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THE READING SOCIETIES NETWORK AND SOCIO-GEOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS

This article presents various factors, aside from national-political impetuses, that may have significantly influenced the formation of a reading societies network in the ethnically Slovene territory in the 1860s. It speculates on the nature of the connections between these factors and the organization of reading centers' spatial distribution in the territory. The article attempts to reveal the nature of the interaction between the demographic features of specific population centers and broader administrative divisions in the context of which the reading movement developed. In so doing, it relies on the first comprehensive Austro-Hungarian census, which was completed in 1869. Among the factors, special attention is devoted to the administrative and judicial organization of regions with reading centers, their local administrative divisions, and the distribution of educational infrastructure made up of middle and high schools. On these bases, the article offers several possible models that show how the factors in question were interconnected in the rise and spread of reading centers throughout the ethnically Slovene territory.

Key words: reading centers, nineteenth century, population, schools, judicial and administrative organization

1 The Reading Societies Network from the Standpoint of Demographic Structure

The era of the reading movement in Slovenia began in the 1860s, although political-cultural societies in Trst (Trieste), Gorica (Gorizia), Gradec (Graz), Vienna, and Ljubljana were already active in the March period and in a way anticipated the reading centers. Even before the phenomenon of reading centers, these societies had a substantial role in the development of literary life and culture. The societies' activities included promoting reading; collecting, preserving, and distributing periodicals and books; organizing dramatic and theatrical undertakings;¹ and translating and adapting literature for Slovene cultural and entertainment productions. The societies' activities further gained momentum after the end of absolutism and in the constitutional period that led to the February Patent (1861), which permitted the formation of non-political organizations.² Reading centers developed most rapidly precisely at the start of this period, with continued growth in number and number of readers, so that

¹ Later, politico-cultural events (»bésede«) with different performing arts.

² The 1867 law on organizations encouraged their development, but many reading centers appeared even before it was adopted.



by the end of the 1860s there were fifty-eight reading centers in the Slovene territory.³ The end of the 1860s also saw the beginning of the Tabor movement. The *tabors* (politically orientated gatherings) can be seen as an extension, as it were, of reading societies. Many reading centers were open until the end of the nineteenth century.

The Slovene reading society in Trst was the first to be founded, on 29 January 1861. Fran Levstik was its secretary. The next was in Maribor, long before the opening of a reading center in Ljubljana. Reading activities in general, at least from a quantitative perspective, were most widespread in Primorsko, with twenty-six reading centers in the region in the 1860s. There were seventeen in Carniola, thirteen in Styria, and two in Carinthia. In Primorsko, there were Slovene societies in the Gorica area,⁴ the Trst area, and Istria. If Trst is left out, which with 70,274 residents⁵ was already at the beginning of the twentieth century the largest Slovene city (with two reading centers, including the one opened at St. Ivan's Church in 1868), all of the other Trst area reading centers were on the outskirts—that is, in the suburbs, which had 52,824 residents. This is noteworthy because it is comparable to the vast majority of population centers in Primorsko⁶ and Styria, where reading centers appeared in rural locations, in the countryside. (Among the largest in Primorsko were Štandrež (St. Andrea) and Branik (Rihemberk), with 1,544 residents; in Slovene Styria, there was, for example, Ljutomer, which was not yet incorporated and had 1,074 residents.) The reason for reading centers appearing in the western and eastern sections of the ethnically Slovene territory in towns with smaller populations than those in Carniola can be found in the local populations' comparatively greater need for institutions that more effectively promoted national cultural activities on the periphery, which was in greater or more »critical« contact with Italians or Germans. This need was markedly lesser in the central area of Carniola and nearby, where about ninety percent of the population was Slovene.⁷ Using the first census, which was taken exactly at the end of the 1860s, and considering the towns with reading centers and their populations, three large divisions can be made. A good half of the communities (i.e., twenty-nine) where there were reading centers were villages and trade centers—that is, smaller places whose populations ranged from 262 (Benedikt in Slovenske gorice) and 987 (Cerkno). There were twenty-two with from 1,050 (Štandrež) to 6,623 (Rocol) residents. The number of residents in larger towns—Ljubljana, Celovec (Klagenfurt), Maribor, Trst, and Gorica—was between 12,828 and 70,274. If we consider the list

³ Altogether there were over 4,000 members at that time. By the end of the century, eighty reading centers were still functioning. (Reisp 1988: 137)

⁴ The Gorica area will be treated on the basis of its administrative divisions or by areas under a district board—that is, besides the town of Gorica and its immediate surroundings, the area under the greater Gorica district board, of Tolmin, and of Sežana.

⁵ All demographic data are from the 1869 census.

⁶ In the Gorica area, with the exception of the city of Gorica with 16,659 residents, all of the reading centers were in rural locations. The same is true for the two Istria reading centers.

⁷ This is foremost evident from a comparison of the regional capitals—for example, in Ljubljana, with a larger population that might demand more reading centers, there was one; in greater Maribor, with a population of 12,828, there was also one, and another functioned close by, in the community of Ruše (Maria Rast), which had only 612 residents. Celovec, which had a reading center from 1863, falls between Gorica and Maribor.



of places with reading centers, we see that the majority of the fifteen reading centers in Primorsko—well over half of them in this region—were in the countryside. Styria, where eight of thirteen reading centers were in villages, followed, while in Carinthia, one was in a town and the other in a village.⁸ As regards the other half, which comprised medium-sized towns, the most reading centers were in Carniola (ten), followed by Primorsko (eight), and Styria (four). However, it should be noted that Primorsko ranked so high in this, second group because of its suburban areas (i.e., Rocol, Škedenj, Kolonja, Rojan, Barkovlje, Opčine, and Štandrež). These were actually suburban villages, and for this reason, despite their relatively large populations, it would be more sensible to count them in the first group, meaning the total number of rural reading centers would be thirty-six instead of twenty-nine, or a good sixty percent of all reading centers.

The outskirts of regional centers or capitals demand separate comparisons, just as do individual communities with reading centers. The outskirts of Trst, mentioned earlier, show some similarities with the Carniolan district board of greater Ljubljana,⁹ based on settlement patterns. Ljubljana had almost the same number of residents (i.e., 50,519) but only one village reading center, in Šentvid. Here we can see how reading center activity in the Trst area was considerably more dynamic than around Ljubljana, which paralleled the relation between Primorsko and Carniola in general. Among the exurban areas, only the Maribor districts diverged somewhat. The population was over 80,000, and there were three reading centers (one more was in the city), although the Lower Styrian districts were, in terms of population, overall larger than most Carniola and Primorsko political districts. For this reason the density of reading centers in Styria was, contrary to expectations, somewhat less than in Carniola, where there were four more reading centers. In the Celovec district, which included the wider area around the city with 60,000 residents, there were no reading centers.

Since among socio-geographic factors, population data is one of the most comprehensive sources for studying the spatial distribution of reading centers, I will now consider individual historical regions in more detail from this standpoint, starting with Primorsko. If we compare the demographic patterns of Primorsko communities, the first thing that strikes us is the broad range of populations between the smallest and largest communities with reading centers; for example, between Skopo (Karst) (309) and Trst (over 70,000). Of course, it is unjustifiable to compare urban areas and villages; it would be more sensible, for example, to draw a comparison with Rocol near Trst.¹⁰ Towns in the Trst environs were in general high on the scale and immediately followed Gorica and Trst, in the range from 6,623 to 1,166 residents, with Branik (population 1,544), a communal center encompassing many villages, falling between Kolonja (1,570) and Rojan (1,465). After Barkovlje (1,166) came Štandrež, which came under the Gorica district board and, like many centers of reading, is today in Italy. In eleventh place is Cerčno (Tolmin district board), with 987 resi-

⁸ This is the Carinthian reading center in Železna Kapla (Bad Eisenkappel), which is one of the reading center locations for which I could not obtain demographic data.

⁹ Ljubljana itself is not counted here, just as Trst and Gorica should be treated separately.

¹⁰ However, the differences here are substantial. The concentration of the population in the suburbs of Trst was far greater than in other Primorsko villages with reading centers.

dents, followed by smaller, but by population comparable places, such as Nabrežina (876), Tolmin (846), Prvačina (837), Komen (779), Ajdovščina (772), Volče (770), Kobarid (767), Dekani (715), Vrtojba (603), Črniče (545), Kanal (510), Solkan (466), Jelšane (428), and Skopo (309). These data are interesting because, on the one hand, it is possible to determine the average size of a reading center locale by number of residents in an area under a district board,¹¹ as well as on the regional level; and on the other hand, the density of reading centers in individual political districts under a district board within a region, which is a function of the total number of residents in the district. On this basis, the reading center coverage of individual districts can be compared across regions. Leaving Trst aside, a town with a reading center in the Trst region would have had an average of 2,361 residents, which due to the larger communities surrounding the city, is greater than the average in other districts. The average number of residents in a place with a reading center under the Gorica district board¹² was 790; in Tolmin, Sežana, and Slovenska Istra (Slovene Istria) the numbers were 842,¹³ 656, and 428, and 715¹⁴ The average population of a (non-urban) community with a reading center was 1,173, counting all of the rural locations, but not the cities of Gorica and Trst. Both average sizes show the relatively small size of communities with reading centers on the western periphery of the ethnic territory. As regards the coverage of reading centers in Primorsko districts, it was greatest on the regional level in the Gorica area, on the inter-regional level in the area under the Postojna district board, which was in Carniola but at the same time historically on the Primorsko border.¹⁵ Reading center density in Primorsko by area under a district board was as follows: in the Gorica area (the city of Gorica, the surrounding area, Tolmin, and Sežana), there was one reading center for every 12,692 residents. If for the sake of comparing demographic data we once again leave aside the town of Gorica and limit it to the surrounding area under a district board, which had 56,082 people in the first census and where there were eight reading centers, we get about one reading center for every 7,010 residents. The area surrounding Trst ranks next. If we treat it with the city, that would mean one reading center for every 15,387 people, while a separate calculation for the rural area yields one reading center for every 8,804 people. The Sežana district follows (27,142 people), with three reading centers, which would be one for every 9,047 residents, and then Tolmin (population 37,591), with four reading centers. Because of the latter's somewhat larger population and one reading center for every 9,397 people, it comes after Sežana. In Istria, there were two Slovene read-

¹¹ In the census, this was a so-called *Bezirkshauptmannschaft* and it applies to the internal division of regions.

¹² The same as without Gorica.

¹³ This relatively high average, which places the Tolmin district, for example, ahead of the Sežana district can be attributed to the rather large size of towns with reading center—like Tolmin and Cerkno—although the largest town in the Cerkno district was Otalež (1,399). The smallest community with a reading center in this district was Kobarid, with a population of 767.

¹⁴ The last two values apply to the towns of Jelšane and Dekani, which were under different district boards. The average size of a town with a reading center regardless of district was 570. But since we are considering the Slovene regions by districts, the coverage in Istria will be given for Volosko and Koper separately.

¹⁵ The average size of a town in the Postojna area is somewhat large than that in the Gorica area.



ing centers; in Jelšane, which came under the Volosko district board and resembled Tolmin in population (37,265), and in Dekani, under the Koper district board, which by population (62,149) comes between Trst and the surrounding area, and the Gorica district board.¹⁶ The comparison between the most and least covered Primorsko district is surprising, for the reading center coverage by population in the area surrounding Gorica was almost twenty times greater than in Istria, where there was one Slovene reading center for every 127,453 people. Moreover, the Slovene reading centers were not isolated. In 1866 and 1869, reading centers were established in Kastav and Pula in the Istria area, which shows that reading center activities were more vibrant than seems at first glance. The fact that both Slovene reading centers appeared in smaller places with under 1,000 residents (Jelšane was the fourth smallest place with a reading center) again points to the phenomenon of reading centers opening in very small towns where cultural conditions were more or less threatening. Population size decidedly did not present an obstacle in the process of national coming to consciousness; the spatial proximity to Italian territory did play an important role. Only Skopo in Primorsko, Benedikt in Styria, and Šentvid in Carniola were smaller.

Šentvid, where a village reading center opened in 1866, was among the least covered districts in Carniola and beyond, while the most dense reading center network by population in Carniola was in the area under the Postojna district board, which had 41,225 residents and six reading centers (from Podnanos or Šembid, population 438, to Postojna, population 1,701), yielding one reading center for every 6,870 people. It ranked ahead of the Gorica area district board. Postojna is most comparable to the area under the Gorica district board and the Primorsko district boards of Tolmin and Sežana because reading centers in the Postojna area had an average of 931 people. Except for Postojna and Vipava, all the places in the area had populations of under 1,000, so rural reading centers dominated. They were also located in Senožeče (population 943), (Ilirska)¹⁷ Bistrica (670), Podraga (584), and Podnanos. The area under the Logatec district board, where the average size of a place with a reading center was significantly greater (2,502), ranks after the Postojna district board. Yet it is necessary to take into account that in the Logatec district there were two reading centers—in Idrija, the second largest town in Carniola, and Planina. The average size of a place with a reading center was somewhat smaller in the district under the Kranj board—2,171 (outside of Kranj and Škofja Loka)—and in the area under the Črnomelj district board—1,120 (Metlika and Črnomelj). The numbers in the Novo mesto, Kamniško, Kočevje, and greater Ljubljana districts were 2,068, 1,1868, 656, and 361, respectively. According to the 1869 census, Ljubljana and surroundings had a population of 22,593. The average population of a place with a reading center in Carniola was 1,383, which was similar to Primorsko when we leave aside Trst and Gorica. Ljubljana is disregarded and villages, trade centers, and medium-size communities are counted. (Some of the latter were already incorporated but by popu-

¹⁶ In the first census, Jelšane had 428 residents, although the Croatian towns of Rupa, Šapjane, and Lipa, along with many Slovene towns, were in the same commune, which was under the judicial district Castelnovo (Novigrad). Dekani had 715 residents and was with a number of smaller towns located in the Rožari commune, which was in the largest Primorsko district, Koper.

¹⁷ The adjective »Ilirska« was added at the beginning of the twentieth century.

lation cannot be treated together with regional centers. According to my typology they belong in the second tier of population centers.) Compared with the majority of Carniolan district boards, where the size of communities with reading centers tended upwards, the Ljubljana area and Kočevje were exceptions. There were, respectively, reading centers in Šentvid (population 361) and Sodražica (656). Further, it is surely worth noting the fact that in the Kočevje district board, to which Sodražica belonged, and the Kočevje area, Kočevje Germans formed the majority of the population, which probably indirectly motivated nationalist involvement in the area. On the other hand, we know, for example, that there were *Leseverein* ‘reading clubs’ [Slov. *kazine*] in larger towns, but they did not prompt the founding of reading centers. The average size of towns in Carniola as compared with towns in Primorsko, whether we use the average by district board area or of the entire region, indicates that somewhat greater efforts were required in Carniola than on the western periphery of the ethnic territory in order to found reading centers. To return to reading center coverage in Carniola, the closest to Postojna and most distant was the area under the Črnomelj district board, which had a population of 29,646 and two reading centers, or one center for every 14,823 people, and the Logatec district board, with a population of 35,152 and one reading center for every 17,576 people. The Ljubljana district board follows with one reading center for every 22,593 people. The Kranj district, with 53,804 residents, had one reading center for every 26,902 people, followed by the Kočevje and Kamnik board areas, with one reading center for every 38,106 and 38,204 people, respectively. The Novo mesto district board area had only one reading center per 44,559 people. The Ljubljana suburban area had one reading center per 50,519. It seems that the reasons for the poor coverage in these areas are not to be found in the comparatively more dense populations but in the fact that Carniola was the most »Slovene« of all the historical regions. At the same time it is striking that the Postojna and Črnomelj district boards, which in Carniola were the most well serviced by reading centers, form the Carniola-Croatia border.

In Styria, the Brežice district forms the southwestern part of this border. The population of eight places with reading centers in Styria was under 1,000: Benedikt (262), Vojnik (488), Žalec (553), Vransko (586), Ruše (612), Laško (613), Sevnica (670), and Ormož (762); those with over 1,000 people were Celje (4,224), Ptuj (2,361), Slovenska Bistrica (1,168), Ljutomer (1,074), and Maribor (12,828). If once again we disregard the regional capital and use comparable categories—rural, trade center, and smalltown—the average size of a center of reading activities in Styria was 1,083, which is smaller than in both Carniola and Primorsko, where we have to take into account the more populous suburban areas that raise the average size of population centers. The size of communities with reading centers in individual Styrian districts varied between 560 (Celje area) and 12,828 (city of Maribor); in between, from smallest up, are Brežice (670), Maribor area (681), Ljutomer (1,074), and Ptuj (1,561).

The density was greatest in Styria in the smallest of the Styrian districts, Ljutomer, with 20,040 people and one reading center. One of the reasons may have been that it bordered Prekmurje, which was in Hungary (partly in Železna County and partly in Zala County). The least density was in the Brežice district (where Sevnica is located), with 45,982 residents and one reading center, which was founded in a



relatively small community. After Ljutomer came Maribor and the surrounding area, where there were 83,596 residents and three reading centers (Slovenska Bistrica, Benedikt, and Ruše)—that is, one small-town and two rural reading centers, which meant one reading center for every 27,899 people. The Celje district, which was large, ranks next. Together with the city, it had 122,281 residents and five reading centers (aside from the one in the city, four trade center or village ones in Laško, Vojnik, Žalec, and Vransko), which meant one reading center for every 22,456 people. The area under the Ptuj district board was in last place, with two reading centers and a population of 76,835, which was one reading center for every 38,418 people. This district was comparable to the Maribor district; the range between the smallest place with a reading center, Ormož, and the largest, Ptuj, within Styria was like that between Benedikt and Maribor; in Primorsko and Carniola—that between Trst and Skopo and Ljubljana and Šentvid, although these differences are more considerable.

From an interregional perspective, the city of Maribor's coverage would put it between the Postojna and Črnomelj districts, which are followed by the town of Gorica and the Logatec district, in the group with the greatest coverage, where one reading center covered roughly between 6,000 and 17,000 people. Also in this group are the Gorica, Trst, Sežana, and Tolmin districts, as well as possibly Celovec, which means that the most well-covered districts were in Primorsko, two in Carniola (both on the borders), and one each in Styria and Carinthia. The Celje, Maribor (Ruše, Slovenska Bistrica, and Benedikt), and (barely) Ljutomer districts would fall into the second group, with Ljubljana and Kranj. In this group, one reading center covers 20,000 to 30,000 people. The Ptuj and Brežice districts would fall in the last group, with the poorest average—one reading center for over 30,000 people on average. It should be recalled that Ptuj was among the largest Slovene districts, with over 70,000 residents, and that was also a reason it was in the last group. The Brežice district, where there were almost half as many people, also adjoined the Croatian territory, and contacts with other Slavs were probably not as critical or »motivating« as contacts with non-Slavic peoples. In the same group are the areas under Kočevje, Kamnik, Novo mesto, the greater Ljubljana, and both Istria district boards, where there were two reading centers and where Volosko and Koper were located. Still, it should be noted that there were four Slavic reading centers in Istria.

In Styria, the reverse correlation between the average community size across individual districts and reading center coverage within them deserves some attention.¹⁸ Besides the Brežice district, a good example is the populous Celje district, which had lesser coverage and in which the average size of population centers was 560. This resembles the greater Ljubljana and Volosko districts, which had very poor coverage but had reading centers in villages with less than 500 people. The Maribor district, with an average of 681—a middle range coverage—resembled the foregoing examples. The opposite was true of Ljutomer, which had just over 20,000 residents and two reading centers and ranked with the districts with highest averages. The average community size in this district was forty percent greater than the average size of places surrounding Maribor. Viewed from a demographic perspective, this

¹⁸ Celje was in fourth place among the six Styrian districts under consideration. It ranked after the city of Maribor, greater Maribor, and Ljutomer.



means that sometimes, despite quite good coverage in an area, a significantly greater population was needed for reading centers to function. The opposite was true as well: reading centers were founded in small places that belonged to districts with poor coverage. Ptuj diverges from this pattern. It is among the areas with poor coverage, and a reading center was opened only in the large population center. Conclusions are difficult where data are scarce, as with *Železna Kapla* in Carinthia. Celovec's features make it comparable to Maribor or Gorica.

The thirteen reading centers in Styria might not seem like many since the Styrian districts were among the largest and Styria had a total population of 1,131,309. By comparison, Carniola and Primorsko (with the Gorica and Trst areas and Istria)¹⁹ had 463,273 and 581,078 residents, respectively. However, it is necessary to consider that there were six Slovene Styrian districts (Brežice, Celje, Ljutomer, Maribor, Ptuj, and Slovenj Gradec), so that the number of residents was in fact lower (i.e., 406,180).²⁰ According to the first census, the population of Carinthia was 336,400.²¹ If the measure of reading activities was of a population from which potential cultural activists and supporters would come per reading center, then, as would be expected, in the constitutional period it was highest in Primorsko (one reading center per 22,394 people). Next came Carniola, with one reading center for 31,245 people; and Styria, where there were twenty-five percent fewer reading centers than in Carniola, or one per 31,245 people. Last was Carinthia, with one reading center per 168,200 people. It would hardly be different if we were to use the average size of villages or small towns and reading centers per number of people, which yields 1083 for Styria, 1,173 for Primorsko, and 1,383 for Carniola.²² Neither would it be different if we added the coverage of individual regional districts, of which, according to the criteria given above, five of the most well covered were in Primorsko, two in Carniola, and one in Styria. Among the moderately well covered were two Carniolan districts and three Styrian. Two Primorsko (Istria), four Carniolan, and two Styrian districts were among the most poorly covered. In first place would be Primorsko, followed by Styria and Carniola (where there was the greatest number of poorly covered districts), and Carinthia would again be last.

2 The Reading Societies Network from the Standpoint of Administrative, Political, and Judicial Organization

Among socio-geographic factors, besides demographic patterns, it is important to consider the political administrative and judicial organization of population centers

¹⁹ The calculations include all the Istrian districts: the largest, Koper (62,149), then Lošinj (35,917) Poreč (39,460), Pazin (36,569), Pula (43,545), and Volosko (37,265).

²⁰ Ljutomer (25,040), Maribor and surroundings (83,596 plus 12,828, total 96,424), Ptuj (76,835), Brežice (45,982), Slovenj Gradec (39,618), Celje and surroundings (4,224 plus 118,057, total 122,281).

²¹ In addition to the city of Celovec, with 15,285 residents, the district of Celovec had a population of 59,151, which was comparable to the Trst suburbs and the district surrounding Ljubljana. The Carinthian numbers are Šmohor (Hermagor), 17,740; Spittal, 43,925; Šentvid na Glini (St. Veit an der Glan), 52,982; Beljak, 54,284; Velikovec, including *Železna Kapla*, 52,533; Volšperg (Wolfsberg), 40,500.

²² It is unnecessary to explain again why Carinthia is not included in this comparison.



and their wider areas. The presence of a district board, a court, communal services, tax, and other offices was surely important for the development of a locale's national consciousness and culture. The question arises as to whether these factors operated independently or had a close connection with one another. If the latter is the case, then it might be expected, for example, that in an area with more intense reading activity many, mutually influencing factors would be simultaneously at work. A survey of reading centers indicates that there were not necessarily seats of judicial districts in all of the places where reading centers opened. At the same time it is interesting to note which judicial districts had many reading centers, and in which administrative districts there were the most or the fewest courts, and how that could have influenced the formation of reading center networks in those areas. Trst and its surroundings had eight. The judicial district of greater Gorica, which included Gorica, Solkan, Štandrež, Vrtojba, and Prvačina, had five Slovene societies. In the Ajdovščina judicial district, which came under the Gorica district board, there were three (in Ajdovščina, Branik, and Črniče). In the Kanal judicial district, which as well belonged to the greater Gorica district board, there was one reading society. The Sežana judicial district had one society; the Komen judicial district had two (both were under the Sežana district board). In the Tolmin judicial district, there were three reading centers—in Tolmin, Volče, and Kobarid. The Cerklje judicial district had one reading center (Tolmin district board). Thus, in Primorsko, about one-fourth of the places with reading centers had their own courts. From the survey it is also evident that areas under district boards that were more divided judicially, the reading center network was more dense, as was the case in greater Gorica, where eight or nine (including the city) communities with reading centers belonged to three judicial districts. Two-thirds of the communities in Carniola had both reading centers and courts (Ljubljana, Idrija,²³ Kranj, Novo mesto, Škofja Loka, Kamnik, Postojna, Vipava,²⁴ Metlika, Črnomelj, Senožeče, and Ilirska Bistrica),²⁵ which points to the fact that judicial organization was a not negligible factor in the spatial distribution of reading centers. In Carniola, the most judicially divided district was also the best covered in the region—in fact, in the country—by reading centers. This was Postojna, where there were altogether six reading centers located in four judicial districts. Judicial organs could have meant more people in the courts or in law, who along with teachers, clergymen, merchants, tradesmen, landholders, and entrepreneurs formed an important part of the group that supported the national awakening. The same is true of Styria, where the communities that had both reading centers and district courts were a good two-thirds. These were Maribor²⁶ (including Ruše), Slovenska Bistrica, Celje,²⁷ Vransko, Vojnik, Laško, Ptuj, Ormož, Ljutomer, and Sevnica.²⁸ Železna Kapla, which was under the Velikovec district board, and Celovec belonged to different judicial districts.

²³ Planina did not have the status of a judicial district and together with Idrija came under the Logatec judicial district. Logatec was also the seat of the district board.

²⁴ Podnanos and Podraga came under the Vipava judicial district.

²⁵ But Sodražica, where there was a reading center, fell under the Ribnica judicial district, which was under the Kočevje district board.

²⁶ Including Ruše.

²⁷ Žalec was in the Celje district.

²⁸ Benedikt came under the St. Lenart judicial district.

We come to similar conclusions if we observe the administrative organization of individual districts. Only Primorsko differs noticeably from the other regions, although two-thirds of the places with reading centers had the status of commune. Aside from Gorica and Trst, which administered the surrounding towns and suburbs, the following had the status of commune, which usually encompassed a number of villages: Jelšane, Cerknò, Kobarid, Volče, Tolmin, Nabrežina, Komen, Skopo, Črnice, Branik, Štandrež, Solkan, Ajdovščina, Kanal, and Vrtojba.²⁹ This means that reading centers usually appeared in self-governing communes. In this regard, only the towns of Dekani and Prvačina were exceptions. Prvačina was in the Dornberk commune, in which more people lived than in Prvačina (1,491 vs. 837), and Dekani was in the Rožari commune, even though Rožari (Rosariòl di sopra/Rožari pri Cerkvi, Rosariòl di sotto/Rožari) was smaller than Dekani (257 vs. 715).³⁰ In Carniola, Styria, and Carinthia, all of the towns with reading centers were also communes, so that the administrative autonomy of a town was one of the most prominent factors in explaining the rise and distribution of reading centers in ethnically Slovene territory.

It is not possible to identify any direct correlations between the variables of political, judicial, and administrative organization of districts, yet we may conclude from a survey of Slovene reading societies that the strongest link is between population centers' judicial and administrative organization. Of fifty-eight population centers, thirty-one (53 %) were seats of judicial districts and communal administration. We can affirm, with reference to the available demographic data, that reading centers in fact were founded in administrative centers. In all of these cases, centers of reading that were not commune seats and administratively link a number of towns were the most populous towns in the commune. Besides the urban and trade centers—Trst, Gorica, Ljubljana, Maribor, Celovec, Kranj, Škofja Loka, Kamnik,³¹ Ajdovščina, Črnomelj, Novo mesto, Slovenska Bistrica, Ptuj, Ljutomer, and (Ilirska) Bistrica³²—this was also true for the following communities, which were the locations of reading centers, district courts, and communal administration: Kanal, where a good fourth of the commune population lived; Komen, with a third of the population; and Tolmin, where only a fifth of the population lived, although the Tolmin commune it should be noted, was one of the most disperse, administratively linking twelve towns in the vicinity. In the Postojna commune there was a reading center in the trade center of the same name. Half of the population lived in Postojna and half in nine surrounding villages (3,606). The situation was similar in Vipava. In the Senožeče commune (along with Gabrče), 90 % of the population lived in Senožeče. In the Idrija commune, the reading center was in the largest town, Idrija, where almost all the population was concentrated (3,813 of 3,937); the few other people lived in Zgornja Kanomlja, Spod-

²⁹ There was a reading center in Spodnja Vrtojba, population 603, while Zgornja Vrtojba's population was somewhat less (552), and that of the whole Vrtojba commune 2,223.

³⁰ Similarly the Solkan commune, where there was a reading center in Solkan, with 466 residents, but not in, for example, Loke (a community near Gorica), with 1,399 residents, and Spodnja Vrtojba, which had somewhat fewer residents than Vogrsko (623).

³¹ Kamnik, Škofja Loka, and Kranj had, with their suburbs, similar populations. The 1869 census figures were 2,178, 2,298, and 2,326, respectively.

³² Nearby towns, like Trnovo, Čelje, the plantations Jablanica and Prem, and others were independent communes.



nja Kanomlja (where the first census found only four residents in one house), and Jelični Vrh. In the much smaller Metlika commune (population 1,331), where ninety percent of the people lived in Metlika, there was a reading center. Places with reading centers in Styria were on average smaller than those in Carniola, but the reading centers were in communal centers, which were the largest towns in the commune. These were Vranksko (with a good one-third of the commune's population), Vojnik, Laško, Ormož (including Dobrova), and Sevnica, in which one-third of the population lived. In the Vojnik commune, which resembled Postojna in size, actually only one-fifth of the people lived in the town of Vojnik, which is attributable to the commune's dispersed population—it encompassed twenty-five villages. Twenty-three towns with a population of 2,969 belonged to the Laško commune, and only one-fifth of the people lived in Laško itself. Cerklje stands out in this list because there was a reading center in the trade center of Cerklje and not, for example, in the larger and proximate community of Otalež; however, the seats of the judicial district and commune, and the tax office were in Cerklje.

3 Reading Societies Network from the Standpoint of the Development of the Educational System

We will now consider the development of the educational network in Slovenia during the constitutional period,³³ how it was spatially related to reading centers distribution, and whether it is possible to discern connections with other factors that have been treated here. The educational network that existed and was being reformed was made up of primary, elementary (started at the time of Maria Theresa), and vocational schools that also offered courses for teachers, some of whom were also Slovene society members. There were also lower and higher middle technical schools and high schools. Higher (technical) and university studies (including philosophy, theology, law, and medicine) were rare. In some places there were trade schools to prepare students for specific occupations (MEDVEŠ 1999: 86). It was in fact merchants and tradesmen who formed part of the Slovene societies' membership. Many intellectuals and semi-intellectuals in education (e.g., teachers, professors), office workers, clergymen, lawyers, and politicians were members, while some were in the arts (e.g., literature, cultural affairs, the visual arts). In Primorsko, in the 1860s—the liveliest period of reading activities—there were city schools, secondary technical schools, and high schools. However, education was well developed here on different levels and with different profiles already before the period of readership promotion (i.e., from the end of the eighteenth century), which was significant for the intellectual development of the people in the region. Soon after the adoption of a general school system in 1774, which introduced compulsory education from ages six to thirteen,

³³ The main source for middle and high schools, aside from those that will be cited in the discussion, is Vlado SCHMIDT (1988). Marjan Dolgan prepared an excerpt from this work for the research project *The Spatial Aspect of Slovene Literary Culture*, to which I contributed the present article. Therefore, in what follows, I will not cite the main source in every instance; it is evident that all of the relevant data on individual schools are taken from Schmidt. I also relied on Schmidt in the course of researching reading centers. I selected and added to the data because my focus is on the 1860s.

primary schools appeared in the Trst area (i.e., in Škedenj, 1780, in Katinara, 1793, in Prosek, 1795, and in Opčine, 1798). The educational network continued expanding in the nineteenth century, with the opening of a school for midwives (1815); an agricultural school (1842); a male normal technical secondary school, and a maritime academy (1817). There was a high school in Trst in the 1860s.³⁴ Since 1851, it had had eight classes, and German was the language of instruction. In 1852, Slovene became a mandatory subject. Slovene was not required in lower technical secondary schools.³⁵ In addition to the secondary and technical school and maritime academy, among institutions for more advanced education was the theological seminary, founded in 1849, which prepared Roman Catholic clergymen. It was open until 1875, when it became possible to study at seminaries in Ljubljana and Gorica. There was also a normal school in Trst, which was moved to Koper in 1875. Thus there were schools that prepared students for the teaching profession in Koper, Trst, and Gorica. It was in 1864–1865 that a male teacher preparation school opened in Trst. In Gorica, Slovene was used in the primary grades from the beginning of the nineteenth century (1808); in 1815–1816, Slovene departments were opened and instruction began in German and Slovene.³⁶ However, this was not true of all schools. The higher secondary school performed this function in Gorica. In the 1850s, Slovene was not mandatory. It became mandatory in the middle of the 1860s (1865), when the school became a full, higher eight-year institution.³⁷ There was already a reading center in Gorica at that time. It had opened in 1862. A reading center opened in Ajdovščina in 1864. However, all the other reading centers in greater Gorica were founded after 1865, when at least formally the status of Slovene in the schools improved. Reading centers opened in Solkan, Kanal, Branik, and Črniče (1867); in Vrtojba (1868); and in the villages of Štandrež and Prvačina (1869). In the Sežana and Tolmin districts, with the exception of Tolmin, where one had been founded in 1862, the majority of reading centers appeared after the mid-1860s: in 1866, in the village of Skopo; in 1867, in Volče; in 1869, in Kobarid, Cerknjo, and Komen. By comparison, reading centers in greater Trst started opening in 1861. Since the beginning of the constitutional period (1861, and before that 1849), Slovene-language instruction for Slovenes was decreed by the regional authority (in 1846). As in Trst, a seminary had existed in Gorica since 1757. In 1818, a two-year course of philosophy and theology was introduced there, and it became the seminary for the entire Primorsko. Slovene was taught at the seminary from 1869, and it should be noted that there had been Slovene at the philosophy school since 1847–1848 and at the high school since 1849–1850, when it expanded to eight years³⁸ and all students were required to take Slovene if it was their first language. Despite strong pressure from the Italians and the fact that

³⁴ It was founded as a Jesuit school in 1620 and closed in 1773. The Franciscans reopened it in 1792, and in 1807 it became a five-year institution.

³⁵ It was founded in 1849 as a lower, two-year school, and after 1870 it had a full, eight years.

³⁶ In Trst, instruction was in three languages—German, Slovene, and Italian.

³⁷ The middle school was founded in 1849 as a primary, two-year school, and became a full, eight-year institution in 1860.

³⁸ This high school had also been founded by the Jesuits in 1620. Between 1780 and 1810 it was run by the Piarists, expanding to six classes in 1807. When, in 1811, the lyceum and high school were closed, a college was opened.



private, occupational, and academic track education in the Trst and Gorica areas only became markedly better in the 1880s and 1890s, we can observe that middle and higher schools that offered general education and a diploma that paved the way to higher education contributed to the strengthening of the intellectual class and to better connections between Slovene groups on the edge of the ethnic territory, as well as to the awakening of ethnic consciousness, which was an important impetus to involvement in Slovene societies. Thus it is not surprising, from this point of view, that the reading movement was most vibrant precisely in the Gorica and Trst areas.

The development of a network of schools, which was important for education, strengthening of national consciousness, and solidifying the use of Slovene in public places, was formidable in Carniola. As in Primorsko, it was centralized. In Ljubljana, there was a state high school³⁹ that offered philosophy and theology,⁴⁰ which in the 1860s already had eight grades. High school (lyceum) studies included theology and philosophy—philosophy became grades seven and eight—and the institution truly had an academic profile and prepared students for the university.⁴¹ The secondary school, which offered a higher—that is, lyceum-level—education, was a more practically oriented school. It was founded in 1849 as a lower, two-year institution. From 1865, it was also an eight-year (German high) school.⁴² Among high schools, there was the school for teachers, which was formed in 1867 from an institute for teachers at the middle technical school,⁴³ which is not unusual if we consider that in secondary technical and city schools in regional capitals there had already been courses for teachers (MEDVEŠ 1999: 86). Students were also prominent members of reading centers' (founding) boards. Specifically, in Ljubljana, we find Ivan Macun among the founders, although there were also—besides merchants, tradesmen, and landowners—a good many other semi-intellectual occupations (lawyers, office workers, physicians, journalists, and politicians) represented. Future Roman Catholic clergymen could get an education at the seminary in Ljubljana (1708–), at which, in 1791, was reinstated a full, four-year course of theology, on the basis of which the College of Theology was formed in 1848. The private diocesan high school (1905–) in Šentvid had its origins here. Slovene was the language of instruction, and it was the only Slovene high school in Austria-Hungary. It was precisely in Šentvid, the third smallest community with a reading center, that a reading center was opened in 1866. Among its founders were two priests, Blaž Potočnik, who was a pastor, writer, and journalist, and Father Alojzij Stare. They were joined by a craftsman (a goldsmith),

³⁹ It was founded in 1597 by the Jesuits. After 1773, when the order was dispersed, the high school belonged to the state (until 1849). After the founding of general seminaries in Gradec and Innsbruck, theology was no longer offered in Ljubljana (1762–). In 1785, the two-year philosophy program was cancelled, to be reinstated in 1788. The high school expanded to six grades in 1807 and to eight in 1849. Slovene became the language of instruction only in 1918 (Gymnasium I).

⁴⁰ 1849–1958.

⁴¹ Those who wanted a university education had only to complete one more year of philosophy.

⁴² Together with the state high school, it came under the Slovene government in 1918. In 1930, it became Technical Secondary Gymnasium I.

⁴³ There were pedagogical courses between 1803 and 1810. The women's school for teachers was founded in 1870 and became an independent institution in the 1920s. At the beginning of the 1930s, it was opened to men and women and the course of study was extended.

an artist, and two landowners.

In the second largest city in Carniola, Idrija, where there had been a reading center since 1866, there was no high school in the 1860s; therefore, we can conclude that among the factors that have been mentioned in connection with the readership movement, the political, judicial, and administrative factors—as well as the demographic pattern—were decidedly more important. We only have to recall that the Idrija commune, which was under the Logatec district board, had 3,937 residents in 1869. It is also telling that the Idrija judicial district was close to the area under the Postojna district board, where the reading movement was most developed. Inter-regional influences ought also to be considered. The area under the Gorica district board »schiuded« the Carniolan districts on the western, ethnically Slovene border, and it had comprehensive readership center activities.

Unlike Idrija, Kranj did have a high school. The Kranj reading center opened in 1863, two years after the founding of a lower classical high school with German as the language of instruction. Slovene replaced German in the 1870s.⁴⁴ A high school, which offered a general education and was an entry point to university studies, was also located in the Carniolan town of Novo mesto. It became an eight-year school in 1855, before the readership movement.⁴⁵ In Kamnik, there was a Franciscan (Province of The Holy Cross of Slovenia) high school, though it was private.⁴⁶ Going back to the fact that, from a demographic perspective, more effort was required in Carniola than on the western or eastern peripheries of the ethnic territory to form reading centers, then it is possible that the schools played an important role in education and encouraging national consciousness.

As regards lower and higher middle schools, with the exception of Idrija, they did not exist at the time in Škofja Loka or in the area under the Bela Krajina district board of Črnomelj. However, Škofja Loka came under the Kranj district board, where there was a high school; the Črnomelj and Novo mesto districts, where there were secondary schools, were proximate to each other. Like Idrija in Carniola,⁴⁷ Postojna elicits more interest because it did not have a network of secondary and high schools, but it had a schooling tradition: In the Napoleonic era (1810) a high school was founded, which was made a college in 1811, and then closed soon after the French departure (1813). Therefore, its border location—in Carniola, Črnomelj was similarly situated—was probably more important as regards reading activities. It was in an outlying part of Carniola, in the west bordering the Gorica region, and we can assume mutual influences. In addition, the Postojna district board, which covered the judicial districts Planina, Senožeče, Lož, and Bistrica, bordered the Slovene part of Istria in the Bistrica area. There was a vibrant Slovene cultural life in Jelšane, in the

⁴⁴ The founding of the two-year high school in 1811 goes back to 1810. In 1870, the high school was changed from a classical to a middle school. At the same time, it became the first high school in Slovenia with Slovene as the language of instruction; German was a separate subject.

⁴⁵ It began as a Franciscan high school (1746). Then it became a five-year school (1807). A college replaced it in 1811, performing to some extent the functions of a high school and lycee. As in Kranj, a higher middle school high school was founded in 1870.

⁴⁶ It was founded in 1821, with its headquarters in Gorica, and had property rights until 1877.

⁴⁷ In Idrija, a three-year high school functioned until the French invasion (1784–1797) and then from 1807–1811. Between 1823 and 1824 and 1827, the first year of a lower high school was open.



area under the Volosko district board, Castelnuovo judicial district (a cultural society formed hier in 1867), which was very close to Bistrica.

During the constitutional period, in Lower Styria there were lower and upper secondary and high schools in Maribor, Celje (the Celje district was the largest Styrian, Slovene district), Ptuj, and Ljutomer. Like Ljubljana and Gorica, Maribor had a high school, a middle technical school, seminary, and school for teachers. The Slovene grades at the Maribor high school (lower grades) were joined to the German ones only in 1889, so that in the 1860s the high school was not Slovene,⁴⁸ but it had a quite long tradition. Its founding went back to 1758,⁴⁹ when the Jesuits founded it. At the beginning of the nineteenth century (1807) it expanded to five grades. The secondary school provided education on the lower secondary level. It opened in 1850 and in 1870 became a full, eight-year technical secondary school.⁵⁰ A seminary for training theologians and priests opened in Maribor in 1849. During the constitutional period, after 1862, future teachers could attend the two-year school for teachers, where Slovene was the language of instruction. The teachers' school had an antecedent in the so-called *preparandij*, a three-month course for grade school teachers (founded in 1802) that became a one-year school for teachers in 1850. In greater Maribor, where in the 1860s there were four reading centers, the status of Slovene as language of instruction had a great deal of importance for its public role and in the cultural awakening. This is especially true if we compare the situation in 1869, when the school was reformed as three-year normal school with German as the language of instruction.⁵¹ Ruše, which was among the smallest communities with a reading center, did not have a school at this time.⁵² The poorest schooling conditions were in the Brežice district. Here the border factor was probably more critical in cultural life. However, even in places where there were schools, it is not always possible to attribute too much importance to them. In the area under the Ptuj district board, where reading centers were organized in Ptuj (1863/1864) and Ormož (1868), a decisive factor could not have been the state lower technical high school, which was founded only in 1869. The example of Prlekija differs again. A reading center had existed in Ljutomer since 1868, while the city school was founded in 1861 (in 1870 it became a lower secondary technical school). In the Celje area, where there were five reading centers, a secondary technical school,⁵³ and a high school (founded in 1808).⁵⁴ In 1895, Slovene classes were introduced. Celovec had theological studies, which had been reinstated at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1801), a

⁴⁸ This came about in 1918.

⁴⁹ It underwent many changes: in 1773 it was closed, it reopened in 1775, and after 1781 the Piarists ran it; after 1790 it prepared lay teachers.

⁵⁰ Like the classical high school or gymnasium, it became a Slovene institution in 1918.

⁵¹ In 1874, it became a four-year institution. The normal school for men grew out of it in 1918 and functioned until the start of WW II. It was the basis for Maribor Gymnasium III.

⁵² A church school was opened here long before (1645–1758). It had the character of a high school and was closed when the Jesuit high school in Maribor opened.

⁵³ Founded in 1849 as a two-year school.

⁵⁴ It provided lower and higher secondary education, although Latin was the language of instruction in the high school, which between 1851 and 1919 served as the superior German high school.

high school, a secondary technical school,⁵⁵ which in the reading movement period were full, eight-year schools.

This look at secondary and high schools in Styria shows that all of the districts where there were reading centers—with the exception of the Brežice (Sevnica) district—had different levels of schooling. This was important for Slovene culture and the formation of national consciousness, which was a significant factor in the formation of reading centers and of active reading center members, among whom were students. Location was the most important factor for the Brežice district, for along with Črnomelj, Metlika, and Novo mesto in the (south)east, and Ljutomer and Ptuj in the (north)east, it was part of the Slovene-Croatian or Slovene-Hungarian border. The same may be true of Ormož as regards schools versus location. The comparatively more diffuse Styrian school network was connected with a relatively sparse population pattern. Reading centers were located for the most part in places with less than 1,000 residents. The judicial and administrative organization of areas with reading centers was the most important social factor in Slovene Styria. Let us recall the fact that three-fourths of Styrian centers of reading were also the seats of judicial districts and all were administrative seats of communes. This means that reading centers were located in the administrative seats of communes.

However, this is not absolute, and the factors in question can be related in another way. In Carniola, the educational infrastructure covered only individual urban centers and a decisive role in the formation of reading centers cannot be attributed to it. In addition to Ljubljana, Kranj, Kamnik, and Novo mesto had higher secondary technical schools. In all three cases it was a matter of reading centers opening in communities where the average population density surpassed the regional average, so that the significance of the school network and settlement pattern interacted differently, suggesting that greater impetus was needed in Carniola than in Styria or Primorsko to form reading centers. It is possible to conclude that in the more culturally exposed districts, where population was less crucial, the different kinds of educational institutions had more importance for cultural activities. In analyzing the effect of different factors, Carniola was closer to Styria when it was a matter of the judicial divisions of political districts and communities' administrative status. Two-thirds of the centers of reading in Carniola were also seats of judicial districts and they were the administrative seats of communes. It is more difficult convincingly to state the relatedness of the factors in Carinthia because there were only two reading centers there. Yet all levels of schooling existed in the Carinthian regional capital. Likewise, Celovec and Železna Kapla, which was not an independent judicial district, had their own communal administrations.

In Primorsko, the network of secondary and high schools was not as diffuse as in Styria. They were located only in Gorica and Trst, where there were the most reading centers in the region. This makes Primorsko resemble Carniola, and in explaining the distribution of reading centers lends more importance to schools in the two regions. On the other hand, we know that in Primorsko, as in Styria, most reading centers

⁵⁵ The high school expanded to eight years in 1849. The founding of the Jesuit high school went back to 1604. In 1773, when the order was dispersed, it became a six-year state institution. The secondary technical school was opened in 1849 as a lower, two-year school.



were in the countryside—that is, in smaller towns not served by the educational infrastructure. The significance of the educational network and the population pattern in Primorsko was essentially a combination of the two patterns above (Styria: comparatively diffuse educational network and sparse population; Carniola: comparatively centralized educational network and more concentrated population), or centralization of the educational network and sparse population. This means that in Primorsko, as opposed to Carniola, demographics were not as crucial, and more than educational factors, the strategic location on the Italian border and greater need for cultural integration were to be credited. The influence of the situation on the border as opposed to other factors also indirectly confirms the fact that the judicial organization of Primorsko districts was not decisive. The communities with reading centers that were also seats of judicial districts were in the minority (only one-fourth). For example, the Trst area was among the least judicially and administratively divided of areas, but there were eight reading centers there. It was otherwise in the Gorica area (all three district boards), which in this sense was more like Carniola or Styria. Here, sixteen (of twenty-six total) Primorsko reading centers were in seven or eight districts. Yet just as in the Trst area, judicial organization did not prove to be an important factor. Only five (of sixteen) places with reading centers (one-third) were also seats of district courts. In Istria, neither Jelšane nor Dekani were seats of district courts. Dekani was not even the administrative seat of the commune. All the same, the factor cannot be disregarded; two-thirds of administrative seats of communes had reading centers. In this regard, Primorsko, Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola hardly differ from one another. Among the factors that interrelate differently in individual districts and regions, this one is the most constant.

Regardless of how individual factors operate and relate to one another, in some cases it is still difficult to explain the phenomenon of reading centers. A good example of this in the (north)east, it seems to me, is Ormož, which did not have a school (they were located in Ptuj and Ljutomer) and where cultural contact (Slovene-Hungarian) must have played an important role in motivating reading activities, as in other small towns. In terms of population, Ormož is comparable to Bistrica in the southwest, where there was no school, but for which location cannot convincingly explain reading activities. Northern Istria was Slovene, as well, and Gorica lays west of it. In this case, interregional or inter-district influences may have played a role, because Bistrica came under the Postojna district board, which was in the most Slovene region and not in culturally exposed Primorsko. The same was true of the Caniolan area under the Logatec district board, which was not strategically exposed, with the Gorica area to the west, so that it is possible to speak of a sort of chain influence between the proximate districts of Istria, Postojna, Gorica, and Logatec. Both Bistrica and Ormož, as the vast majority of places with reading centers, were the seats of judicial districts and commune administrations. Thus communities with reading centers can, without further speculation, be identified as centers of administrative, political and cultural-political life.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The reader can make use of the historical-literary map (appended to my Slovene article in this issue), which was used as a cognitive tool for analyzing the spatial network of reading societies.



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