mobility and Urban Space in Early Modern Europe: An Introduction’, in *Cities in Motion: Mobility and Urban Space in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Pablo Gonzalez Martin, Rosa Salzberg, and Luca Zenobi, special issue of “*The Journal of Early Modern History*”, 2021, 2–10.

26 In the current ‘Vicolo della Contrada Tedesca’.

27 Chriscinda Henry, ‘Navigating the Palace Underworld: Recreational Space, Pleasure, and Release at the Castello del Buonconsiglio Trent’, in *Early Modern Spaces in Motion: Design, Experience and Rhetoric*, ed. Kimberley Skelton (Amsterdam and New York: University of Amsterdam Press, 2021), 33–57.

streets were named after these activities, like the *Contrada del macello* (Butchers' Street), located in the extreme south of the area, or the *Fossato dei conciapelli* (Tanners' Ditch), running south parallel to Contrada di San Pietro. The street that most clearly identified the relationship between occupation and "ethnic" origin was the so-called *Contrada delle osterie tedesche* (Street of the German Inns), today Via del Suffragio, where the catering and accommodation services managed by Germanic immigrants were concentrated. The main streets of this lively commercial area of the city converged at an unusual point, the so-called *Canton* (Street corner). Resembling a road lay-by, the *Canton* was one of the public areas, together with the main piazza of the Duomo, where the city statutes allowed farmers and merchants to sell their products. In addition to being the location of the urban bread ovens, this was a busy gathering point, a meeting place for establishing social and economic contracts or hearing town-criers read out public proclamations from the local council and ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>28</sup>

The district of San Pietro was not inhabited exclusively by Tyrolean, Bavarian, or Swabian immigrants. For example, up until the alleged ritual homicide of the 2-year old Simone (1475) by the Jews of Trento, a well-known "blood libel" in early modern studies, there was a small three-family community of Ashkenazi Jews living right alongside the *Canton*.<sup>29</sup> The various parts of the district were also widely populated by native Trento citizens and foreigners originating from Lombardy, Emilia, and Veneto. Despite the fact that in 1559 only 22.5% of the population of the district was of proven Germanic origin, it was nevertheless the presence of the Germans that characterized the urban and economic fabric of San Pietro.<sup>30</sup> The German population also left a characteristic mark on the architecture of the district, importing the use of shops with porticoes (still present on Via del Suffragio), along with skylight windows ("erker") and balconies ("corfenster"), the latter disappearing only during the urban renewal projects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The social, religious, and political lives of the Germans in Trento essentially revolved around two focal points: the Confraternity of Miners (or *Hauerbruderschaft*) and the church of San Pietro. The first provided for the welfare, social, financial, and housing needs of the community. The second was the parish of preference for German-speaking immigrants throughout the early modern period, thanks to the presence of a German priest who supported an Italian clergyman in giving pastoral care.<sup>31</sup> In addition to being a religious venue, the church of San Pietro was also an important public space, facilitating a strong group identity in the daily social life of the community.

28 Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 147–160.

29 Domenica Primerano, Domizio Cattoi, Lorenza Liandru and Valentina Perini, eds., *L'invenzione del colpevole. Il 'caso' di Simonino da Trento dalla propaganda alla storia* (Trento: Museo Diocesano Tridentino, 2019); Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

30 Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 156.

31 *Ibid.*, 165–179, 195–220.

In summary, the district of San Pietro was profoundly characterized by the presence of men and women of German origin throughout the early modern period. It will suffice to note that the confraternity founded in the thirteenth century existed until 1811, when a vice-regal decree abolished all the old charitable-welfare organizations of medieval origin. It might be assumed that the tangible signs of the German community in this part of the city would be abundant and obvious to anyone walking through the old streets of the district of San Pietro today. However, it is unlikely that contemporary visitors to these public spaces would recognize the relationships between foreign presence, commercial activities, and urban fabric without adequate didactic support and the help of locative media.

In order to grasp the impact of mobility on the urban fabric of Trento as a transit city between the German world and Italian states during the 1500s, it is impossible to ignore the relationship between the urban centre and its river, the Adige, which linked the Alps to the Adriatic Sea. Only in recent history Trento has lost its close ties to this navigable watercourse, which during medieval times flanked the city on its northern and western sides, flowing from north to south, and providing a fundamental element of urban life. The old riverbed is easily recognized on the map of 1562–1563 by Giovan Andrea Vavassore (Fig. 6.3).<sup>32</sup> This was used for georeferencing the *Hidden Trento* app, and is presented as a narrative instrument to help visitors imagine urban features that are no longer visible. The historical maps of the city are an indispensable source to this end, not only for historians but also for the computer programmers reconstructing urban phenomena and transformations, and creating geospatial displays and analyses using the techniques and instruments of augmented reality and 3D.<sup>33</sup>

On the wide bend in the Adige River to the north of the city stood the city gate and fortified suburb of San Martino on the Imperial road, the Torre Verde look-out tower, and the city port. The river curved south again at the Torre Vanga tower, constructed to guard the port of San Lorenzo, which was reached over a wooden bridge of about 300 m in length, today replaced by a concrete bridge. For the entire early modern period, shipping goods down the river, was conducted using wooden rafts of several meters in length and capable of supporting loads of up to a few tons. Upstream fluvial transport was instead achieved on vessels towed from the river bank. Moving goods on water was quicker and cheaper than land transport. The old course of the Adige River was redirected in the 1800s by the Austrian government. It was straightened in order to avoid ever-more frequent flooding, allow urban expansion towards the north, and facilitate the construction of the Verona-Bolzano railway line.<sup>34</sup> The urban landscape and the image of the

32 Renato Bocchi and Carlo Oradini, *Le città nella storia d'Italia. Trento* (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 1983), 98–104.

33 Elisa Mariarosaria Farella, Emre Özdemir and Fabio Remondino, ‘4D Buildings Reconstruction with Machine Learning and Historical Maps’, *Applied Sciences* 11 (2021): 1445, <https://doi.org/10.3390/app11041445>.

34 *Il paesaggio negato. Il fiume Adige e la città di Trento* (Milano: Mazzotta, 1987); Vito Rovigo, *Il fiume, le terre, l'immaginario. L'Adige come fenomeno storiografico complesso* (Rovereto: Accademia roveretana degli Agiati-Osiride, 2016).

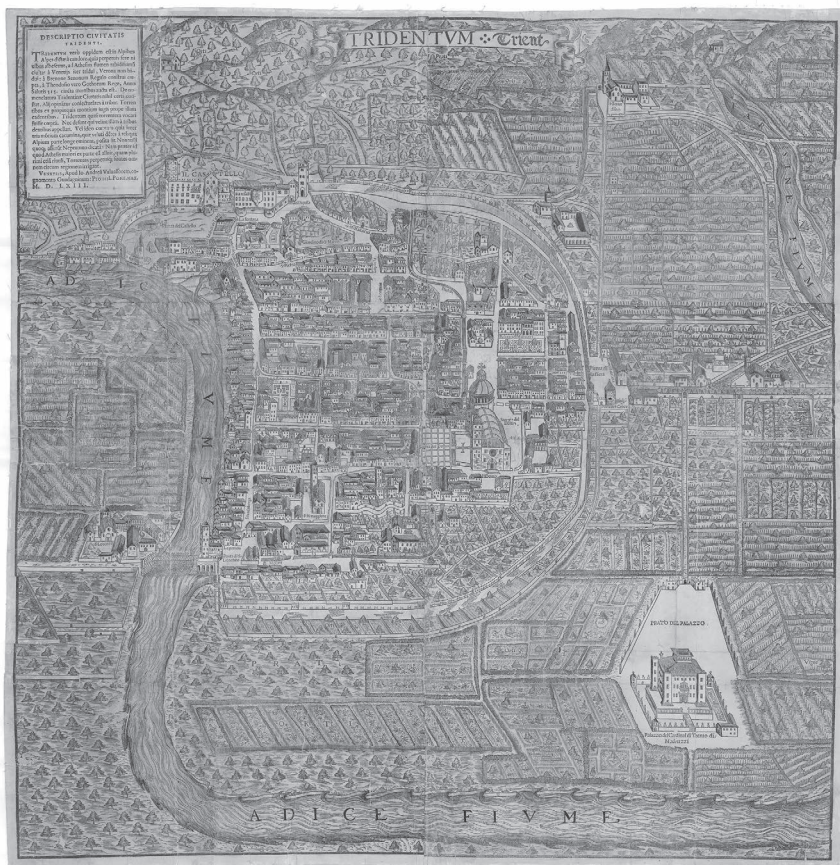


Figure 6.3 Giovan Andrea Vavassore, *Mapa di Trento*, 1562–1563, Vienna: Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv. © Österreichische Staatsarchiv

city itself were completely transformed from that time. The boat landing wharves were replaced by the railway station, presenting yet another long-term demonstration of how mobility and its associated infrastructures can decisively impact the urban fabric of transit cities like Trento.

Of all the old commercial infrastructures on the river and the fortifications defending the northern entrance to the city, today there remains only the isolated and decontextualized Torre Verde. There is no visible sign of the old port of San Martino other than some traces in place and street names. The former course of the Adige is difficult to recognize in the current Via Torre Verde, one of the busiest roads in contemporary Trento, apart from two rows of trees that are intended to evoke the river that is no longer there. How then to evoke the significance and

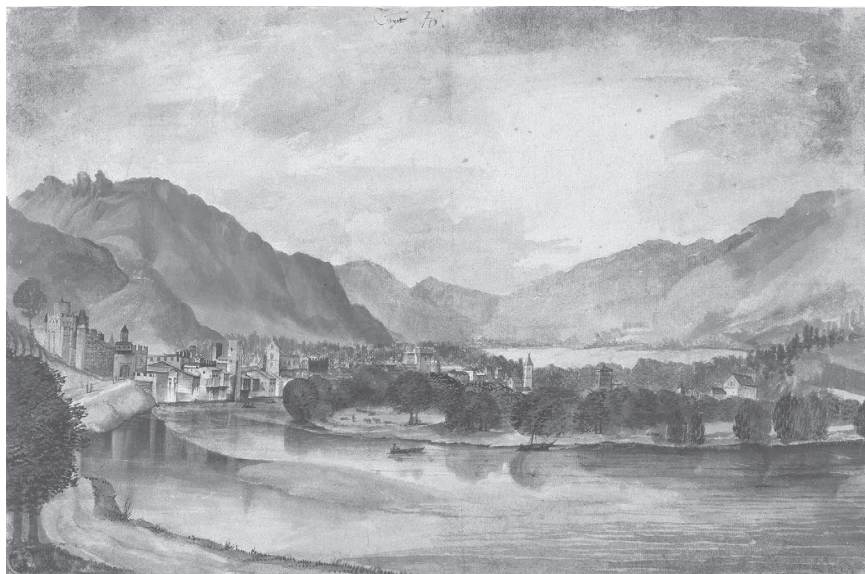


Figure 6.4 Albrecht Dürer, *Veduta di Trento*, ca. 1495, Bremen, Kunsthalle. © Wikicommons

impression of this busy northern entrance to the city, as it appeared in the early modern period? On the first section of the walking tour, *Innkeepers, princes and migrants*, at the location of the vanished port of San Martino, three main types of sources were utilized: (1) visual sources; (2) material remains; (3) archival documents. Both in *Hidden Trento* and on the further study platform [hiddencities.eu](http://hiddencities.eu), users can see a watercolour by Albrecht Dürer (c. 1495), preserved in the Kunsthalle in Bremen (Fig. 6.4). It depicts Trento seen from the north, as it would have appeared to travellers, migrants, and merchants arriving from the Brenner Pass in the 1500s, before the urban transformations of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> The function of the port of San Martino, which also served as a public office for the payment of commercial fees and registration of foreigners, is also recalled in a customs sign, once located at an unspecified city gate and now held in the provincial collections of the Buonconsiglio Castle.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the registration of foreigners upon entrance into the city is testified to by a register of the aforementioned confraternity held at the Trento Public Library.<sup>37</sup>

Within the *Innkeepers, princes and migrants* walking tour, this section represents an extreme case of a “location” without physical elements on site to link into

35 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/view-of-the-city](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/view-of-the-city) (accessed May 27, 2021).

36 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/epigraph](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/epigraph) (accessed May 27, 2021).

37 Trento, Biblioteca Comunale, Archivio della Congregazione di Carità, n. 909; [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/german-names-register](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/s-martino-gate/german-names-register) (accessed May 27, 2021).

the storytelling of the guide-protagonist Ursula. Consequently, we used Ursula's story, where she recalls her own experience of migration into the city through the Porta and her perceptions about the river itself, to translate our research materials into a narrative of place and experience. Ursula's story, the detailed observations of the research team, and the visual, material, and documentary sources do not aim at a reconstruction of a place that no longer exists. Instead, they aim to evoke a public space that has been profoundly transformed over the centuries, as is the case for the old port of San Martino. In this way, the user experiences the historical heritage in an immersive and not entirely passive manner. The aim is not to provide facts and figures about the lost northern port of Trento, but to recreate the idea of the social complexity, vibrant trade, and mobility of people and goods in a transit and border city during the early modern period. The historiographic method of bringing disparate sources together, in particular material remains and archival documents, enabled the research team to reconstruct a more dynamic social reality than would emerge from the use of a single type of source. The same methodology and aims were implemented for the other seven points on the walking tour, even where the storytelling is also supported by more obvious materiality.

### **Via del Suffragio as a case study and experiment**

One of the areas influenced by the presence of German immigrants in the San Pietro district is the present-day Via del Suffragio, a fairly typical old city centre "canyon" and among the busiest public spaces in the Renaissance city, originally known as the *Contrada delle osterie tedesche* (Street of the German Inns). Like many parts of Europe, starting from the second half of the 1300s, Trentino began developing a network of accommodation facilities designed to host a growing number of travellers, merchants, and pilgrims. In a strategic position close to the northern port of San Martino, Via del Suffragio was identified as an ideal location for travel facilities like inns, hotels, and taverns, offering travellers accommodation, food, and drink. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the management of inns in Trento was almost entirely in the hands of immigrants. Some accommodation and catering facilities inside the city walls were managed by immigrants from Lombardy, Veneto, and Piedmont, but it was above all the Germans who held something of a monopoly on the taverns and hotels in Trento, sited almost exclusively in the district of San Pietro. In the mid-1400s, there were as many as 14 German inns on the short section of Via del Suffragio running from the port of San Martino to the *Canton*, and over the following centuries there were never fewer than ten.<sup>38</sup> The name itself, *Contrada delle osterie tedesche*, indicates the street's association with German immigrants and the facilities they managed, making it a central component in the *Innkeepers, princes and migrants* walking tour narrative.

38 Elio Fox, *Storia delle osterie trentine. L'ospitalità dal XIII al XX secolo* (Trento: Curcu & Genovese, 1996); Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 230.

Over and above their immediate function of hospitality, inns were typically also venues for urban sociability, a central historiographic theme for *Hidden Trento*, as well as acting as travel nodes and managing relations between foreigners and the public authorities. In addition to room and board, inns provided citizens and travellers of diverse origins with the opportunity to meet, encouraging cultural exchanges. In the heated ground-floor rooms (*stuben*), between mealtimes guests could hear the latest local and international news, gamble with dice, enjoy songs and ballads, and mingle with minstrels, musicians, and jesters. For example, a group of Venetian diplomats are known to have stayed at the *Osteria alla Rosa* in 1492; over dinner, they enjoyed the antics of a jester and songs performed by a female guitar player who sang popular verses in German for the mostly northern European clientele.<sup>39</sup>

Inns like those in Via del Suffragio were also informal political venues; not only for hosting foreign representatives, ambassadors, and foreign officials visiting Trento, but also because they were venues for expressing opinions and dissent, both political and religious. Over a carafe of wine or a tankard of strong ale, people debated the latest rulings by the authorities, discussed legal convictions, gathered information more or less legitimately, and sometimes ridiculed public officials.<sup>40</sup> In one example from 1513, a Venetian informer described the performance of a member of the bishop’s court of Trento singing a song defined as “gutter talk” in an inn. The bishop’s appreciation for this drunken song was used by the Venetians as propagandistic argument in the context of the Italian Wars, in order to present a stereotyped view of the prince-bishop of Trento, Georg Neideck, as a German speaker and a great drinker: “*il vescovo di Trento si fa cantar questa canzone, . . . qual è da imbrigi, come sono todeschi e vil canaglia*” (“the bishop of Trent calls for this song, . . . good for drunkards, since they are Germans and vile as dogs”).<sup>41</sup> The city authorities exercised some forms of control over these varied and colourful microcosms, attempting to prevent the spread of unorthodox views and monitor immigrants they considered to be suspicious. It was inside the reception facilities themselves that foreign guests were identified and registered by the landlords, in order to avoid the presence or transit of undesirable individuals.<sup>42</sup>

From a narrative perspective, evoking the historic role of Trento’s inns was possible, thanks to an abundance of material remains, both on site and in local

39 *Itinerario de Germania delli magnifici ambasciatori veneti*, M. Giorgio Contarini, conte del Zaffo, et M. Polo Pisani . . . dell’anno 1492, in Henry Simonsfeld (ed.), *Miscellanea di storia veneta* (Venice: Deputazione veneta di storia patria, 1903), 284.

40 On inns and public houses as spaces of political communication, Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters. Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Rosa Salzberg, ‘Spaces of Unrest? Policing Hospitality Sites in Early Modern Venice’, in *Unrest in Venice: Popular Politics in an Aristocratic Republic*, eds. Claire Judde de Larivière and Maartje Van Gelder (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 105–128.

41 Marin Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XVI, Venezia: Visentini, 1887, coll. 531–532.

42 Hans Heiss, ‘The Pre-Modern Hospitality Trade in the Central Alpine Region: The Example of Tyrol’, in *The World of the Tavern: Public Houses in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 159–176.



Figure 6.5a Doorway of the *Osteria alla Rosa*, fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, Trento, Via del Suffragio, 39–41. © Alessandro Paris

museums. At number 39–41 of the present-day Via del Suffragio, the red stone doorway of the most famous accommodation facility of Renaissance Trento, the *Osteria alla Rosa* (The Rose Inn), is still visible. Like all medieval and early modern inns, the venue took its name from its sign, which depicted an easily recognizable symbol for illiterate people or foreigners. Along the *Contrada delle osterie tedesche*, one could see a sequence of pictorial signs, for the inns at the Eagle, the Sun, the Rose, the Crown, the Star, and so on.<sup>43</sup> The doorway to the *Osteria alla Rosa* is clearly decorated with the flowers that gave the inn its name, small roses sculpted in relief. Of special interest is a sculptural detail on the key-stone of the arch depicting a postal horn. This was the symbol of the De Taxis family, originally from Cornello del Tasso (Bergamo), who were assigned the monopoly of the communications network within the boundaries of the Empire by Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian I at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>44</sup> In the

43 Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 31.

44 Francesca Brunet, “Per essere quest’ufficio la chiave dell’Italia e Germania. . .”. *La famiglia Taxis Bordogna e le comunicazioni postali nell’area di Trento e Bolzano (Sec. XVI–XVIII)* (Camerata Cornello: Museo dei Tasso e della storia postale, 2018); on the Early Modern postal networks, Wolfgang Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur: Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).



early 1500s, the De Taxis family guaranteed a quick and reliable postal service between the transalpine regions and northern Italy, the offices of which were very often hotels and inns. This made inns like *Alla Rosa* real infrastructural nodes for the movement of people and ideas, where mail carriers could rest, change horses, find refreshment, and deliver messages, possibly adding information by word of mouth and thus encouraging the migration of news from one region to the next across the continent. The architectural evidence on the doorway therefore gives a good indication of the role of the *Osteria alla Rosa* as a primary venue for communication, hospitality, and socializing (Fig. 6.5a).

The doorway’s excellent state of conservation makes it perfect for anchoring the storytelling to a material cultural element from the Renaissance still visible



Figure 6.5b Sign of the *Osteria alla Rosa*, sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, Trento, Buonconsiglio Castle. Provincial monuments and collections. © Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento

today. However, another of the main objectives of the *Hidden Cities* app family is to reconnect material objects “hidden” in historical collections back to their original contexts. In the provincial collections of the Buonconsiglio Castle, there are at least four old Trento inn signs, which is rather rare for Italian cities of the early modern period. In addition to the wooden sign of the *Tre Re*, there are the wrought-iron signs of the *Due Mori*, the *Corona*, and even the *Osteria alla Rosa* (Fig. 6.5b).<sup>45</sup> As a result, while our guide-protagonist Ursula presents her inn, the *Osteria alla Rosa*, the app displays both the doorway and the antique sign. The further study platform ([hiddencities.eu](http://hiddencities.eu)) shows all four antique Trento inn signs. As part of a collaborative initiative with local cultural heritage sites, the signs were photographed in high definition for the first time and made available to the public, following their restoration by the holding institution. It would be worth considering a future temporary dossier exhibition of the four signs, as well as their reproduction and display in their original locations, at the very least for the *Osteria alla Rosa*. With the support of new technologies, and in particular 3D printing, it would be possible to create a precise copy of the sign of the *Rosa* and accurately reconstruct the historical external appearance of the most famous inn in Trento.

### The street corner: the “Canton”

At the end of the *Contrada delle osterie tedesche*, Ursula tethers her mule near the most important street junction in Trento, the *Canton*, which as noted earlier was a crowded intersection and busy focus of public life. Here, Ursula and the user encounter a town-crier who is heralded by trumpets as he prepares to deliver a public notice to the citizens. The user and guide hear the public announcement, which regards the serving of food and drink in the city inns, as well as the evening curfew and registration of foreigners. Once again, the storytelling is based on a combination of material evidence and documentary references. The *Canton* was effectively the most important public communication point where proclamations were posted or read aloud. The crier’s announcement, accompanied by trumpeting, is an amalgam of genuine proclamations conserved in local archives dating back to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (Fig. 6.6).<sup>46</sup>

Street corners like this one were multifunctional spaces shared by locals and foreigners of various social classes in order to trade and gather news and exchange gossip or ideas.<sup>47</sup> The site of the *Canton* was not only used for formal government communications by town-criers, but it was also where political statements might be anonymously posted on the walls, sometimes attacking the ruling elites. Examples of this were scandalous broadsheets (“*cartelli*” and “*libelli famosi*”)

45 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/alla-rosa-inn/tavern-signs](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/alla-rosa-inn/tavern-signs) (accessed May 27, 2021).

46 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/street-corner](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/street-corner) (accessed May 27, 2021).

47 On street corners, Fabrizio Nevola, *Street Life in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020).

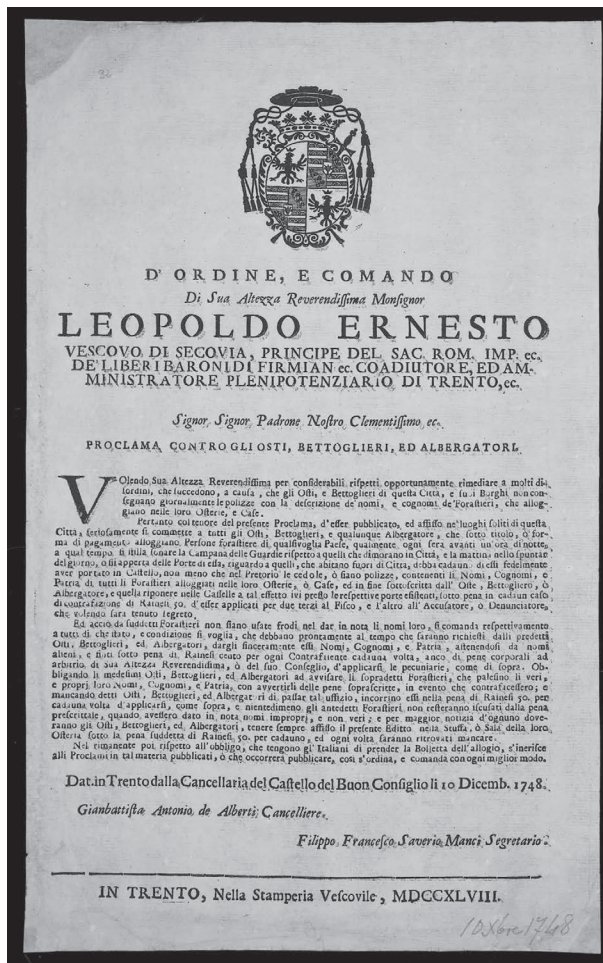


Figure 6.6 Proclama contro gli osti, bettoglieri, ed albergatori, Trento 1748. © Trento, Public Library

criticizing local magistrates that were fixed to a column in the city's main square (Piazza Duomo) and at the Canton street corner in May 1545, a few months before the opening of Council of Trent.<sup>48</sup> The dynamism and multifunctional nature of

48 “. . . quelli chartelli o libelli famosi quali dal mese prosimo pasato furno atachati per tempo di nocte alla colona del Cantono et alla colona de la Piazza in dishonore de li Consuli et altre persone”; Trento, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Principesco Vescovile, Libri feudali, vol. 38, cc. 8v-9r. We thank Alessandro Paris for this reference.

the Canton as an eminently public space for urban communication and sociability were brought to life through a combination of sources and various material remains. Ursula's narration engages, conceptually and materially, with the iron rings for tethering horses that are still found today below the porticoes of Via Suffragio, where she ties up her mule, close to the *Canton*. The presence of these animals and their interactions with people in public spaces, something that tends to be forgotten about early modern urban life, is recalled by a contemporary post, preserved at the Italian War History Museum of Rovereto. The commercial function of the *Canton* is instead evoked by a photograph from the late nineteenth century, showing the numerous commercial activities and shops that still occupied the area of the junction like a sort of extended bazaar.

Today the commercial and social importance of the area is much less significant than in the past. The various types of businesses that characterized the *Canton* in the 1500s are further illustrated with the heraldic symbols of the German artisans of the city, as depicted in the decorated register of the miners' confraternity preserved in the Trento Public Library.<sup>49</sup> The symbols of the members of the confraternity clearly indicate the occupations of the German families who lived or worked close to the *Canton*, always within the district of San Pietro. The recurrent symbols include those of blacksmiths, butchers, innkeepers, bakers, joiners, and other artisans.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the multifunctionality of this public space is revealed in a print showing a street vendor of prints, an omnipresent figure in the streets and squares of European cities in the early modern period. The image comes from the collections of the 'Per Via' Museum of Pieve Tesino (Trento), a museum dedicated to the extraordinary story of Val Tesino and its inhabitants, which from the early modern period specialized in trading and street vending prints all over Europe.<sup>51</sup> The appearance of the print seller opens up additional insights into the history of printing, mobility, and their impact not only on urban contexts but also on mountain communities, as well as the history of this Alpine region in general in this period.

## Conclusions and new challenges

The public history aspects of this project have been seen from the beginning as critical for bringing to light certain specific historiographic perspectives, implicit in the narration of the walking tour *Innkeepers, princes and migrants*. These include the history of mobility, material culture, and digital urban history, through a close interweaving of public history and historiography.

49 Trento, Biblioteca Comunale, Archivio della Congregazione di Carità, n. 49.

50 Luzzi, *Stranieri in città*, 241, 244.

51 See Niccolò Caramel, 'Rapporti commerciali, organizzazione dei viaggi, ripercussioni locali: nuove prospettive sull'ambulantato tesino (1685–1797)', *Studi Trentini. Storia* 98, no. 1 (2019): 155–184. Cfr. inoltre Massimo Negri, ed., *I Tesini, le stampe, il mondo. Uomini e immagini in viaggio* (Milano: Gabriele Mazzotta, 2014); Elda Fietta, *Con la cassela in spalla: gli ambulanti di Tesino* (Ivrea: Priuli e Verlucca, 1987).

From the historiographical perspective, our case study of a German tavern keeper began with archival research by Luzzi and then was reinforced with further research into the material culture of public spaces. The work on the digital outputs prompted the research team to critically reconsider a historiographic theme, already investigated in depth, from a more interdisciplinary perspective. This engaged the main Trentino institutions for historical preservation and thereby established synergies with cultural heritage institutions that would not always occur otherwise. Documents, prints, weapons, signs, ex-votos, photographs, and numerous other objects were used to recreate the complexity of the public spaces in which migrants and travellers lived and moved. Materiality can be difficult to interpret without the support of new technologies and cross-referencing to cultural heritage preserved in museums, libraries, or archives. Here they are given new meaning in a more articulated reading of relevant historical themes like the relationships between citizens and migrant communities, the role of women in the world of work, the management of commercial activities in urban contexts, and the use of public spaces as venues for socializing. The city is shown in particular in its role as a place of transit and as a frontier, a lively commercial centre sitting astride the German and Italian worlds.

From the point of view of public history, the decision to focus the storytelling on the interaction between migrants and public spaces in the city also had the purpose of shifting attention away from the most common themes and locations frequented by present-day citizens and visitors to Trento. Unlike the abundant range of cultural options available today, *Hidden Trento* does not aim to speak exclusively about the major protagonists in the history of the city, or its monumental and artistic highlights. Sovereigns, social elites, and artists do appear in the narrative, but only to the extent to which they influence everyday life within the urban context, and their depiction is filtered through the perceptions of innkeepers and artisans. Following Ursula around the city, one inevitably encounters significant artworks and monuments. One example is the Renaissance palace of Meli-Del Monte, opposite the *Canton*, which Ursula sees nearing completion in 1520.<sup>52</sup> The guide-protagonist points out to the user the allegories and the trials of Hercules depicted on the façade of the building, dominating one of the main city roads. However, this pictorial cycle is not presented as a work of art in itself, with the purpose of revealing its iconographic complexity, but rather to reveal the meaning it might have had for a German innkeeper of the early sixteenth century. It is presented as a symbol of the power of the Empire over the city of Trento, highlighting the close political ties and identification that the German community felt in relation to the Germanic Emperor.<sup>53</sup> Observing this important work of Renaissance art through Ursula’s eyes and narrative interweaves the popular and high cultures of the time, delineating an unusual point of view.

52 [www.hiddencities.eu/trento/meli-del-monte-palace](http://www.hiddencities.eu/trento/meli-del-monte-palace) (accessed May 27, 2021).

53 Marco Bellabarba, ‘Il principato vescovile dagli inizi del XVI secolo alla guerra dei Trent’anni’, in *Storia del Trentino. IV: L’età moderna*, eds. Marco Bellabarba and Giuseppe Olmi (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002), 15–70.

By the time this volume is published, *Hidden Trento* will be expanded with a second itinerary centred around a major event, the famous Council of Trento (1545–1563), but again picking up on the main themes adopted on the previous walking tour: attention to material culture, the impact of mobility on the urban fabric, and the use of public spaces. Trento was chosen to host the Council precisely because it was a frontier city in a strategic position in the heart of Western Europe, located between the Catholic and Protestant worlds. Hosting the Council caused the population to explode and turned the city into an even more significant transport hub, attracting clergymen and their entourages. The second walking tour will highlight unpublished archival sources on the history of public spaces and social life of Trento during the final stages of the Council. It will also introduce the general public to this well-known event from a new perspective, narrating a day in the life of Angelo Massarelli, secretary of the Council and contemporary guide of the walking tour.

The ever-faster development of digital media and application of innovative technologies are generating new challenges and opportunities in the cultural heritage sector. As regards the city of Trento, computer scientists are testing the possibility to reconstruct multi-temporal (4D) digital representations of the city from historical maps, while applying machine learning regression techniques for the analysis and presentation of historical data.<sup>54</sup> Within the wider context of digital humanities developments in recent historiography, historians should avoid being passive spectators of these new challenges, and instead actively promote more constructive dialogue between computer scientists, the humanities, and the heritage sector.

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