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Demographic Aspects of 18th Century Styria

It was poverty that created something like a “common smallness” on a lower level in Lower Styria, especially among the Slovene Styrians.

THE DUKEDOM of Styria consisted of three main parts, namely Upper Styria (the *Kreise* of Judenburg and Bruck), Central/Middle Styria (the Graz *Kreis* and partially the Marburg/Maribor *Kreis*) and Lower Styria (the Cilli/Celje *Kreis* and partially the Marburg/Maribor *Kreis*). Upper Styria was the mountainous area with larger farms, dominated by cattle raising and foresting, and parts of it were industrialized quite early (heavy metal industry and mining). Central Styria was generally a hilly area, dominated by smaller farms, with few acres of land and modest livestock; wine-growing also became important in this area. The capital, Graz, was situated right in the middle of this area. Both areas were inhabited exclusively by German-speaking Styrians.

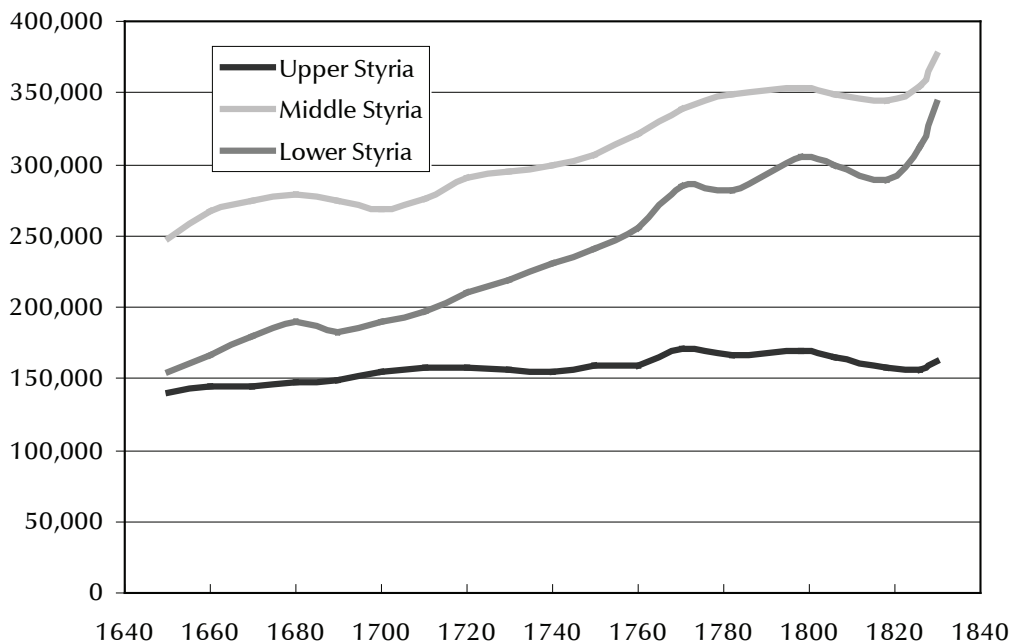
Only in the very south, on the way to Lower Styria, small minorities of Slovene-speaking Styrians did exist. Lower Styria resembled Central Styria in its main characteristics, but the farms were smaller and wine-growing was more widespread. The agrarian countryside was inhabited exclusively by Slovene-speaking Styrians, and only in some small cities (Maribor/Marburg, Celje/Cilli and Ptuj/Pettau) stronger

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German-speaking minorities represented a secondary and tertiary petty bourgeoisie.

GRAPH 1. POPULATION GROWTH IN STYRIA (IN ABSOLUTE NUMBERS), 1690–1830



SOURCE: cf. Straka and Neunteufl (1971).

Graph 1 shows very clearly that Lower Styria experienced a strong population growth, the gap between this part and Central Styria nearly closing by 1830, whereas Upper Styria somewhat stagnated. These characteristic effects stem from two very different demographic systems. In the agrarian areas of Upper Styria demographic restrictions were widely spread: a lot of partially life-long servants worked in agriculture. They were not allowed to marry, but illegitimacy grew especially after the 1790s. On average, there were about 2–3 servants per farm. In Central Styria, they were much fewer (1.3 servants per farm), and in nearby Lower Styria no servants did exist. Thus the possibilities for the people to marry and for the population to grow in a natural way were better in the open demographic system of Lower Styria, and partially also in Central Styria, than in Upper Styria. In 1813 the German-speaking Styrians represented about two thirds of the whole population of the dukedom (cf. Kudler 1821). Immigration to Styria from abroad was a very marginal phenomenon throughout the 18th century.

TABLE 1. ILLEGITIMACY RATIOS IN STYRIA, LATE 18th CENTURY, AND CELIBACY 1754
(14–60 YEARS OLD) (IN %)

Kreis ^a	Illegitimacy 1785	Illegitimacy 1787	Illegitimacy 1789	Illegitimacy 1791	Celibacy 1754
Judenburg (Upper Styria)	18.1	20.6	18.3	20.7	male 73 female 62
Bruck (Upper Styria)	19.2	18.2	16.3	19.3	male 68 female 59
Graz (Central Styria)	8.8	9.1	8.9	10.6	male 50 female 47
Marburg (Central, Lower Styria)	8.5	8.6	6.9	10.5	male 45 female 40
Cilli (Lower Styria)	3.9	4.1	3.1	4.5	male 30 female 32

SOURCES: Zwiedineck-Südenhorst 1895; Straka 1960.

a. The *Kreis* was a smaller administrative unit, introduced during the reign of Maria Theresa.

The illegitimacy ratios in Table 1 reflect the different demographic systems or regimes, including the socio-economic and cultural issues: farmers in Upper Styria did not want their servants to marry because they wanted to uphold their privileged rank as peasants. On the other hand, a workforce was needed and illegitimacy was accepted, not discriminated against (cf. Schmidl 1839, 47). The opposite applied in the southern parts of the country: farms were small and the prevailing mentality was to let the young people marry and become farmers themselves. The consequence was a reduction in the size of the farms. Illegitimacy, on the contrary, was stigmatized, which obviously increased the frequency of abortions or even infanticide (cf. Kurmanovski 2002). The higher the proportion of Slovene-speaking population, the lower the illegitimacy ratio. On the other hand, celibacy ratios were more than double in the exclusively German-speaking Upper Styria, in comparison to the deep south (Celje/Cilli), which was exclusively inhabited by Slovenes (for the demographic differences cf. also Teibenbacher 2009).

The economic situation of the farmers was also very different. Table 2 shows the predominance of larger farms in Upper Styria and of small farms in lower Styria. The small farm sizes cannot only stem from partitions according to inheritance rules, but in the 18th century even the landlords tended to divide up the estates, getting thus more taxpaying farmers. They argued that one peasant family could not tend to larger farms (cf. Ebner 1959).

This argument was also part of the policy of Empress Maria Theresa, who wanted to increase the population and the number of peasants. In Upper Styria,

the wealthy farmers could obviously withstand such a redistribution of land. Their farms had been larger since the so-called *Hufenverteilung* (distribution of land among peasants) of the High Middle Ages, given the lower economic estimation of meadows and forests as opposed to farmland proper. The *Kreise* in Upper Styria were partially industrialized quite early and showed a relatively lower agrarian ratio (agrarian units per 1,000 population), but correspondingly a high percentage of very small agrarian units, namely, 1/4-sized farms and cottages.

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGES OF FULL-SIZED FARMS AND SMALL FARMS, 1754

Kreis	Full sized farms (%)	1/4-sized farms and cottages (%)	Sum of agrarian units ^a	Agrarian units per 1,000 population	Population
Judenburg (Upper Styria)	25.2	52.4	11,545	91	127,183
Bruck (Upper Styria)	15.3	61.3	7,914	119	66,714
Graz (Central Styria)	2.8	84.9	33,067	151	219,650
Marburg (Central, Lower Styria)	4.2	79.3	27,155	170	159,708
Cilli (Lower Styria)	3.4	73.1	25,735	161	159,588

SOURCES: Straka 1960 and Straka 1964.

a. Not only real peasant farms, but also small units, held and used by day laborers who—especially in Upper Styria—often worked in the industry or services.

Whereas Table 2 shows a much higher ratio of agrarian units per 1,000 population in Central and Lower Styria, Table 3 highlights very distinctive differences in the values of *Naturalien*, namely a strong decrease from Upper Styria to Lower Styria. These *Naturalien*, as designated in the official statistics, can be interpreted somehow as a gross domestic product, as an output from the agricultural economy, comprising crops, wine, hay and wood.

Thus, we can summarize by saying that there were distinctive and different demographic and socio-economic systems within the dukedom of Styria in the 18th century. These differences were partially accompanied by ethnic patterns. Obviously, two criteria did exist, a socio-economic one and an ethnic one. The north (Upper Styria = Bruck and Judenburg *Kreis*) had different social and economic patterns in terms of the prevailing agricultural system (ecotypes, cf. Mitterauer 1986) than central (Graz *Kreis* and partially Maribor/Marburg *Kreis*) and Lower Styria (Celje/Cilli *Kreis* and partially Maribor/Marburg *Kreis*). Besides, the north was richer and the south was poorer.

We shall not discuss here the definitions of culture and society or economy. The fact that the countryside in Lower Styria was nearly exclusively inhabited by Slovenes and the presence here of different demographic structures, which influenced population growth, especially in terms of higher marriage rates and less of higher fertility rates, cannot be easily related. Obviously, economic matters, namely the small size of the farms, did not further the development of societal hierarchical systems, as in Upper Styria, with its larger farms, richer peasants, celibate farmhands, and consequently with a smaller population growth.

TABLE 3. VALUES OF NATURAL ASSETS (IN GUILDERS), 1829

Kreis	Sum of values	Population	Per capita (%)
Judenburg (Upper Styria)	3,055,868	97,552	31.3
Bruck (Upper Styria)	2,566,115	69,423	37
Graz (Central Styria)	8,124,369	319,995 ^a	25.4
Marburg (Central, Lower Styria)	4,191,195	198,777	21.1
Cilli (Lower Styria)	3,967,524	200,201	19.8

SOURCE: Statistische Tafeln der österreichischen Monarchie, 1830.

a. Among them, 38,855 inhabitants of the town of Graz.

DESPITE THE similarities in the economic agricultural system (landed estates and vineyards, small farms) between Central and Lower Styria, the systemic differences were significantly more manifest in Lower Styria. Thus, we have to also take into account some important mental-cultural factors. Relevant in this respect are some texts from the 19th century, drawn up in the context of the *Landesbeschreibungen* (descriptions of the land), accompanying the censuses or other tools of modern state policy in the attempt to gain as much information as possible about the country and its population. The texts belong to German-speaking authors, but they also refer to Slovene writers.

Text 1 (by Schmidl 1839, pp. 44–46)

Der Wende lebt gewöhnlich einfacher. Haferbrod und frisches oder gedörertes Waldobst ist die Nahrung der Aermern. Der Wende hält sich meistens abgeseondert vom Deutschen, ist meist lebhafter und gesprächiger als dieser, aber weniger guthmütig, arbeitsam und reinlich. Die Kaleser [living near Ptuj/Pettau] werden am ungünstigsten geschildert. Weinbau ist ihr Haupterwerb, und so lang Wein zu verkaufen ist, leben sie in Saus und Braus, dann desto kleinmüthiger und elend.

Text 2 (by Macher 1860, p. 120)

Die windischen Landbewohner haben in der Regel viel kleinere Besitzungen, und sind daher schon deshalb ärmer als die teutschen. . . . Die Armut scheint auch vorzüglich Ursache zu sein, daß unter den Windischen so wenig Strebsamkeit, Erwerbslust und Sparsamkeit herrscht, denn sie glauben es bei allem Eifer zu keinem Wohlstand bringen zu können, und werden hierin durch ihre Genußsucht unterstützt, welche sie antreibt, sich möglichst oft einen guten Tag anzutun, wenn sie auch wochen-, ja monatelang danach darben müssen.

Text 3 (by Hlubek 1869, p. 62)

In Hinsicht seiner Arbeitsamkeit, seiner Ausdauer und seines Fleisses kann dem windischen Landvolke im Ganzen kein besonderes Lob gespendet werden. Der Gebirgsbauer ist jedoch ungleich fleissiger als der Landmann in den ebenen und hügeligen Gegenden, welcher sich durchaus nicht zu sehr anstrengt, wiewohl der Mangel an brauchbaren Arbeitsleuten gross ist, und sehr viele Arbeitstage im Jahre durch die übermässigen Markt- und KirCHFahrten verloren gehen.

Text 4 (by Zwiedineck-Südenhorst 1895, pp. 174–175)

Diese zuletzt genannte Erscheinung eines höheren standard of life [sic!] für die Deutschen darf aber nicht dahin verstanden werden, als ob der slavische Bauer sparsamer und bescheidener in der Führung seines Haushaltes wäre; im Gegentheile müssen wir bei der tatsächlich erwiesenen grösseren Armuth des slavischen Bewohners Sparsamkeit demselben absprechen; die Möglichkeit einer Bereicherung der Bevölkerung des steirischen Südens ist vielleicht mit Ausnahme der Sannthaler Gegend [a less fertile area] ziemlich allgemein gegeben, aber die im Lande wohnenden Slaven verstehen es nicht genügend, Erworbenes ordentlich zu verwerthen, sie leben nicht ökonomisch, das heisst im Sinne einer geregelten Wirthschaft. So lange sie (im relativen Sinne) Ueberschuss haben, wird gedankenlos in den Tag hineingelebt, bis nichts mehr da ist; so geht's im Sommer nach der Ernte, so im Herbste nach der Weinlese, so im Winter nach dem Schweineschlachten.

These texts must have been written independently from each other, as their wording is too different and simple imitation can be ruled out. The texts must be the result of various individual perspectives. Three of the authors (Macher, Hlubek and Zwiedineck-Südenhorst) were natives of Styria or spent many years of their life in this region. Nevertheless, they all address the same issues and state the same things, namely, the greater poverty and the less experienced “economical” behavior of the Slovene Styrians: they tended do waste the little money they earned and remained poor. Whereas the authors partially accused the Slovenes

of being too lazy, they also considered somehow that their poverty, resulting from the smallness of the agrarian units, had a negative impact on their mentality: people would not believe in their possibilities and in the chance to change their lives. Thus they addressed a very important, critical and actual issue, when discussing development, poverty, the “third” world etc. Not surprisingly, the authors did not address the demographic issue of a strong population growth in Lower Styria during the 19th century, but the Malthusian concept was overruled by the development occurred during the 19th century: population grew everywhere, and so did wealth.

In fact, in the year 1900 (cf. the Austrian statistics) the regional socio-economic structures were very different and the savings per capita and the tax revenues were significantly lower in Lower Styria than in the other parts of the country (see Table 4). We cannot neglect or ignore these texts, nor dismiss them as representing just ideological, chauvinistic-nationalist or even racist views, despite the fact that ethnic-national tensions had increased in Austria in the second half of the 19th century, perhaps also because of economic differences. Even when these texts exaggerate some details, without a doubt they do reflect an “objective” reality, a “true core.” On the other hand, it would be very dangerous to see these differences in behavior and mentality as “natural” or “biological” elements. That would really mean to support racist, nationalist or at least chauvinistic views, which in fact appear quite often in population-related issues, whenever it comes to fertility or migration, for example. So, we have to conclude that it was poverty that created something like a “common smallness”—in the sense of more equality in the prevailing agricultural system (less celibacy, higher fertility, no servants etc.)—on a lower level in Lower Styria, especially among the Slovene Styrians. But, on the other hand, these life circumstances and their cultivation as a tradition and as a “culture” perhaps did hinder progress in a modern sense, namely, the growth of the human capital, the main issue of the modernization process in an economic sense (cf. Guinnane 2008; Galor 2005; Galor and Weil 1999). To evolve from peasants to market players was the big challenge for the farmers, especially for the small and very small farmers living in Middle and Lower Styria in the times of modernization, which started in 1848 following the abolishment of manorial system. Regional differences—nothing is equal—, existing at least since the 18th century obviously did not only persist in this period, but became even stronger and grew into disparities during the 19th century: the modernization process was a rather graceless one.

TABLE 4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURES, 1900

	Agrarian Upper Styria	Industrial area Upper Styria	Agrarian ^a Central Styria	Agrarian ^a Lower Styria
Agrarian quota	58.9	31.9	70.2	81.6
Industrial quota	20.1	44.8	16.6	9.9
Other sectors quota	21.0	23.3	13.2	8.5
Stable persons per farm	7.9	9.7	56	5.3
Family persons (quota) per farm	63.6	58.6	89.8	91.0
Mean farm size (ha)	21.6	17.2	10.1	7.8
Tax payers per 1,000 population	23.2	53.1	14.8	9.8 (sic!)
Taxpayer's income per capita of population (crowns)	69.8	144.3	43.8	27.8 (sic!)
Savings per capita (crowns)	221	218	167	31(sic!)
Milk per capita and year (kg)	700	327	422	342
Bread per capita and year (kg)	105	63	110	86

SOURCES: Austrian Statistics, own calculations.

a. Without the towns of Graz, Maribor/Marburg, Celje/Cilli and Ptuj/Pettau.



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Abstract

Demographic Aspects of 18th Century Styria

The dukedom of Styria was divided into different demographic and economic regions, probably since the early modern times, and evidently since the 18th century. Agrarian ecotypes obviously had a strong impact on demographic behavior, demographic structures and population growth. Whereas in the mountainous north of the country cattle raising and foresting on larger farms with numerous and mostly celibate stable farmhands were common, in the south and especially in the deep south, the Slovenian part of the dukedom (called Lower Styria, today's Slovenia), predominant were the small and very small agrarian units, with few acres of land, small livestock and small vineyards, and without stable farmhands. Population growth during the 18th century was remarkable especially in this part of the country, in this more "open" demographic system, showing the mutual interdependencies between demography, society and economy.

Keywords

Styria, 18th century, population, demography