



Andrea Komlosy. *Grenze und ungleiche regionale Entwicklung: Binnenmarkt und Migration in der Habsburgermonarchie.* Vienna: Promedia, 2003. 500 pp. EUR 39.90 (paper), ISBN 978-3-85371-201-6.



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Territoriality and the Modern State

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In recent years, borders and their histories have captured scholars' imaginations. The bulk of the literature that has emerged as a result of this interest concentrates on external state borders, and thus on the definition of states and their populations in relation to the world beyond their limits. Andrea Komlosy introduces a different perspective on the significance of borders by focusing her attention not on the articulation and enforcement of the external borders of the Habsburg Empire, but rather on a complex array of internal borders. Komlosy has chosen to study borders because, she argues, they offer new ways of examining economies and societies. Thus, although Komlosy adopts the relatively new lens of borders to examine economic and political changes in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire between 1750 and 1918, she is also engaged in established debates over the nature of modernization in the Habsburg state.

At the core of debates over whether the Habsburg Empire was developing into a modern state by the nineteenth century is the question of whether or not centralized industrial nation states are the only real expression

of modern development. Some scholars who have argued that the Habsburg lands were indeed growing less regionally differentiated, and thus more modern, by the late nineteenth century as the result of west European influences. [1] Others have instead emphasized the monarchy's relative backwardness and peripheral position in Europe, the result, it is argued, of its linguistic, economic, and political diversity.[2]

Komlosy rejects both of those positions, arguing instead that regional economic and political diversity in the 18th and 19th centuries was a product of and a spur to modernization rather than an archaic survival standing in the way of change. Her work strongly suggests that multi-national states such as the Habsburg Empire could and did modernize by the late nineteenth century, albeit along somewhat different lines than their officially nationally homogeneous western neighbors.

Komlosy concentrates on two primary changes in her examination of modernization: the development of freer trade and the emergence of a centralized bureaucratic state that exerted increasing control and surveillance over its territory and population. The first change

was made possible by the dismantling of internal tariff barriers from the late eighteenth century on. Communities across the monarchy became part of supra-regional markets. Those that could compete moved beyond regional and subsistence production whether in agriculture, crafts or industry, while those who could not became consumers of outside goods and fell into peripheral economic and political positions.

At the same time, the state began imposing new controls on migration, using passports, tracking population in order to enforce conscription, and putting new emphasis on the idea of *Heimatrecht*, so that when people did migrate, as many had by the late nineteenth century, the state retained the ability to deport them back to their official communities of origin, thus controlling population and labor markets. Both of these tendencies had the effect of creating new borders and consolidating old ones along single territorial lines. Thus economic regulation of different goods such as tobacco and salt increasingly took place in the same location usually at the state border.

At the heart of Komlosy's project is an examination of the transfer of political, and to some degree also economic power out of the hand of aristocrats and traditional elites and into those of the modern centralizing state. And that transfer of power and the creation of new administrative institutions that accompanied it increasingly found territorial expression. Where once the state, aristocrats, the church and other elites had held overlapping jurisdictions, by the nineteenth century, the state increasingly took charge of administration, reorganizing its territory so that political boundaries, tariff boundaries and other territorial limits coincided. Although internal boundaries were not, like external borders, visibly marked by border stones and customs stations, they nevertheless took on new and more consistent meaning than in the past, marking the limits of *Heimatrecht*, of taxation and conscription districts and so on.

Komlosy begins the book by introducing borders as multi-faceted. They are, she suggests, simultaneously concrete objects of research that exist in space; a way of look at territory, politics, and societies; and a discursive tool used to establish legitimacy as well as patterns of social, cultural and economic inclusion and exclusion. Certainly borders do have all of these characteristics, but one gets the impression that Komlosy's primary interest, in spite of her discussion of discursive and conceptual borders, is the establishment of administrative institutions and concrete economic practice which in turn redefined

regions within Habsburg Austria.

Thus at the core of the book is an exploration of the evolution of the Austrian Habsburg state and economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than an exploration of the many conceptual divisions that existed within Habsburg society. This is illustrated, for example, by the relative absence of discussion of the other internal borders that have interested historians of the Habsburg monarchy: the *Sprachgrenzen*. The cursory attention that Komlosy gives to the question of *Sprachgrenzen* in part speaks to her much greater interest in economic and administrative developments. But it also suggests a desire to move debate over Habsburg modernization away from long-standing assumptions that national divisions were, by the nineteenth century, the one modern tendency in the Habsburg state that was leading inexorably to that state's downfall. Instead Komlosy seeks to show that the Habsburg state and economy were modern in their own right.

This book is a rigorous and detailed exploration of the question of modernization, economic and political change, and territorialization of the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Komlosy's use of the idea of borders and their articulation contributes to a growing literature on borders and borderlands. But even more, her book contributes important insights into more established debates about the nature and development of the Habsburg state. At the same time, as Komlosy herself acknowledges in her introduction, this is not a book that could have been written before 1989. Implicit to the overall argument is a sense that understanding regional diversity in the Habsburg Empire can help us to understand the diversity and the implications of diversity for an expanding European Union.

Komlosy's suggestion that multi-national, regionally varied states and territories can indeed be modern and functional seems to suggest that EU expansion and the institutions of united Europe should be taken seriously. At the same time, her work makes it clear that the dissolution of economic and other borders among EU member states may not have the effect of eliminating economic and political inequalities within Europe, but may indeed reinforce such inequalities and create new ones.

Notes

[1]. For example see: Alexander Gerschenkron, *An Economic Spurt that Failed: Four Lectures in Austrian History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); David

Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[2]. For example see: Ivan Berend and György Ranki, *The European Periphery and Industrialization 1780-1914* (Studies in modern capitalism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Andre Gunder Frank, *Abhängige Akkumulation und Unterentwicklung* (Edition Suhrkamp 706, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980).

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