

## Minority in Postmodern Paradigm. The Carinthian Slovenes

### 1. Introduction

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1920, a plebiscite was held in Carinthia, concluding the final act of the long process of demarcation between the Republic of German Austria and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The referendum was won by Austria, and the Slovenes, who at that time made up a third of the population in the southern part, became officially a minority. Over the century, the minority has changed a lot. The number of members decreased, the political position of the community changed, and its social composition, mode of settlement, organization and activities changed fundamentally. According to the last census, the minority still has about 14,000 members, and according to various estimates,<sup>1</sup> about 45,000. Although it has shrunk in numbers, it is a well-organized, culturally active, emancipated and self-confident minority community.

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In the context of studies on minorities, the influence of spatial factors is usually underestimated or even completely disregarded. Klemenčič demonstrated decades ago, using the example of the Carinthian Slovenes, how closely social and spatial processes are interconnected and how strongly they can influence the national minority. At that time, the description referred to the transition from traditional (agrarian) to modern (industrial) society. This social phase was characterized by the change of occupations from peasant to various profiles of industrial, administrative and service activities, migration to cities and adoption of urban lifestyles.<sup>2</sup> Assimilation was obviously faster in this phase than before in peasant

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<sup>1</sup> The most of estimations include primarily the various use of slovene (minority) language.

<sup>2</sup> V. Klemenčič, *Koroški Slovenci danes*, "Geografski obzornik" 1986, no. 23, p. 54.

society and in the countryside.<sup>3</sup> The belief was formed that urbanization or modernization are in fact an effective assimilation mechanism. Already in the 1980s, a certain ethnic and linguistic stabilization was observed during the urbanized place of living of the minority members (for example, among Slovenes in Klagenfurt in Villach). Based on the growing interest in learning Slovene and bilingualism, the impression of even a certain cultural revival was created.<sup>4</sup> The question arose as to whether assimilation would be slowed down in the conditions of postmodern society, of course in the light of changes in the political circumstances of a united Europe.

In this contribution we discuss changes in the settlement area of the Slovene minority in Austrian Carinthia and the effects of these changes on the minority in the last three decades. This is the time of the establishment of the postmodern or post-industrial social paradigm, its values and lifestyles. Postmodern society emphasizes (looking the spatial issues, of course) individuality, dynamism and flexibility. Living in it requires more flexibility and tolerance from the minority. The main research question here is, how the postmodern lifestyle and another characteristics affect the identity of members of a minority community. A minority is a relatively small entity that can only have a very modest impact on the development of the wider political situation, economic trends and social processes. It is therefore essential how the minority reacts to these situations and adapts to them. The contribution consists of three parts. The first presents broader political development in Carinthia and Austria, the dynamics of economic, social and spatial processes, and broader demographic development. The second part presents in more detail the social and spatial characteristics of the postmodern social stage. The third part analyzes the life of the minority in the post-modern phase of social development and identifies some of the challenges that the minority must face in the future.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, *Narodne manjšine kot element politične, prostorske, socialne in ekonomske stvarnosti v Alpsko-Jadranskem-Panonskem prostoru*, [in:] P. Vencelj, V. Klemenčič, S. Novak Lukanič (eds.), *Manjšine v prostoru Alpe-Jadran. Delovna skupnost Alpe-Jadran*, Ljubljana 1994, pp. 1–8.

<sup>4</sup> J. Zupančič, *Wirtschaftliches und soziales Profil der Kärntner Slowenen*, "Historicum: Zeitschrift für Geschichte" 2005, no. 86, pp. 30–38.

## 2. Overview of broader social, political and spatial processes in Austrian Carinthia

### 2.1. Brief outline of the main political changes in the last century

World War I and the changes on the political map of Europe after that war represent an important geopolitical turning point. The following milestones followed in this century: the emergence of bipolar Europe (1945) after the end of World War II, the collapse of the ideological bloc division and socialism (1989–1991), then the creation and enlargement of the European Union (EU) (1992–2013).

A bit more than 100 years ago the area north and south of the Karavanke Mountains was politically united. The land of Carinthia was part of the Austrian half of the Habsburg monarchy. Slovenes were settled both in Carinthia (southern part) and in Carniola (was predominantly slovene). The European countries were mostly monarchies in terms of internal structure and very mixed in terms of ethnic and linguistic composition. In the years after World War I (from 1918 to 1921), the political map changed dramatically. At that time,<sup>5</sup> three large multinational monarchies disintegrated, and the Ottoman Europe of territories became a Europe of nations, whose nationalisms sought new changes on the political map.<sup>6</sup> The minority issue has in many cases become an important element of interstate relations, and despite attempts to protect minorities, in almost all cases they have been subject to numerous constraints and even genocidal policies.<sup>7</sup> The Slovenes are almost a textbook example of the attitude towards minorities in Europe during the national (or even nationalist) paradigm interrupted by the Second World War. The Carinthian Slovenes also felt attacked by genocidal policies during the Third Reich rule (1938–1945). The deportation of Carinthian Slovenes in 1942 is further a typical case.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of World War II (1945), he created a completely new geopolitical picture by dividing Europe into two blocs. Central Europe disappeared as a geographical concept, and the countries were either capitalist

<sup>5</sup> Here, we may include the desintegration of Ottoman Empire on the Balkan Peninsula before the WW1.

<sup>6</sup> R.P. Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe*, Seattle 2002, pp. 125–129.

<sup>7</sup> W. Lukan, A. Moritsch (eds.), *Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen. Von 1918 bis zu Gegenwart unter Berücksichtigung der Gesamtslowenischen Geschichte*, Klagenfurt 1988, pp. 50–76.

<sup>8</sup> F. Bister, J. Buch (eds.), *Die Deportation slowenischer Familien aus Kärnten 1942*, Wien 2004.

(Western) or socialist (Eastern). In Europe, the national (and also nationalist) paradigm continued in essential aspects. Areas inhabited by minorities (and thus also southern Carinthia) again became the subject of border issues and mass migration, which lasted in Austria until 1957. Around 40,000 Germans from Yugoslavia and several thousand Slovenes migrated to Carinthia fleeing the new Yugoslav communist authorities; the Germans remained in the land, while the Slovenes emigrated further to Argentina, USA, Canada and Australia, mainly.<sup>9</sup> Austrian statehood was restored by the Austrian State Treaty. The Slovene minority in Carinthia received a political and legal basis for minority protection.<sup>10</sup> A milestone in the stabilization of political borders as well as minority protection was the Helsinki Conference in 1974. The political climate in Carinthia was rather hostile to minorities, as illustrated by attacks on bilingual inscriptions (s.c. "Ortstafelsturm") and public minority figures and a census of a special kind (1976). The minority lived under considerable overt and even more covert pressure. At that time, the minority was obviously also very vulnerable in the phase of transition from agricultural to industrial (modern) and urbanized society.<sup>11</sup> It is not insignificant that the ethnic core of Slovenes in another country with a socialist social order (Slovenes in Slovenia as part of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation) and the minority was defined as a factor of political risk; i.e. in terms of the alleged communist threat. Namely, the agents of the Yugoslav secret service were active in a minority environment much more than we knew so far.<sup>12</sup> From 1989 to 1992, the collapse of the socialist political system in Europe followed the end of the bipolar world bloc division. Slovenia became independent in 1991 after a short war. This act was important for the Slovene minority because the Austrian public perceived Slovenia and therefore Carinthian Slovenes positively in the atmosphere of anticipation of new European integration processes. The new state was just developing international relations. The main goal was to join to EU (Austria became a member in 1995). Slovenia was weaker partner in bilateral relations with Austria as a young country.<sup>13</sup> The neighborhood of Austria and Slovenia is considered generally good, but there are some open questions. The minority issue was often on the agenda of bilateral relations. In 1992 the next big milestone

<sup>9</sup> M. Klemenčič, V. Klemenčič, *Die Kärntner Slowenen und die Zweite Republik*, Klagenfurt 2010.

<sup>10</sup> J. Pleterški, *Avstrija in njeni Slovenci 1945–1976*, Ljubljana 2000.

<sup>11</sup> M. Klemenčič, V. Klemenčič, *Die Kärntner Slowenen...*, pp. 165–182.

<sup>12</sup> R. Pezdir, *Vzporedni mehanizem globoke države*, Ljubljana 2021.

<sup>13</sup> B. Jesih, *Ethnos und Politik. Was wollen die Kärntner Slowenen*, Klagenfurt 2010, pp. 63–74.

followed: the beginning of the unification of European countries into the European Union. Austria joined the EU in 1995 and Slovenia in 2004 in a major wave of enlargement. By 2013, the EU had reached its peak. The Brexit (withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU) in 2019 marked the beginning of the disintegration processes.<sup>14</sup> Through a series of development policies and initiatives on cross-border cooperation and conditions for free crossing of political borders, the EU has created a much more favorable social climate, especially for minorities,<sup>15</sup> which is also reflected in the interest in learning foreign languages. At the same time, as a result of globalization, English has become accepted not only as a language of business, but also as a *lingua franca* of communication, especially among the younger generation.

## 2.2. Demographic and ethnic development of Carinthian Slovenes

The next aspect is the demographic changes of the minority. At the time of the 1910 census (the last before the collapse of the monarchy), Carinthia had about 370,000 inhabitants<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 1); according to records in 2020, the number was about 562,000, an increase of almost exactly one-third.<sup>17</sup>

A century ago, according to revised census estimates, Slovenes numbered about 110,000 (official counts yielded somewhat lower figures, about 85,000,<sup>18</sup> accounting for about one-third of all,<sup>19</sup> only about 14,000 were listed,<sup>20</sup> and their number is estimated to be as high as 45,000,<sup>21</sup> making the

<sup>14</sup> J. Zupančič, *Migration of Slovenes to Austria during the period of transition*, [in:] K. Heffner, J. Zupančič (eds.), *Small European Regions during Transition Period: Migration Processes*, Opole 2000, pp. 42–55.

<sup>15</sup> M. Bufon, *Med teritorialnostjo in globalnostjo. Sodobni problemi območij družbenega in kulturnega stika*, Koper 2004.

<sup>16</sup> B. Grafenauer, *Narodnostni razvoj na Koroškem od srede 19. stoletja do danes*, [in:] B. Grafenauer, L. Ude, M. Vesel (eds.), *Koroški zbornik*, Ljubljana 1946, pp. 117–246.

<sup>17</sup> J. Zupančič, *Sodobne spremembe med koroškimi Slovenci*, [in:] M. Geršič, M. Bat (eds.), *Koroška: od preteklosti do perspektiv*, Ljubljana 2021, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> R. Unkart, G. Glantschnig, A. Ogris, *Zur Lage der Slowenen in Kärnten. Die slowenische Volksgruppe und die Wahlkreiseinteilung 1979 – eine Dokumentation*, Klagenfurt 1984.

<sup>19</sup> B. Grafenauer, *Narodnostni razvoj...*

<sup>20</sup> J. Zupančič, *Demografska slika Slovencev v sosednjih državah*, [in:] J. Malačič, M. Gams (eds.), *Soočanje z demografskimi izzivi v Evropi: zbornik 14. mednarodne multikonference Informacijska družba – IS 2011, 10.–11. oktober 2011: zvezek B*, Ljubljana 2011, pp. 138–145.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, *Sodobne spremembe...*



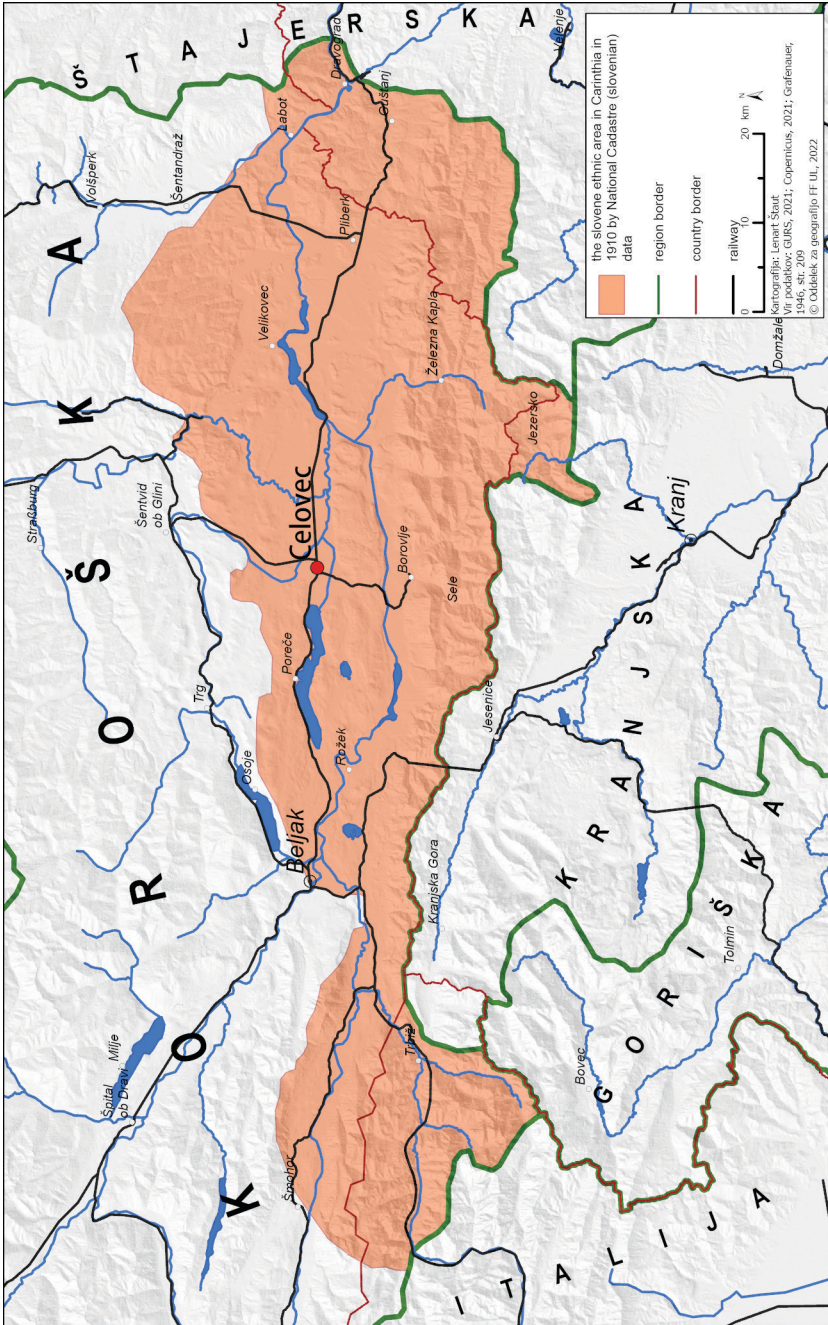


Fig. 1. Slovenes in Carinthia around 1910

Source: own study.

Slovene community in Carinthia a significantly declining group.<sup>22</sup> Assimilation is a characteristic feature of most European minorities, with the Carinthian Slovenes falling off more than average. For various reasons, a part of the minority isolates itself from its identity, does not cooperate with the community and does not communicate, and finally completely abandons its identity and the attributes of ethnicity. In the Slovenian case, the greatest focus of identity is language; therefore, the reduction of language use is a kind of substantial core of the assimilation process.<sup>23</sup> Knowledge and use of the majority language (German) is by no means an assimilation lever. The minority is rightly referred to as a “bilingual” community, which underscores the need for effective mastery of the majority language. Modern members of the minority master the language of the majority to the same extent and degree as members of the majority.<sup>24</sup> Bilingualism or multilingualism is a key qualification for integration into the majority society. However, a problem arises for the minority when knowledge and use of the minority language has declined. As mentioned above, the new situation and lifestyles have systematically reduced the value and importance of Slovene, thus accelerating assimilation. The decline in the number of minorities was also strongly influenced by statistics as a mechanism for determining language affiliation or practice. This statistical evidence was deliberate, part of an anti-minority policy in Austria, and basically a de facto opposition to the spirit and letter of the Austrian State Treaty, which establishes minority rights (among others) for Slovenes in Carinthia and Styria.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly striking in view of the introduction of the census category “vindiš,” which experts are almost without exception highly critical of.<sup>26</sup> This is a category that proves the relatively small number of Carinthian Slovenes. The census category “windish” was introduced in the Nazi census of 1939;<sup>27</sup> at that period it defined about half of the total population that could be defined (in various combinations) as Slovene. Reducing the number of minority members was an obvious interest, as the number proved to be an instrument for granting or waiving certain minority rights.<sup>28</sup> Discussions

<sup>22</sup> P. Ibounig, *Die Kärntner Slowenen in Spiegel der Volkszählung 1981*, Klagenfurt 1986.

<sup>23</sup> P. Gstettner, *Zwanghaft Deutsch? Über falschen Abwehrkampf und verkehrten Heimatdienst*, Klagenfurt 1988.

<sup>24</sup> S. Vavti, „Wir haben alles in uns...“. *Identifikationen in der Sprachenvielfalt*, Wien 2009.

<sup>25</sup> V. Klemenčič, *Metodologija uradnih popisov prebivalstva pripadnikov slovenske manjšine v Avstriji, Italiji in na Madžarskem*, [in:] A. Vratuša (ed.), *Narodne manjšine*, Ljubljana 1990, pp. 31–45.

<sup>26</sup> T. Zorn, *Nacistično ljudsko štetje na Koroškem leta 1939*, “Zgodovinski časopis” 1973, no. 27, pp. 91–105.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> M. Klemenčič, V. Klemenčič, *Die Kärntner Slowenen...*, pp. 136–142.

about determining the criteria for placing bilingual inscriptions have quite a long history.<sup>29</sup> In later censuses, the difference between the “Slovene” and “Windisch” categories became greater. In the 2001 census, there were a few dozen people in total.<sup>30</sup> According to the census, the number of Slovenes by language category has steadily declined (Fig. 2). The political circumstances and the social climate with the minorities had a significant influence on the statistical definition. Part of the minority hid their belonging to the minority for various reasons, including not using the Slovene language in public consciously or out of fear and prejudice. In this way, they directly triggered a real assimilation process. In some ways, however, they cooperated with the minority and benefited at least modestly from its organizational structures. According to the actual use of the Slovene language or the use of minority organizations, it was possible to extort a much larger number of members of the minority. This is also a relatively common phenomenon among modern minorities. In Carinthia, the number is estimated to be as high as 45,000, which is about three times as many as the official census data show according to the criterion of *lingua franca*.<sup>31</sup>

The census and the estimated number of members of the minority were also significantly influenced by migration flows. Although these did not occur very massively in the years 1920–2020, they should not be neglected. Carinthia has not managed to provide adequate career opportunities for everyone in modern times. Traditionally attractive milieus, on the other hand, are primarily the two largest cities in Austria, Vienna and Graz, where a large proportion of Carinthian students still congregate.<sup>32</sup> As a college city, Vienna was an important center for Slovenes much earlier.<sup>33</sup> The cosmopolitan center and the colorful mixture of peoples from a wide geographical area of almost all of Central Europe contributed to a cultural awareness, but also to greater tolerance.<sup>34</sup> Many remained outside Carinthia even after graduation. There was some (albeit smaller) emigration precisely because of the search for better career opportunities.

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<sup>29</sup> M. Pandel, M. Polzer, M. Polzer-Srienz, R. Vospernik (eds.), *Ortstafelkonflikt in Kärnten – Krise oder Chance?*, Wien 2004.

<sup>30</sup> J. Zupančič, *Grenzüberschreitende Pendelwanderung aus Slowenien nach Österreich und Italien*, „Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft“ 2002, Jg. 144, pp. 145–157.

<sup>31</sup> J. Zupančič, *Številčni razvoj koroških Slovencev v luči rezultatov ljudskega štetja leta 2001*, “Razprave in gradivo” 2002, no. 40, p. 101–104.

<sup>32</sup> F. Bister, *Wien als kulturelles Zentrum der Slowenen*, [in:] E. Deak (ed.), *Ethnische Gruppen in der Bundeshauptstadt Wien*, Wien 1982, pp. 71–88.

<sup>33</sup> D. Medved, *Slovenski Dunaj*, Klagenfurt 1995.

<sup>34</sup> M. John, A. Lichtblau, *Schmelztiegel Wien – einst und jetzt. Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart von Zuwanderung und Minderheiten*, Wien 1993.



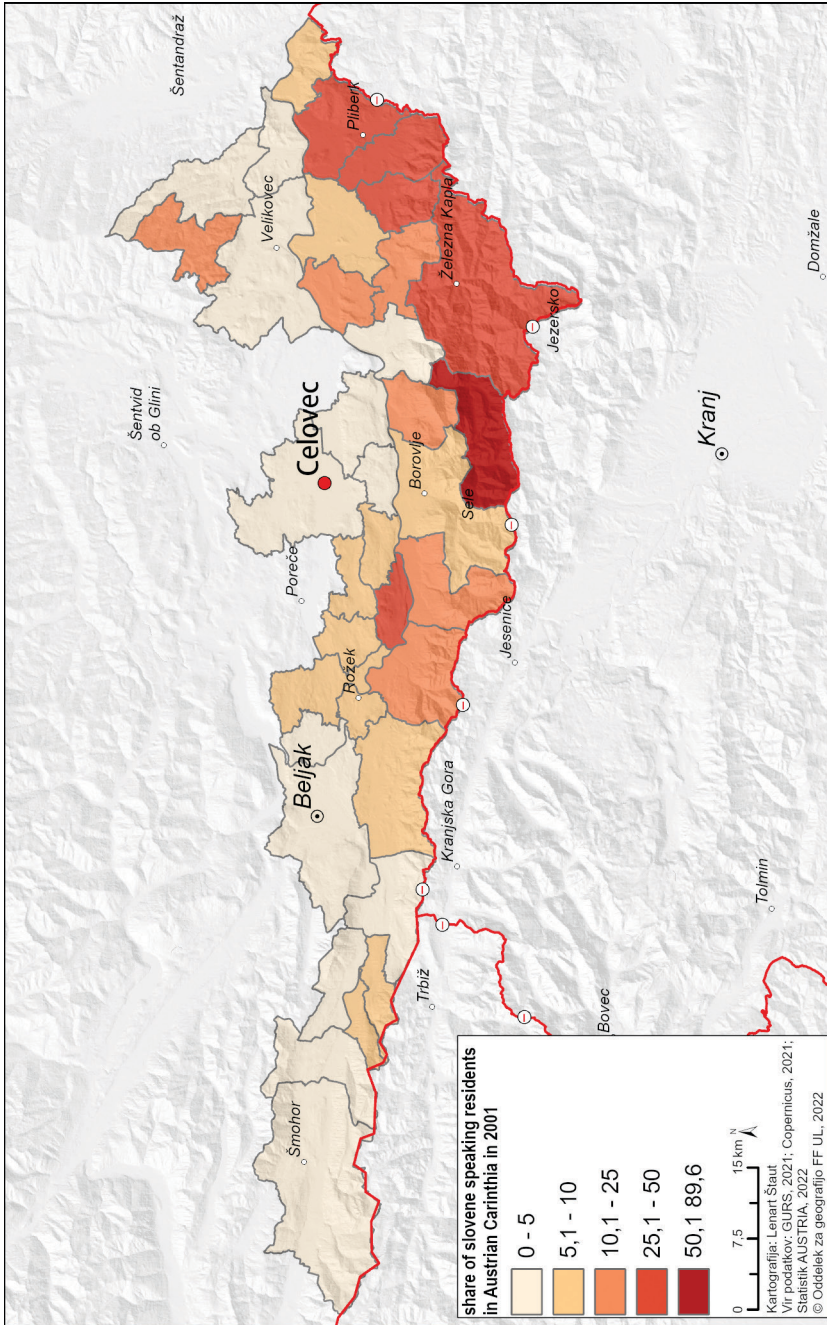


Fig. 2. Slovenes in Carinthia according to the census data in 2001

Source: own study.

The problem is that the part of the minority that would most rightfully bear the title of minority “elite” was mostly pushed out.<sup>35</sup> Given the alleged elitization of the minority, it is necessary to establish where the less educated and more socially dependent part of the minority has gone. We assume that assimilation is responsible for this. Individuals with lower levels of education and at the same time greater social dependence (e.g., due to occupational status) have assimilated more quickly than their better educated peers. The alleged “elite” of the minority actually represents the part that ethnically and culturally “survived” the assimilation selection due to education, which included good knowledge of the Slovene language, and due to better social position achieved through higher education and professional qualifications.<sup>36</sup> More detailed research has shown that in the 1980s the minority community reached a similar, then even somewhat more pronounced centre of the Austrian Carinthian society. The advantage of the social environment has contributed to social as well as cultural emancipation. However, based solely on the breakthrough into the middle class, it is not justified to speak of an elitization of the minority. Members of the minority achieved a good level of education, and in terms of social status they were usually in the social average.<sup>37</sup>

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### 2.3. Socio-spatial transformation of South Carinthia

The beginning of social modernization with the development of industry, urban growth and urban lifestyle starts at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional agrarian society, characterized by the predominance of the rural population and concentration in the peasant occupations, began to disintegrate. In peasant society, the focus was on language communication in families and in the countryside: in close neighborly relations and at the level of local social institutions such as school and church. As a rule, local circumstances encourage the use of the home language, especially in dialectal form. The fact that Slovenes knew German poorly at the time and that the majority language did not represent strong language competition contributed at least to the preservation of Slovene vocabulary. It was quite different within cities and in circumstances

<sup>35</sup> J. Zupančič, *Dunajski Slovenci v perspektivi skupnega slovenskega kulturnega prostora*, [in:] V. Rajšp (ed.), *Slovenski odnosi z Dunajem skozi čas*, Ljubljana 2013, pp. 27–42.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, *Slovenci v Avstriji*, Ljubljana 1999, p. 115.

<sup>37</sup> A.F. Reiterer, *Kärntner Slowenen: Minderheit oder Elite? Neuere Tendenzen ethnischen Arbeitsteilung*, Klagenfurt 1996, pp. 4–6.

where Slovene was not the majority communication medium.<sup>38</sup> The social position of people played an important role in the use of language in non-peasant occupations. In such an environment, the duality of language situations inevitably developed. Slovenian was used in the domestic, family environment, German in the professional environment.

As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial and mining enterprises were established in some places. In the Karavanke region there were several small mines. Other non-farm occupations also began to emerge in the countryside. At the same time, the development of tourism began, which pragmatically increased the use of the German language among guests from a predominantly German-speaking areas. With social modernization in the following decades, and especially after World War II, the need for education increased sharply, followed by increasing employment in non-farm occupations. In the village, too, members of the minority became increasingly socially dependent. The forms of village co-existence began to disappear with the social changes and were replaced by new circumstances, which also brought new (German) language situations and practices. In them, Slovene as a minority language had much more modest possibilities than German. Moreover, the minority school system was rather inefficient in terms of teaching Slovene, and in some places the school as an institution was not minority-friendly.<sup>39</sup> Gradually, new lifestyles with elements of urban lifestyle were formed. Mass media also played an increasing role in this process, as they had a strong direct influence on the reduction of the volume of linguistic communication in Slovene. The consequence of the decline in Slovene language practice was the decline of Slovene consciousness and identity.<sup>40</sup> By the 1980s, non-farm occupations were already widespread. Many drove into town daily for work, school, or to run errands. Spatial interaction between the home and the sites of other tasks was increasing, and contact with the home environment was decreasing in time and quality. From the perspective of language use, the increase in functional space automatically reduced not only the scope of Slovene language practice, but also the prestige of the minority language. In the eyes of many commuters, Slovene was a "peasant" or "rural" language, and the dialectal forms were even less valid. Among people, these new social dimensions pejorativized the minority, reduced language awareness, and thus increasingly diminished minority identity. The reduction of minority

<sup>38</sup> J. Zupančič, *Slovenci v Avstriji*, pp. 100–112.

<sup>39</sup> M. Klemenčič, V. Klemenčič, *Die Kärntner Slowenen...*

<sup>40</sup> J. Zupančič, *Koliko je Slovencev v Avstriji?*, "Razprave in gradivo" 1997, no. 32, pp. 167–176.

identity usually correlates with changes in the environment, occupation and language situation. For this reason, the slogan was created, apparently based on the experience that "industry and the city are devouring Slovene." Farms were also subject to assimilation. More and more tasks and agricultural administrations had to be done in German. Southern Carinthian farms were mostly small and at some regards no longer profitable, so farmers were employed elsewhere or introduced additional services on the farms.

Tourism was particularly popular. The Carinthia region strongly encouraged the development of tourism.<sup>41</sup> With social stratification into primarily various nonagricultural occupations, the use of the Slovene language in southern Carinthia declined sharply.<sup>42</sup> In the 1980s, shifts in the social structure of the minority began to emerge, the most interesting of which was the above-average representation of persons with high qualifications compared to the average of the land Carinthia. This new social profile is particularly evident in the analysis of the hinterland of the Slovenian Gymnasium. Since the hinterland of this central educational institution has always been located throughout southern Carinthia, it represents a fairly credible example of the settlement area of the Slovene minority and also reflects relatively well the changing social composition of the Slovene community. Until the mid-1970s, about half of the students were from peasant and working-class families.<sup>43</sup> In the following two decades, the share of various entrepreneurs and liberal professions increased, and from the mid-1980s onward, the share of employees in various services, bureaucracy and liberal professions rose sharply.<sup>44</sup> Especially in the urban population of Slovenes, the proportion of people with higher and tertiary education predominates.<sup>45</sup> Especially in the cities, the proportion of higher educated members of the minority is much higher than in the entire urban population. Thus, at first glance, there is indeed a kind of elitism of the minority community,<sup>46</sup> which is also reflected in their cultural activities. During the late 1980s

<sup>41</sup> F.M. Zimmermann, *Tourismus in Österreich. Instabilität der Nachfrage und Innovationszwang des Angebotes*, "Geographische Rundschau" 1995, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 30–37.

<sup>42</sup> A. Lokar, *Modernization and Ethnic Problems in Carinthia*, "Slovene Studies" 1999, 14. Jhg, no. 1, pp. 35–50.

<sup>43</sup> J. Polanc (ed.), *Jubilejni zbornik. Petindvajset let Zvezne gimnazije za Slovence v Celovcu – Festschrift. Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Bundesgymnasium für Slowenen in Klagenfurt*, Klagenfurt 1982.

<sup>44</sup> A.F. Reiterer, *Doktor und Bauer. Ethnischer Konflikt und sozialer Wandel: Die Sozialstruktur der slowenischen Minderheiten in Kärnten*, Klagenfurt 1986.

<sup>45</sup> J. Zupančič, *Koliko je Slovencev v Avstriji?*, p. 193.

<sup>46</sup> A.F. Reiterer, *Kärntner Slowenen...*



the crossborder shopping-tourism strongly increased and the Slovenian language become the important economic factor almost over the night.<sup>47</sup> In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Slovenian minority was already fully socially stratified, so that one can speak of a postmodern society. This social change also coincides with major political changes.

#### **2.4. Urbanization, suburbanization and periurbanization and the modern spatial patterns of slovenian settlements in Austrian Carinthia**

In terms of the degree of urbanization, the land of Carinthia and Slovenia are quite similar: both are among the rather modestly urbanized in Europe. The share of the urban population is between 50 and 60%. Klagenfurt, the land's capital and far the largest city center, also has around 100,000 inhabitants. Together with nearby smaller towns forms a sufficiently relevant urbanized agglomeration, which due to its demographic scope can offer most modern services.<sup>48</sup> However, the low share of the urban population does not mean that the urban way of life does not prevail. The postmodern social phase is characterized by the predominance of urban lifestyle, which takes place both in cities and in open, sparsely populated rural areas. Carinthia is characterized by rarer settlements with a predominance of smaller settlements and in some places also scattered settlements in the form of hamlets and solitary homesteads. The urban way of life has become fully established even in remote places on the periphery. During the urbanization, the spatial structure of Carinthia came to the fore. The central part of the country is a tectonic basin, which in recent geological periods has been thoroughly transformed by glacial activity and other natural processes. The formation of larger and smaller lakes and ponds, swamps and hills represents even in retail a very diverse and aesthetically appealing landscape. This mosaic in the agrarian era in the eyes of the locals – the farmer had no economic value. In the phase of progressive urbanization, the picturesque landscape became extremely interesting for settlement. The migration of citizens to the countryside or the settlement of rural places in the form of residential neighborhoods with a completely urban typology of one- and multi-apartment houses is called suburbanization. Both urbanization and suburbanization

<sup>47</sup> K. Podlipnig, *Die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Kärnten und Slowenien. Stand und Perspektiven*, "Mitteilungen des Arbeitskreises für neue Methoden in der Regionalforschung" 1991, Bd. 21, pp. 119–125.

<sup>48</sup> A. Bandelj, J. Mihelič, J. Zupančič, *Zamejska Koroška*, Ljubljana 2016.



significantly changed the Carinthian countryside and thus indirectly significantly affected the conditions for the use of the Slovene language and the practical position of the minority. A third form also appears – periurbanization and characterizes the process of immigration to peripheral areas. The motive of these immigrants is the urban way of living on the periphery and the desire to move away. Three groups are typically involved in this flow: retirees, people working remotely and people who want a “retro” lifestyle. The latter are also working on the establishment of a hybrid rural-urban way of life.<sup>49</sup>

The current urban core of Carinthia consists of the largest Klagenfurt (100,000 inhabitants) and Villach (62,000 inhabitants). Wörthersee (lake; slov. Vrbsko jezero) with the surface of 19.36 km<sup>2</sup> stretches between them, the oldest core of tourism development in Carinthia, which dates back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hiking in summer and skiing in winter conquered the mountainous landscape a little later. Carinthia has even more lakes and all of them are important for tourism. Klagenfurt is a city with a university and all the necessary resources for the whole of Carinthia. The Villach minority in the west is an important railway crossroads on a European scale,<sup>50</sup> and motorways have further increased its selective traffic position. The intermediate space by the lake on its northern side was occupied by smaller tourist places. Suburbanization has been gaining ground since the 1970s. In particular, the nearby and more accessible places near the two cities and especially between them have become a place of intense immigration due to the popularity of outdoor living. About two-thirds of the population lives in about a quarter of Carinthia, and a good part of this area is the traditional settlement area of the Slovene minority. Thus, the minority experienced modernization and urbanization and then the implementation of the postmodern social paradigm very intensively.<sup>51</sup> Construction first occupied the edges of the settlements and then also formed completely new large-scale residential areas. The agricultural space disappeared, the image of the cultural landscape changed into a specific “urban sprawl”. In some places along the tourist-recreational attractive zones, such as Faaker See, Keutschacher see and especially along Klopeiner See, in addition to residential neighborhoods, tourist offer complexes were created. Accelerated economization of space followed. Great pressure to build has irritated land prices as well as services. Due to accessibility, they needed additions to the transport

<sup>49</sup> J. Zupančič, *Sodobne spremembe...*, p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> H. Paschinger, *Kärnten. Eine geographische Landeskunde*, vol. 1, Klagenfurt 1976.

<sup>51</sup> A. Bandelj, J. Mihelič, J. Zupančič, *Zamejska Koroška*, p. 22.

network, recreational areas and trade facilities. In the last twenty years, these areas have been filled mainly with the creation of business areas. However, both provincial cities also began to expand. While other cities in Carinthia have a rather subdued development or even stagnation (because the inhabitants prefer to settle in the area), Klagenfurt and Villach, the largest provincial cities have experienced relatively vibrant demographic and even more spatial development. In fact, the boundary between the two cities between them and the already suburbanized previously inhabited places began to be filled. The outskirts of the city are occupied by commercial zones where shopping centers and warehouses predominate. Some of the services from the city center are also moving here, following the trend of accessibility by car and individualization of living. Separately, new residential neighborhoods are also concentrating in these areas. The two cities are now connected in an almost 50 km long, practically uninterrupted zone of urban space, where there are also many wooded areas, lakes and wetlands. All of this contributes to the esthetic value of the space and significantly increases the quality of life. At the same time, the local character, image and identity of the places are also changed, which has a certain – not negligible – impact on the experience of the minority space. All these processes have greatly accelerated the establishment of the German language in the local environment.

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In more remote places in Podjuna, in some places in Rož and Karavanke the population stagnated or decreased. Most of the population remained in these places. Holiday accommodation and, in some places, the return of pensioners to the countryside began to prevail. Slightly higher areas in sunny locations are particularly attractive. According to already somewhat outdated views, a larger proportion of the elderly population in rural areas is considered a development problem: It is a kind of indicator of demographic regression. However, this is a completely different phenomenon. Retirees who are still able and whose income allows them to buy smaller and cheaper new housing units move to these somewhat cheaper outlying areas, or they settle in older, vacant houses and other buildings that have been converted into apartments. This “amenity migration” is a new trend and typical of formerly peripheral areas. Rural communities must reckon with this trend. New mobile forms of health, social and cultural care and forms of mobile sales of various goods are also being established to provide for these people. Retirees have time, some skills, patience and memories and mostly a wish to do something.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> J. Zupančič, *Koroški Slovenci: sedanost in prihodnost manjšine v postmoderni družbi*, [in:] G. Hafner, K. Hren, H. Neisser, M. Pandel, J. Pirker, G. Rautz, K. Stainer-Hämmerle,

A particular phenomenon of the existential concepts of the postmodern social paradigm is bipolarity. Inhabitants of large cities often need an additional, different location, which they usually seek in a rural area, usually the one from which their ancestors originated or came. This is similar to another form of modern urban living in big cities, where ornamental gardens with carefully trimmed hedges and manicured grass are transformed into vegetable gardens, or gardens are created where possible. Gardens, including those for growing food, are even springing up on rooftops and in less common places. In this “retro” move, one should see a certain striving for a higher environmental awareness, an awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle. It is a kind of answer to the call “back to nature”. For those who spend some days in the countryside and some in the city, maintaining two locations is justified, especially in an environment where certain housing capacities can be sold well.<sup>53</sup> Globalized forms of marketing with these properties are also very popular in Austrian Carinthia. In this context, people can be found in the Carinthian residential environment who moved to the city in their youth because of school and later (especially to Graz and Vienna), but now return in some form. These examples are not very numerous, but they are part of the process of changing lifestyles and different values.

### 3. Postmodern social paradigm and minority

#### 3.1. The appearance of postmodern society

The modern or industrial phase of society in Carinthia lasted until the early 1980s and ended in the last decade of the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup> In this late phase, under the conditions of relatively good cross-border cooperation between Austria and Slovenia (at that time it was still part of the Socialist Yugoslav Federation), attempts were made to help the minority economically by providing jobs. They established several industrial enterprises under mixed ownership in southern Carinthia. These plants operated for about a decade, then gradually began to close, as did others in the country. Although accusations of anti-minority activities were made,<sup>55</sup>

M. Stocker, *Probleme und Perspektiven des Volksgruppenschutzes 100 Jahre nach der Kärntner Volksabstimmung*, Klagenfurt–Ljubljana–Wien 2020, pp. 399–402.

<sup>53</sup> Idem, *Socialna geografija: človek, prostor in čas*, Ljubljana 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *Wirtschaftliches und soziales Profil...*

<sup>55</sup> M. Klemenčič, V. Klemenčič, *Die Kärntner Slowenen...*

the closure of the industry clearly marked the decline of the industrial age. Modern society has evolved into the postmodern or postindustrial era. The share of service activities in the employment structure began to increase. Due to the development of tourism, Carinthia was already quite tertiary in the classical industrial age.<sup>56</sup>

Since Slovenia's independence (1991) and with the beginning of the EU foundation, cross-border economic flows have increased. Opportunities for Austrian companies to invest in Slovenia expanded, and cross-border projects and various forms of economic cooperation began to take hold.<sup>57</sup> In addition to professional knowledge and mastery of various skills, mastery of the Slovenian language at a high level and knowledge of general and economic culture were very important. The language was then marketed as a useful asset at various levels, closely and practically inseparable from culture. The minority has proven to be an excellent cross-border link, and the position of the minority as a "bridge" between countries, nations and cultures has rightly emerged.<sup>58</sup> The already existing connections of the Carinthian Slovenes with Slovenia, established through various forms of cooperation, but also through science and kinship, proved to be very useful. Under the conditions of accelerated cross-border cooperation, the minority used its human capital, gained prestige and self-confidence. In the same period, the number of daily cross-border migrants from Slovenia increased, using various banking and insurance services in addition to their work,<sup>59</sup> but cooperating relatively little with minority institutions, although they were available to them.<sup>60</sup>

One would almost overlook the fact that in the socioeconomic emancipation of the minority, the process of tertiarization (reflected in the predominance of service occupations) played an important role. However, the decisive factor was that the Slovenian minority was able to adapt quickly to the rapidly changing situation due to its organization, professional qualifications and language skills, as well as the social networks it had built up. We estimate that the main contribution to this elasticity of the minority was made by the minority's middle and high schools, especially the oldest among them, the Slovene Gymnasium. The bilingual commercial academy

<sup>56</sup> F.M. Zimmermann, *Tourismus in Österreich...*

<sup>57</sup> V. Klemenčič, *Narodne manjšine kot element politične...*, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> J. Zupančič, *Minorities: how long will they have a 'bridge function'?*, [in:] K. Heffner, M. Sobczynski (eds.), *The Role of Ethnic Minorities in Border Regions: Selected Problems of ethnic and Religious Minorities, "Region and Regionalism"*, no. 6, vol. 2, Opole-Łódź 2003, pp. 7-16.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, *Migration of Slovenes to Austria...*

<sup>60</sup> J. Zupančič, *Številčni razvoj koroških Slovencev...*, pp. 72-105.

and the private college for economic professions were added in the early 1990s and quickly established themselves with an interesting educational offer. Together, the schools formed a professionally well-educated, linguistically competent (the minority members are strictly bilingual; due to bilingual practice they like to learn another foreign languages in order to improve their professional competences) and culturally active layer of the minority, although not very numerous, which generally took over the most important functions in the political, economic and cultural life of the minority and also came to Slovenia and Austria at an opportune time. These processes strengthened and emancipated the minority economically.<sup>61</sup>

At least three social groups of the minority population stand out: Farmers and semi-farmers in rural areas, sole proprietors and liberal professions, and the growing number of pensioners. Of the employed members of the minority, most are in the position of deputies. Their actual position depends to a large extent on their education and qualifications, as well as on the work environment in which they operate. Due to the nature of their work, especially in education and the media, they have many opportunities to use the Slovene language. Not everywhere, of course. Business has declined sharply after the big “boom” in the 1990s. Most small stores in the border zone and in smaller towns have closed their doors.

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The number of farmers has been declining almost steadily over the last hundred years. At the end of the 1980s, their share was about 5%, which roughly corresponds to the characteristics of highly developed societies. Among the Carinthian Slovenes there are more agricultural holdings. Most of the owners of smaller farms are primarily dependent on work in other fields, and agriculture is a supplement or even a hobby for them. An attractive additional activity in some areas is rural tourism, which has also a long tradition here in Carinthia since the culmination of industrial era of the 1960s and 1970s. However, in the minority context, it is important that farmers and semi-farmers, as landowners, remain a key factor in the existence and development of the cultural landscape. The physical space (natural landscape with material heritage created by people over generations) plays an extremely important and irreplaceable role for the national identity: it proves that the Slovenian community is at home in Southern Carinthia and still is and will be the bearer of the spatial component of the national identity.

Small business owners and freelancers are socially independent, have relative economic power, social standing, and prestige. Because of their

<sup>61</sup> Idem, *The economic situation of Carinthian Slovenes after WW II*, “Slovene studies” 2008, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 235–239.



social prestige, they are a source of encouragement and pride for members of minority groups. The number of women in these professions has increased over the past two decades.

Retirees have historically been a social category not specifically considered in analyzes of minority socioeconomic structures. With the growing proportion of the elderly population, this stratum is also becoming increasingly important in the minority context. It is characterized by three key elements: They have time, some economic power, and experience. It is also characteristic of postmodern society that a part of the retired is culturally and socially activated, and a part is also economically activated. This social group is valuable mainly by possessing language practices and experiences. On the other hand, they function as users of various services, including those for which knowledge of a minority language is required.

### **3.2. Postmodernist lifestyle and its effects on minority issues**

The postmodern age brought a series of changes that were unimaginable at the time of urbanization. We are mainly capturing changes resulting from the lifestyle of the postmodern estate that directly and indirectly affect the minority. There is still too little research on all of this. However, it is very likely that certain processes can be deduced or confirmed with certainty. The postmodern way of life in an urbanized (and equally suburban and rural) environment favors locality, uniqueness, individuality. The uniformity of the past industrial (modern) phase of society must gradually recede.<sup>62</sup>

Immediately as a result of immigration into suburban (formerly predominantly Slovene) communities, the local language situation changed completely, as the vast majority of immigrants were German speakers, some of whom had no knowledge of or contact with the minority. Suburbanization in part of the settlement area directly contributed to the dilution of the minority at the local level, which directly led to the withdrawal of Slovene in public use. Between 1961 and 1991, the minority became a minority in most municipalities. According to the 1991 census, only two municipalities still had a Slovene majority, Sele (Zell Pfarre) and Globasnitz. However, the number of Slovene speakers in the two provincial towns has been steadily increasing since the last censuses. Thus, urbanization and suburbanization have increased the effects of the spatial dispersion of the minority, indirectly reducing the proportion of the

<sup>62</sup> Z. Mlinar, *Prostorsko-časovna organizacija bivanja*, Ljubljana 2008.

Slovene population by assimilating the majority population in addition to the assimilation that is already taking place (for many reasons). In addition, a certain part of the minority was also urbanized by immigrating to the two largest cities and their surroundings or emigrating outside Carinthia, especially to Vienna and Graz.<sup>63</sup> In the second phase, there is already a partial return, namely as pensioners and in the form of a permanent second residence, and thus the restoration of contacts with the minority environment.

The suburban lifestyle prevalent in the Slovene settlement area in southern Carinthia has loosened or reduced local social control through greater individualization. However, the social climate has become more favorable for the minority. Increased individualization also has the downside of greater political and cultural apathy. Although the minority is on average much more active in the cultural sphere, there is a general trend toward decreasing interest in local gatherings. In their place are new opportunities and challenges, especially online and in virtual reality.

The suburbanized cultural landscape has dramatically changed its image, structure and identity in the area of intensive immigration and the creation of completely new residential areas in the countryside. Man of the postmodern social paradigm is characterized by the search for spatial identity and respect for local tradition. This can be well seen in the efforts to preserve elements of the natural and designed environment such as houses, agricultural buildings, sacred monuments, and other built elements. The postmodern person respects the modesty of the farmhouse, its integration into the environment. There is also a change in values towards the consideration of intangible elements of the environment, such as names, traditions, customs, stories and knowledge. This includes efforts to preserve local ice names, which have had a remarkable uptake and very positive response in the projects. In a sense, the alienation caused by the introduction of completely new, hybrid building structures in what had previously been a rural and rustic environment has triggered a reflex of protection of the cultural landscape. This is especially evident among the older generation who, upon returning to their surroundings, like to surround themselves with symbols of tradition, sometimes exaggerated and kitschy. However, since many elements of the traditional landscape are associated with the space and time when the minority was still the local majority in a particular environment, they also implicitly contribute to the identification with the minority.

<sup>63</sup> J. Zupančič, *Dunajski Slovenci...*

The most important influences on the language, culture and identity of the community can be found in the changing temporal-spatial organization.<sup>64</sup> The industrial (modern) phase of society was characterized by the so-called sequential linear approach in temporal-spatial organization, according to which, for example, an industrial worker or an employee of a company with a certain working time started with the morning housework, continued to work, worked and returned home, while the evening part consisted mainly of the immediate or domestic environment. In postmodernity, working hours have become stretchable, often divided and often in different places. Therefore, mobility has increased. In the domestic environment remained only the space (place) of residence, everything else was elsewhere. This means that in the daily rhythm of performing various functions outside the home are arranged several different places, located at different points, for example, in the city and suburbs, where they are accessible. They can, but do not have to, form a certain network pattern.<sup>65</sup> Only the points that he uses and with which he is in frequent contact are important and influential for the user. The rest of the intermediate space is less important for him. The functional space has become a matter of choice; it depends on interests and opportunities. In today's world, virtual space also enters the picture as more and more tasks are done online. Location is no longer so immediately important.<sup>66</sup> New concepts of living in two (or even more!) places, moving to the rural periphery after retirement, and engaging in culture, reviving traditions, and protecting nature are new trends in the lifestyle of postmodern people. This is made possible by the relatively high standard of living in Austria, the excellent local infrastructure with the provision of an Internet connection (through contacts, support and remote work) and the concepts of the "smart house".

In postmodern society, the predominance of labor in service activities complicates the search for a characteristic pattern of spatial behavior. The sum of all the places where an individual performs various activities is his functional space. This is also where linguistic communication takes place. This space, therefore, has real meaning even for members of the minority. Effects on language knowledge, skills and use are also to be expected. Especially in the urban and suburban areas of Central Carinthia, most functions are located in the German-speaking environment. The home environment has thus lost importance, as people spend relatively little time in it. The symbolic importance of the hometown remains or even

<sup>64</sup> Z. Mlinar, *Prostorsko-časovna...*

<sup>65</sup> J. Zupančič, *Socialna geografija...*

<sup>66</sup> Idem, *Sodobne spremembe...*

increases. Admittedly, this means that the concept of minority protection, which is based on the territorial principle of the place of residence, has lost its effectiveness in postmodernity because of spatially extended patterns of behavior. Members of the minority increasingly use the Slovene language only symbolically.<sup>67</sup> In addition to German as the language of the majority, English is on the rise, especially among the younger generation, in various forms, from specific professional jargon or colloquial language in social electronic networks to its use in business and in choirs. In the life of a typical member of the Slovene community, linguistic communication is often multilingual, and Slovene plays a rather subordinate role, at least in terms of volume. Even in the professional world (e.g., in commerce), English has already taken the place of the usual channel of communication.<sup>68</sup> The minority language is thus at a strong disadvantage. All three colleges with Slovenian language have also adapted very well to the trend of multilingualism. More than that, they were in their own way the pioneers of the new educational trend. The rich offer of multilingual education strengthens one of the key competences of the members of the Slovenian community: the linguistic ability to cope in an increasingly (linguistically) diverse environment. In addition to their professional qualifications, multilingual knowledge and cultural skills also strengthen their sense of flexibility and mobility.

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The domestic rural environment thus loses practical significance, while its symbolic role increases. It remains the anchor of spatial (local) identity because it corresponds, at least in part, to belonging to a minority. The area of southern Carinthia is the "historical core" of the Carinthian Slovenes. At the local level, therefore, the need to prove both local and national, linguistic and cultural identity multiplies, because it is also tied to space and not only to the community. Experience has shown that older people, especially retirees with higher education, professional experience and a decent standard of living, are more likely to respond to these symbolic meanings. Initiatives to protect the remaining elements of the cultural landscape will increase. As a result, the tangible and intangible heritage becomes a sought-after asset and a kind of capital.

<sup>67</sup> M. Obid (ed.), *Identitetne opredelitve mladih v slovenskem zamejstvu*, Ljubljana 2018.

<sup>68</sup> D. Kern, *Ohranjanje identitete s poučevanjem slovenščine med Slovenci v Avstriji*, dissertation, Ljubljana 2016.

## 4. Conclusions

The postmodern society has already established itself in Carinthia, Austria, before the turn of the millennium. The postmodern society lives an urban lifestyle in which individuality, dynamism and adaptability are in the foreground. It is globalized and localized at the same time. In the century since the Carinthian referendum of 1920, the Slovene minority has preserved all the space of its traditional presence in southern Carinthia, albeit in much smaller numbers, well organized, emancipated and self-confident. In most municipalities, according to the latest surveys, the percentage has fallen below 50 percent. Even at the municipal level, Carinthian Slovenes are mostly in the minority. The effects of spatial dispersion have been accelerated by urbanization and suburbanization processes. The role of Slovene as a lingua franca has diminished, partly due to the growing influence of English as the lingua franca of European modernity in many areas and, of course, of German as the state language. A member of a minority is necessarily bilingual, and the cultural and political elite of a minority is increasingly polyglot. The role of the Slovene language is also decreasing due to the implementation of the network pattern of the minority's spatial behavior. A functional space consisting of all places where members of a minority perform various tasks such as work, care, education, recreation, entertainment, socializing, etc., has expanded to many environments where Slovene is practically absent. Postmodern society is characterized by an increased attention to local particularities. Postmodern people seek spatial identity, are interested in the past, and pay more attention to tradition and culture in global communication than they did a few decades ago. The spatial component of ethnic identity is also strongly influenced by the functional space in which members of minorities pursue their interests. Functional space is much broader than living space, it is not necessarily closed, and it also exists in virtual reality. The society of elders poses a special challenge because the generations have different values, experiences, and lifestyles. There is a need for a kind of minority contract between the generations that takes the differences into account and strives for common interests, while respecting the differences in the way they function.

The Slovene language is still the most important, but not the only and not necessarily the only element of national identity. There are a number of environments and situations in which the minority language has no practical significance. But it is symbolically important.



There are already forms of Slovene belonging without Slovene language skills. This can lead to moving away from the linguistic core of Slovenes in Slovenia. This can lead to complete assimilation. In reality, we are dealing with a different identity, where the minority position and Austrian citizenship and loyalty are as important as the fact that the minority belongs to the Slovenian linguistic and cultural corpus. The minority is confronted daily with a foreign language (German), which it uses pragmatically so often and as a matter of course that this method has also become a feature of minority performance and the content of Carinthian Slovene identity. The Carinthian Slovenes are Slovenes, of course, but other "Slovenes".

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