

# READING SOCIETIES

## Database Analysis

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*Among the institutions which shaped the public “space of Slovenian literary culture” – besides theatres, national halls, publishing houses and printing houses – are also reading societies. A network of reading societies was intensively formed from the 1860's onwards. We have closely studied its formation from three viewpoints, namely: 1) demographic characteristics of individual settlements and wider (political) districts where the reading centres arose, 2) from the perspective of the administrative and politically-judicial organization of settlements or areas with reading centres and 3) from the perspective of the development of a secondary and higher education network, since the education system can to an extent be connected to the spatial arrangement of reading institutions.*

## I. METHODOLOGY

### 1. The selection of material

In the framework of the project “The space of Slovenian literary culture”, a selection of 58 reading centres, which actively co-shaped the Slovenian literary space from the establishment of the first reading centre in 1861 to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the majority of the reading centres stopped operating; was planned. The research is limited to the period from 1861 to 1869, which is the reading centre era; at that time mass meetings began to form, which together with reading centres and political societies helped to co-shape the national-political consciousness.

### 2. The structure of data about reading centres

For each reading centre the following data were acquired for entry into the data base:

1. *the name of the settlement* (Trieste, Ljubljana ... Železna Kapla etc.),
2. *the status of the settlement* (city, city vicinity, that is village/market town),
3. *politico-administrative status of the settlement* (installation in the district board, court circuit and municipality),
4. *the number of reading centres in the settlement,*
5. *the number of residents in the settlement (with surroundings) in the discussed period.*

For the structure of data about reading centres, see also the Excel document, *Structure of the reading centre data 1\_Urška Perenič\_28\_06*.

While researching the demographic structure of the individual settlements and wider (political) districts where the reading centres were active, we mainly considered the first more complete census from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was carried out in 1869. In the abovementioned Excel table there are two columns, 'št\_preb1' and 'št\_preb2', since the census for certain towns indicates the number of residents for the city as well as for the surroundings;

in such cases we took the bigger number, because it is obviously meant for the close surroundings of the city (data for other places, which belonged to the same administration, are actually given separately).

On the basis of the census it was possible to establish the politico-administrative organization of the ethnically Slovene territory at the time of the reading centres. The categories of settlement, district board, court circuit and municipality were in rare cases overlapped (for example Trieste, Gorizia, Postojna), but mostly one of them differed and had to be determined from the census (for example [Ilirska] Bistrica, which was a municipality and at the same time represented a court circuit, fell under the district of Postojna, while Planina, for example, fell under the district of Logatec etc.)

Regarding the settlements, it was only impossible to acquire the demographic data for Železna Kapla (Bad Eisenkappel), where one of the two reading centres in Carinthia was located. However, that did not have a fatal influence on the relevance of the acquired results. When researching historically distant periods some data deficiency has to be counted upon.

In relation to the abovementioned Excel table, it is necessary to add that it contains 57 units, but exactly 58 reading centres, since there were two active reading centres in Trieste (in 1868 a second was opened at St. Ivan). In other settlements of various sizes only one reading centre was operating.

For the next, second, step we tried to establish which secondary schools and higher education institutions operated simultaneously in the reading settlements and surroundings, since we supposed that the existing school network had to influence the formation of the reading centres (pedagogues had a visible role among the workers in the reading centres). Our main source was the work of V. Schmidt (1963). We supplemented the Excel table, which contained the aforementioned types of data, with data about existing schools, which were classified into the following types: theological seminary, grammar school, (non-classical) secondary modern school, teacher training college, commercial school, studies of theology, “Bürgerschule” (middle class school).

For the supplemented structure of data about the reading centres see Excel document, *Structure of the reading centre data 1\_Urška Perenič\_28\_06*.

For the third step we established the geographical coordinates (x, y) for the settlements with reading centres, which represented the foundation for the representation of the reading centres on the map. Subsequently we inserted educational institutions.

### **3. Data acquisition and processing**

The literary map of reading centres represented, together with Excel tables, a foundation for the analysis of the reading centres from the perspectives mentioned in the preface.

It turned out that researching the network of reading centres in the framework of today's national borders would be unreasonable. Therefore we reshaped the literary map into a historical map; we added a layer, which shows the division of provinces at that time. That enabled a complex enough analysis of the reading centres. After careful consideration we decided not to include politico-administrative borders on the map. In addition to their frequent

changes, they also would not contribute to the informative or analytical value of the map, but would just overcrowd it. With that the analytical value of the previously completed Excel tables increased.

## **II. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

58 reading centres were researched. They are listed in the Excel tables, and the basic statistical characteristics which were important for the analysis, were added.

### **1. The reading societies and demographic structure**

In the western and eastern part of the ethnic territory, the reading centres arose in settlements with lesser population density than in Carniola. The reasons can be found in local people's bigger needs for institutions for more efficient national-cultural activism. Namely, we're talking about regions which were in "more fatal" contact with the Italian or German and also Hungarian element. If we consider data from the first census, we could divide the settlements with reading centres into three groups of different sizes, according to the number of residents. 1) A good half of the settlements, i.e. 29, where the reading centres were active, are villages and market towns or small villages, where the population ranged between 262 (Benedikt v Slovenskih goricah) and 987 (Cerkno). 2) 22 of the settlements had between 1,050 (Štandrež) and 6,623 (Rocol) residents. 3) The number of residents in bigger settlements, which are Ljubljana, Klagenfurt, Maribor, Trieste and Gorizia, had between 12,828 and 70,274 residents. If we look at the reading centre list we find that most of the reading centres in the countryside were located in the Slovene Littoral, namely 15, which is more than half of all the reading centres in this area. This is followed by Styria, where 8 reading centres among 13 were located in a village or market town, while in Carinthia one reading centre was in the city and one in the countryside. Most middle-sized towns with reading centres, which fall into the second group, were located in Carniola, i.e. 10. It is followed by Slovenian Littoral with eight and Styria with four reading centres. On the other hand it would make more sense to count the Slovenian Littoral among the first group, since the otherwise densely populated towns (Rocol, Škedenj, Kolonja, Rojan, Barkovlje and Opčine in the Province of Trieste, and Štandrež in Goriška region) are actually villages. The number of all the countryside reading centres would in that case be 36 instead of 29, which represents a good 60% of all reading centres.

The average size by population of a (non-urban) settlement with a reading centre would, in the Littoral area (Trieste, Goriška, Gradiška, part of Istria), be approximately 1,173 people. The statistical analysis also showed that the lower limit of the number of residents in the political district where a reading club was organized, is around 7,010 people. Among the Littoral districts, Goriška was most densely covered with reading centres.

The average size of a settlement with a reading centre in Carniola would be somewhat larger, i.e. approximately 1,383 people. The lower limit of the number of residents in the district with a reading centre would be 6,870 people. The reading centres network was the densest in Postojna district, where 6 reading centres were located (thus this district is placed before the Gorizia vicinity district).

The average size of a settlement with a reading centre in Styria would be approximately 1,083 people, which is less than the average in both the Carniola and Littoral districts. However, we

have to consider that the average is, especially in the Littoral district, raised by relatively big hinterland towns in the Province of Trieste. Otherwise, coverage in Styria is the biggest in Ljutomer, with 20,040 residents and one reading centre. Considering the inter-provincial perspective, coverage in Styria was bad. In Carinthia there were two reading centres, one in Železna Kapla and the other in Klagenfurt, which with the surroundings and according to the data, numbered 15,285 inhabitants.

If we consider the total number of residents in all the Littoral, Styrian, Carniolan and Carinthian districts, we can similarly say, that the reading society standard in the constitutional era was the highest in the Slovenian Littoral, with one reading centre per 22,394 people. It is followed by Carniola, with one reading centre per 27,251 people and Styria with 25% less reading centres than in Carniola, namely one reading centre per 31,245 people. The last is Carinthia with one reading centre per 168,200 people. (For more, and more complete information see Perenič, *The Reading Societies Network and Socio-Geographic Dynamics* 2012).

## **2. Reading societies and administrative-political and judicial organization**

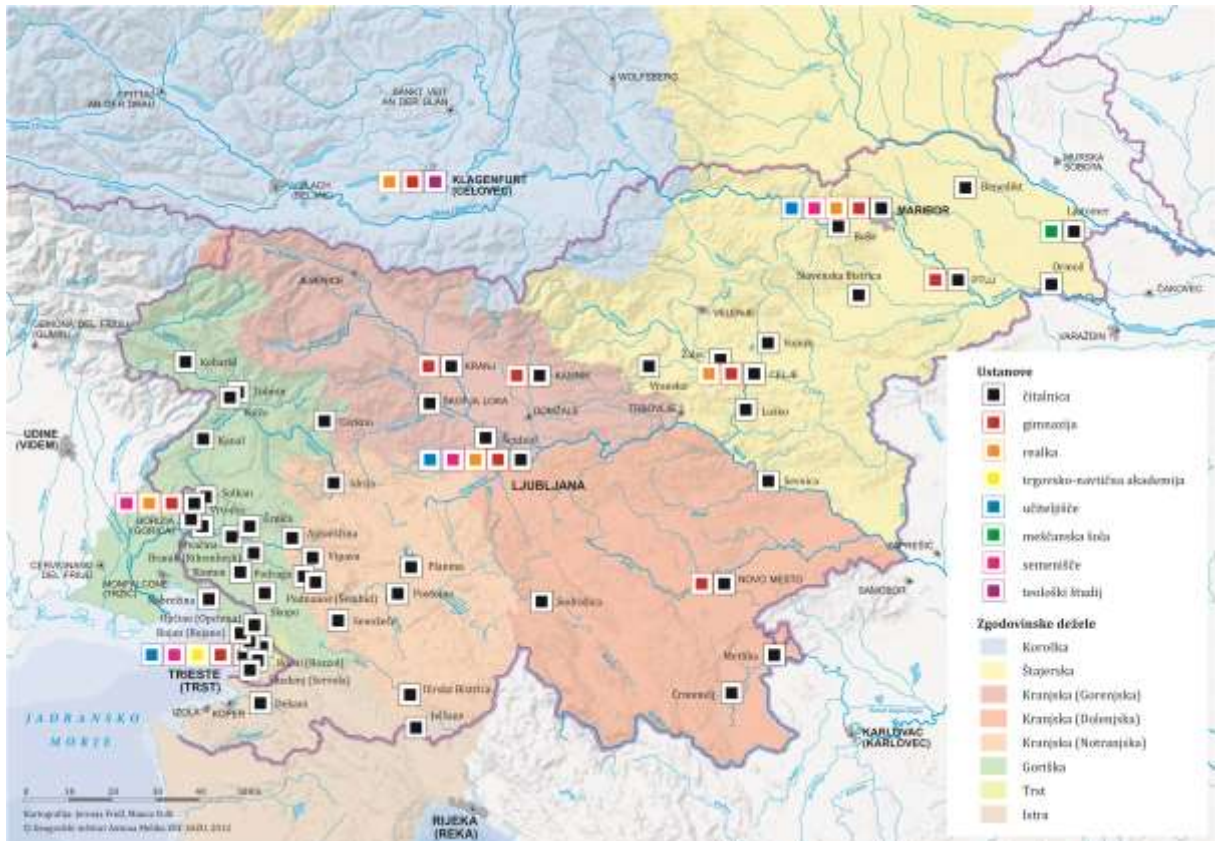
The strongest connection is shown between the judicial and administrative organization of the settlements. Among all the 58 settlements, 31 (53%) were court circuit and municipal corporation seats, which means reading centres mostly arose in civic centres. When a settlement other than the one with a reading centre had municipality status, it was in approximately half of the cases the biggest town in the municipality (the majority of the population in the municipality lived there). The following town or market town municipalities belong here: Trieste, Gorizia, Ljubljana, Maribor, Klagenfurt, Kranj, Škofja Loka, Kamnik, Ajdovščina, Črnomelj, Novo mesto, Slovenska Bistrica, Ptuj, Ljutomer, (Ilirska) Bistrica; and the following settlements, which were the seats of the reading centres, circuit courts and municipal corporations: Kanal, Komen, Postojna, Vipava, Senožeče, Idrija, Metlika, Vransko, Ormož, Sevnica. In the Cerklje ob Sotli municipality the reading centre was in the eponymous market town and not, for example, in the bigger settlement of Otalež, however the seat of the court circuit, municipality and tax office was in Cerklje ob Sotli. (For more, and more complete information see Perenič, *The reading societies network and socio-geographic dynamics* 2012.)

## **3. Reading societies and the development of the secondary and higher education network**

The strongest connection between the network of schools and the development of the reading centres can be established for Styria. With the exception of Brežice, namely, all remaining counties where there were reading centres, they also had educational institutions of various levels. In Carniola, secondary schools and junior colleges were located in Ljubljana, Kranj, Kamnik and Novo Mesto. Since the average number of inhabitants here was higher than in the settlements where reading centres arose, while the position wasn't as "fatal" as in the border areas of the ethnic territory, we can assume that educational institutions played a relatively big part in the formation of the reading centres. In contrast with Styria and Carniola, the education network in Slovene Littoral was less decentralized (Trieste, Gorizia), which shows a bigger

influence of other factors in the formation of reading centres. Those are the demographic characteristics of the settlements and districts, administrative organization and, last but not least, the geographical position. In Carinthia, cultural and educational life was concentrated in Klagenfurt. (For more, and more complete information, see Perenič, The reading societies network and socio-geographic dynamics 2012.)

### III. THE MAP



Map of the network of reading centres in the 1860's in the ethnically Slovene territory

Historical provinces or their constituent parts (for example, Inner Carniola in pale orange colour is a component part of Carniola) are illustrated in different colours, so that it is obvious where the network of reading centres was the densest, and where there were relatively few reading centres. They are represented by black squares, while squares of other colours represent different schools.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The discussed factors, which are the existent network of schools, administrative organization of the ethnic territory, and the demographic characteristics of settlements and the wider area, influenced the formation of the reading centre network in different ways, and are also interconnected in different ways.

In the Slovene Littoral (Trieste, Goriška, Gradiška, part of Istria), reading centres were organized in relatively small settlements. In comparison to educational institutions, the strategic border position in contact with the Italian element shows a bigger influence. The importance of the border position for the formation of reading centres also indirectly demonstrates administrative-judicial organization, namely the settlements with reading centres in this area were rarely also the seats of the court circuits or municipalities. (Of course there are differences among the districts in a certain province; for example between the Province of Trieste and Goriška).

In Carniola, a bigger demographic input for the formation of reading centres was necessary, which means that the reading centres here were organized in bigger towns. Hence we could assign a bigger role to schools. It is also impossible to overlook that Carniola was, according to the population, the most Slovenian province, which means the nationally-integrative needs weren't as strong as in, for example, Littoral districts.

In Styria, reading centres were, similarly as in Slovene Littoral, mostly located in the countryside, i.e. in smaller towns. Styria also had a relatively well developed educational network. It is also impossible to overlook the border positions of individual districts; the data is eloquent – among Styrian districts the coverage of reading centres was the densest in Ljutomer, which bordered on Prekmurje ( then belonging to Hungary; partly to the parish of Železna and partly to parish of Zala).

An important influence of a border position of settlements, districts etc. is seen with the formation of the network of reading centres. (For more, and more complete information, see Perenič, The reading societies network and socio-geographic dynamics 2012.)

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