8 Countryside versus city?

Anti-urban populism, Heimat discourse and rurban assemblages in Austria

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Many indicators point towards a dissolving of the dichotomy between the city and the countryside in current post-industrial societies. This concerns cultural semantics, economics, infrastructure and society more broadly. It has also manifested in changes to the balance of political power. The outcome of national elections in various European states, dynamics in the United States of America (Hochschild, 2017; Maxwell, 2019; McKee, 2008) and endeavours to leave the European Union (EU), such as Brexit, have given rise to an awareness that educational background has been joined by geography as a key determining factor in political debate and positioning. The simplified version posits the "right-wing countryside" against the "left-wing city" (Andersson et al., 2009; Burschel, 2010; Emanuele, 2018; Gimpel and Karnes, 2006; Ivaldi and Gombin, 2015). Cities are associated with political, economic and – particularly – cultural elites in almost all cases. This article takes a view from and of Austria, a small state in central Europe, where this issue has been the object of particularly intense focus in recent years.[1] I will begin by sketching the differences between the city and the countryside in Austrian politics and cultural history, before moving on to an analysis of the concrete ways in which the countryside and the city have become symbolically and politically charged dichotomous categories in recent Austrian election campaigns. Following this, I will report on research projects that focus on lived realities in towns of different sizes and rural areas. Taking the findings from these projects, I move away from the assumption of a city-countryside dichotomy and, instead, posit the thesis of so-called rurban assemblages, which encompass the different relationships and ties people have to "city" and "countryside", depending on their life circumstances. These are expressed through everyday imaginations, practices and attributions of the spaces that people frequent.

Countryside versus city in Austrian politics

Austria is a country in which there are marked differences between extensive rural areas, on the one hand, and a few larger towns and the dominant capital Vienna, on the other, in contrast to countries with a greater number of larger cities, for example, Germany, and where, furthermore, the prevailing structure

is strongly centralist. The metropolis of Vienna functions as a centre for the entire country in a number of ways and stands uncontested as Austria's foremost city for various different forms of capital, for example, cultural, political and historical. A total of 1.9 million of a total population of 8.86 million (in 2019) live in the federal capital of Vienna (Mohr, 2021). In 2019,

> close to 4.7 million [were living] […] in urban areas and close to 4.2 million in rural areas. This means that the urban population, with 52.8 per cent, represents a slightly higher proportion than the rural population with 47.2 per cent.
>
> (Falter, 2019)

The dichotomy is reflected in political rhetoric and has deep roots in society, politics and history. Regarding politics, the two main traditional parties in Austria – ÖVP (Austrian People's Party) and SPÖ (Social Democratic Party of Austria) – are associated with different spaces and stand symbolically for either the countryside or the city. The ÖVP represents conservative bourgeois values and has traditionally recruited its loyal clientele from among farmers, business and voters affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. The social democratic SPÖ, by contrast, is considered the earliest "left-wing" political power in Austria, with close ties to the urban workforce, trade unions and, specifically, the metropolis of Vienna. Currently, since the era of "Red Vienna" (1919–1934), during which numerous social reforms in housing, education and social policy were implemented (in particular the construction of social housing with affordable apartments), the "Red City" stands in symbolic opposition to the "Black Countryside" on the political map of Austria. This distinction between "Red Vienna"[2] and the "Black Countryside" (the colour black traditionally symbolises the conservatives and Catholicism) continues to be negotiated and (re)produced on many levels to this day.

Austria, as elsewhere in Europe, has observed a shift to the right over recent years, resulting in considerable popularity among voters of the right-wing populist FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) and a right-wing conservative ÖVP under Sebastian Kurz, rebranded as "The New People's Party" with turquoise replacing black as the party colour. The symbolic attributions of the city and the countryside also play their role here. The FPÖ has a longer history of electoral successes than similar parties in many other countries. After some stability in the post-war party system, FPÖ and ÖVP had fallen into disrepute due to corruption scandals and widespread clientelism on the local, regional and national level. The FPÖ managed to participate in government for the first time in 1983 and, under former party leader Jörg Haider – at that time, the right-wing populist governor of Carinthia, an Alpine province in southern Austria characterised by agriculture and tourism – it enjoyed widespread popularity among the population as a right-wing populist, nationalist and Eurosceptic party, before party divisions led to a split and the founding of the BZÖ (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich/Alliance for the Future of Austria) under Haider. Nowadays, the FPÖ – following fresh scandals and

splits caused by the Ibiza scandal[3] – continues to represent right-wing, conservative and nationalist values and repeatedly makes the headlines with its proximity to right-wing extremism.

While the right-wing populist FPÖ has been enjoying electoral success above all since the millennium (Weidinger, 2016) and has widened its appeal to voters in (small and medium-sized) urban areas and working-class voters who used to vote socialist (Flecker et al., 2018; Flecker and Kirschenhofer, 2007; Oesch, 2008), the ÖVP can continue to rely on a traditional and particularly strong level of support in the countryside, above all, in agricultural milieus (Dworczak, 2006; Pelinka, 2002).[4]

Trends in public petitions over recent years also confirm growing geographical frictions along party-political lines: Urban voters in Austria in the *Frauenvolksbegehren* – a petition to demand gender equality – and in the national and EU elections in 2017 and 2019 were more likely to express a preference for green, left-wing or social democratic parties and their projects, while the proportion of votes for the right-wing conservative and populist parties, the ÖVP and the FPÖ, was higher in the countryside and generally depended on the size of the voting district (Gavenda and Resul, 2016).

The **Heimat** *concept in Austria*

It makes sense in political overviews such as these to speak of frictions between the city and the countryside. These are articulated in multiple ways, increasingly along a line of conflict between the federal state/Vienna (the federal government sits in Vienna) and the federal provinces. Established dichotomous images and stereotypes remain entrenched. These frictions are fuelled by political parties through electoral campaigns that use vivid words and images to stir up a cluster of stereotypes and a set of ideological arguments. It is possible to observe a pronounced differentiation between "us" and "the others" in the right-wing populist FPÖ, especially regarding migrants and asylum seekers but also urban intellectuals. This distinction culminates in an emotionalised appeal to ideological concepts such as *Heimat* (the homeland) and *Volk* (the people).

These terms have carried a particular political, namely, exclusionary – even racist – meaning in the German language and the intellectual and social history of Austria and Germany, and they remain loaded terms. The anti-urbanism encountered in this imagery, one directed against intellectual city dwellers, academics, artists and other milieus – and against Vienna in particular – finds its historical complement in a powerful anti-Semitism, which was especially pronounced in the countryside (Botz et al., 2002; Wistrich, 2002).

The election campaign for the office of Federal President of Austria in 2016 showed this all too clearly. The FPÖ in particular drew on clichéd images of an idyllic and untouched, yet, also endangered countryside and used these to evoke a dynamic of social division in which the term *Heimat* played a key role. The party laid ideological claim to the term in a style consistent with a right-wing populist campaign: *Heimat* was framed through the countryside – green, usually mountainous landscapes – and as a familiar

social environment of down-to-earth people like "us", an environment conceived as under threat. "Preserve tradition, nurture custom, protect identity" ran a slogan on one election poster. Men in lederhosen, a handshake to signal social connection and commitment, the radiant faces of top politicians and sun-drenched meadows suggested peace, quiet, familiarity and closeness. These images were complemented by magazine covers depicting armed and masked figures in threatening poses, which referenced alleged daily police operations at Styrian refugee hostels. In this election, the strategy paid off.

The ideologised concept of *Heimat* developed particularly in the nineteenth century, during the time of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was manifested in various contexts. In Austria, a *Heimatschutzbewegung* – a movement to protect "homeland" culture and tradition – emerged around the turn of the twentieth century predominantly in "small-town settings and in the ranks of educated, middle-class provincial dignitaries" (Nikitsch, 1995, p.24). From there, however, the movement was soon able to declare "the former international city of Vienna a bastion of native custom" (Nikitsch, 1995, p.24) as well. The 1930s saw contradictory meanings ascribed to the city-countryside relationship in Austria. The metropolis of Vienna, which, like the monarchy, stood for multiculturality and internationality, was, to some extent, a barrier to the pan-German ideas of National Socialism. Alpine regions within Austria, on the other hand, were eminently suited to ideas of annexation to the German Reich – of *Anschluss* – and these ideas soon sought to connote Vienna as *völkisch* and anti-elitist as well. At the same time, Vienna, with its associated symbols and meanings, also offered Dollfuß and the Austro-fascists, who opposed annexation, opportunities for distancing themselves from Germany. In brief, the

> image of the countryside […] in twentieth-century Austria underwent several shifts, connected, on the one hand, to its reduction after 1918 to a state territory largely defined by mountains, and, on the other hand, to changes in its political, economic and cultural needs. As the Danube Monarchy was superseded by the Alpine Republic, new places, views and compositions gained in significance.
>
> (Johler et al., 1995, p.188, translated by the author)

Hence, today's evocative – and successfully marketed – images of what is perceived as an "authentic" Alpine *Heimat* emerged especially after the two world wars, which had separated the country "from its traditional hinterland" (Johler, 1995, p.37) of the former k. u. k. (kaiserlich und königlich) Empire – just as generally any claimed "tradition […] is an invention of bourgeois thinking and industrial values" (Johler, 1995, p.18). In this context, the Alps became an ever stronger symbol of Austria and, after the Second World War, skiing rose to become *the* national sport, producing the country's popular heroes; ski-lifts were open over the 2020/2021 Christmas holidays in Austria even during the coronavirus pandemic in spite of a lockdown. Considered thus, *Heimat* is always a question of perspective and an expression of a

particular social situation.[5] While the concept of *Heimat* is fought over mainly in socio-political debates, it is also experiencing a renaissance in academic discourse (Egger, 2014; Tauschek, 2005), which clearly illustrates the entanglement of social processes and academic analysis and knowledge production, of social history and the history of social science and the humanities.

This invocation of *Volk* and *Heimat* gives rise to the image of a (flexibly defined) hostile antagonist who threatens the imagined community of those who are ostensibly the same. Solidarity is created against "the others" who might be "foreigners", in one instance, intellectual urban dwellers, Islam or "the East", in others. Elite-bashing and racist depictions go hand in hand in the discourse of the populist right. Linking the image of *Heimat* to both *völkisch*-racist and anti-elitist connotations has appealed to many people in Austria. While the FPÖ candidate Norbert Hofer, whose political base is in the Burgenland region, narrowly missed being elected as the new federal president in favour of the independent candidate and former Green Party politician Alexander Van der Bellen in a second-round vote, the FPÖ became the third strongest party in the general election in 2017 and, until the so-called Ibiza scandal in 2019, was part of a coalition government with the ÖVP. Yet, with Van der Bellen, a different type of figure entered the political arena. A university professor of economics and public finance, he embodied the liberal Viennese intellectual who, in addition, presented himself as an outsider with a migration background. He was born in Vienna in 1944 and grew up in Tyrol, after his parents had moved to the German Reich as Baltic Germans in 1941 and came to Austria via the Würzburg resettlement camp. As a "father of the nation" who stresses democratic and humanitarian values, he campaigned for acceptance for refugee families and for climate protection and equal recognition for same-sex marriage, thus, positioning himself against the values of the FPÖ.

The presidential election campaign demonstrated the active construction and production of social boundaries within Austrian society. This was done by blending different references to the countryside, to "the people" and to *Heimat*, i.e. by selecting and utilising powerful, entrenched imagery and attributions, and a convincing rhetoric (Lehner, 2019, p. 46). Hofer sought to distance himself from economic, artistic and intellectual elites, thereby suggesting his particular closeness to and solidarity with "the people". Part of this strategy was to address voters with the personal, informal "Du" form for "you" (as opposed to the more formal "Sie") and to use language such as "our homeland" (*unsere Heimat*) to evoke community. A story in the news magazine *Profil* ran:

> So it came as no surprise that the Freedom Party candidate Norbert Hofer, in response to a remark by a TV journalist that several artists were calling on people to vote for Alexander Van der Bellen but none were supporting Hofer, took this as something to boast about. "He has high society, the people are for me", said Hofer, with more than a little self-assurance
>
> (Zöchling, 2016; "*Der hat die Hautevolee, bei mir sind die Menschen*", translated by the author).

Presenting a love of *Heimat* – framed as a love of the countryside, the ordinary, the people and nature – is an electoral strategy that is gaining in influence, especially in right-wing populist programmes, where it makes use of conspicuously aggressive language, as in the example above. An insistent rhetoric of exclusion and social decay that framed migration as a danger and a threat and declared immigration in general to be a problem for society (Rheindorf and Wodak, 2018) was blended with the figure of anti-urbanism, which was based on ideas about "true country life" and social closeness among "peers" and a promise of "authenticity". It is this imaginary, the historically rooted dichotomy between the city and the countryside, together with the simultaneous existence of densely intertwined social relationships between these spaces, that provides, so my thesis runs, particularly fertile soil for the ideologisation of *Heimat* as countryside in Austria.

The anti-elitism in evidence here is, of course, one of the basic features of populism (Priester, 2010, p.4; Weckwerth, 2013) and is also characteristic of the FPÖ's overall style, even though the party cultivates close contacts with self-proclaimed elites, for example, right-wing university fraternities and their alumni organisations. The latter, however, have not been detrimental the FPÖ's fostering of the "myth of the common man". Socio-economic elites in Germany and Austria are indeed becoming increasingly distanced from the broad mass of society, as sociologist Michael Hartmann shows in his research. However, while Hartmann addresses economic elites, FPÖ elite-bashing is aimed predominantly at cultural and intellectual elites (Hartmann, 2018; Kontrast, 2018). As part of the coalition government, so Hartmann finds, the FPÖ was in fact more likely than other parties to contribute to growing social exclusivity (Kontrast, 2018).

However, in recent times, *Heimat* has not remained the sole preserve of right-wing parties. On the contrary, opposing presidential candidate Alexander Van der Bellen also employed the theme of *Heimat*, albeit with a very different interpretation and content. The independent candidate attempted to pitch an alternative, democratic-pluralist concept of *Heimat* and give the term more open political connotations. He was depicted on posters standing in front of a Tyrolean mountain landscape with slogans such as "Those who love our homeland do not divide it", which urged people to embrace a humanistic and democratic idea of solidarity (Die Presse, 2016), or with his dog, turned towards the camera while leaning casually on a fence. This combination of picturesque natural views, a casual pose and socially inclusive slogans does not evoke dichotomy or exclusion like the appeals to *Heimat* by the FPÖ and, instead, promotes compassion and integration over social division. The depiction of Van der Bellen as a nature- and animal-loving Austrian in touch with the *Heimat* complements his image as an "intellectual" and is intended to render him "relatable" in the country at large. The candidate was also shown in statesmanlike poses in venerable historical buildings, but, significantly, "urbanity" was not used as a motif in Van der Bellen's campaign. Countryside and nature stand for a "homeland" to which people everywhere in Austria are entitled.

The effectiveness of these posters and their reception cannot be investigated further here. However, the visual language fell upon voters whose eyes were predisposed to certain ways of looking and it followed well-practiced viewing conventions. It quoted from the social imaginary and, with that, drew on a repertoire of stereotypes. Thus, the images used in this campaign, especially those of the "countryside", also implicitly or explicitly reproduced the dichotomous pair of concepts: "city" versus "countryside". They summoned up established clichés in which the countryside emerges as a space of tradition, harmony and idyllic life, in turn, suggesting authenticity, belonging (together) and an intact world. They connoted ordinary people, down-to-earth types, as opposed to the intellectuals in the city or, indeed, "foreigners" or "others" who were not visualised in the context of the Alpine *Heimat*. This was contrasted, at least implicitly, with the city and its embodiment of plurality, density, anonymity and individuality, which was often framed as a threatening and alienating space and discussed in connection with social problems caused by migration (Hill and Yildiz, 2018; Yildiz and Hill, 2015).

That the loaded symbolism and contrasts placed on geographical classifications and dichotomies (countryside = the people, city = elite/intellectuals) continue to play a significant role in socio-political discourse, for example, in the country's media, was again in evidence in 2020. Following the Ibiza scandal and the dissolution of the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government, the former leader of the FPÖ, Heinz-Christian Strache, stood as a candidate in Vienna's city council elections – even though his personal residence was outside Vienna, in Klosterneuburg, the third-largest town in Lower Austria. His personal choice of residence meant that he had no legitimate claim to the office of mayor in the eyes of media reporters. This also drew on the established antagonism between Vienna and the rest of the country, between Vienna and the "countryside". In turn, a joke made the rounds among the progressive Viennese particularly concerning Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, a Viennese, and his claim to be a "Meidlinger from the Waldviertel", i.e. the ÖVP politician's claim to unite the city (Meidling, a district of Vienna) and the countryside (Waldviertel, a very rural region) and, thus, his attempt to service old party-political obligations towards the countryside.

Relativising the city-countryside dichotomy: on the necessity of a differentiated social analysis of everyday life

There is no question that a dichotomy between the city and the countryside and the continual invocation of this difference in discourse are well established in social and political rhetoric, as well as finding expression in voting behaviour. As appealing and convincing as such a diagnosis may be on these levels and regarding meaning structures, there are many arguments for going beyond simplified representations and taking a more differentiated look at this relationship in actual practice. The semantic dichotomy reduces the heterogeneity of lifestyles and conceals the fact that towns and cities can vary greatly and "countryside" can also be constituted in different ways and mean

different things. A social and cultural analysis of everyday life and its underlying ethics and possibilities can offer more rounded findings here about lived realities in different spaces and the connotations they carry. Building on the notion of "rurbanity," I propose the concept of "rurban assemblages" to recognise the very different ways in which the "city" and the "country" are interwoven in everyday practice. The experiences and everyday routines of Austria's inhabitants contradict the city-countryside dichotomy; spaces are lived and connected in ways that are much more multilayered.[6]

The existence of very close links between the "city" and the "countryside" is evident on many levels in Austria. Many businesses draw workers into the city from rural areas. Rural exodus is still an ongoing issue, and, especially single women move from the countryside to the city (Weber and Fischer, 2012). A considerable proportion of the workforce in Vienna comes in from other provinces. People from rural regions bring new ideas into the city and live their routines and ties in "the city". Different spaces are intertwined in individual and family biographies; many Viennese people have links to other regions through family and, above all, very many Viennese are themselves incomers from other provinces. Children of all social milieus are regularly sent to relatives in the countryside during the long summer holidays or to spend weekends, summers or other long holidays with one parent in a rural setting. The seasonal rhythms of relocation give even city dwellers access to and experience of the countryside, be it through commuting between work and home, visiting relatives or second homes. The practice of escaping the city for the cool of the countryside in summer known as *Sommerfrische* – originally an aristocratic and bourgeois form of relocating to the countryside in summer, which has spread successively from one class to another, even shaping the rhythms of migrant workers – is still in evidence in Austria and is currently being heralded as having something of a "comeback" and actively promoted (Brandenburg et al., 2018; Schmidt-Lauber, 2014, 2019). This is just one example of the close intertwining of city and countryside. Similar to so-called elites, urban and rural dwellers often cannot be confined to one particular space in their real lives.

The trend towards second home ownership, which is an important lifestyle option for the city's more well off intellectual, academic and artistic clientele in addition to their urban living and work spaces, is another example that argues against the dichotomy between city and countryside. Veritable colonies have formed in the Waldviertel and Weinviertel regions of Lower Austria, especially since the 1990s and 2000s (Statistik Austria, 2019), and ever more "refugees from the city" are to be found there who participate in local life and organise social and cultural events. The trend of moving to affluent commuter belts around cities – the so-called *Speckgürtel*, lit. "bacon belt" – will also continue, according to forecasts by the "Regional Prognosis 2010 to 2030". This heralds not only the culturalisation of rural regions, as posited by Andreas Reckwitz (2018), i.e. the economisation and marketing of "rural culture", but also a ruralisation of imaginaries and utopias among urban milieus (Springer, 2014). The Lower Austrian village of Drosendorf boasts

KuKUK (*Kunst Kultur Umwelt Kommunikation* – "Art Culture Environment Communication"), Haugsdorf in the Weinviertel has a society for *Kunst und Wein* ("Art and Wine") and other villages organise film, discussion or musical evenings. A collector is putting together an ethnological museum in the Waldviertel on the Czech border, and many other examples could be given that show a culturalisation of rural regions closely connected to urban resources and stemming from a variety of motivations. This has diversified the groups of people seeking to realise an idealised image of the "countryside" in many rural regions, especially those close to larger towns. Some romanticisation notwithstanding, the new part-time residents renovate old buildings and, on weekends and in summer at least, bring new life to the village streets and shops. Initiatives in food or agricultural policy that seek to create a link between rural and urban residents, life-worlds and products are also becoming more frequent, as shown by the boom in food cooperatives in cities or by agricultural producers supplying city dwellers directly ("organic vegetable boxes", e.g. Adamah BioHof, n.d.).

These kinds of constellations can also lead to unexpected coalitions of interest arising from the entanglement between the "city" and the "countryside". Long-standing residents in and new arrivals to the village of Drosendorf in the Waldviertel region on the Czech border participated in efforts to modernise the main square. An artist, resident in the village since the 1990s, contributed an installation. It was criticised for being out of keeping with the local community – this criticism came, above all, from recent arrivals, as well as local farmers (Kalchhauser, 2018). However, coalitions of interests can also form along other parameters, strengthening established dichotomies between "countryside" and "city". In a research project on the implementation of rural development programmes in Germany, Oliver Müller, Ove Sutter and Sina Wohlgemuth observed conflicts between old residents and newcomers over a green space in the centre of the village, which had been used previously as a parking lot and was to be converted into a biotope with EU funds, and which led to friction (Müller et al., 2019). Sutter elaborates on that conflict in a forthcoming paper. He noted that a group of newly arrived citizens who had moved from the city and the countryside saw the project as a successful contribution towards more sustainability and, thus, took part in the development. However, the long-established citizens met the meadow with suspicion because of, among others, the "wild growth" ("*unordentliche[r] Bewuch[s]*") in front of their doors (Sutter, 2021, translated by the author and Ove Sutter). Similar examples could be given from Austria as well.

In fact, aesthetic differences also manifest themselves materially: Old houses along the main road in some villages in the Weinviertel near the Czech border are increasingly being bought up by university-educated and artistic Viennese who lovingly restore them, thereby preserving the village's "traditional" appearance that is the basis of conservative *Heimat* aesthetics. Meanwhile, working people whose primary residence is in the village often do not want to forego the comforts of a newbuild and prefer to settle in uniform,

prefabricated houses on the edge of the village. A 55-year-old man born in the district commented on the social shifts caused by people from outside buying houses in his village thus: "Better the Viennese than dilapidated houses" (Fieldnote BSL, 25 August 2018). Different arrangements of commuting – to work in the city on a daily basis, to a second home in the countryside at weekends – overlap and shape everyday life in both places.

On the other hand, urban planning in towns and cities is increasingly focused on qualities more usually associated with rural areas, such as social and spatial manageability. The "city of short journeys" has become an important ideal in urban planning, conveying a sense of defined neighbourhood and social closeness, citizens' participation in public space and proximity to nature, for example, in projects such as urban gardening (Müller, 2011). The weekly market in Wels, a medium-size city, was declared a "Du Zone", in which everyone would be addressed with the informal "Du" for "you" – an example of social closeness that is usually performed in rural regions and towns (Wolfmayr, 2019, p.217f). These are just a few examples that argue against a dichotomous attribution of an intellectual, cosmopolitan, elitist city, on the one hand, and down-to-earth countryside, on the other.

Still, places confer unequal levels of symbolic capital on their residents – and this is relevant for people's perception of their place in society. But this cannot simply be mapped onto the city-countryside dichotomy or a (de)valuation of specific places. We noticed during a research project based at the Department of European Ethnology at the University of Vienna on negotiations of everyday life in so-called medium-sized towns in Germany and Austria that living spaces took on different connotations and normative meanings in different circumstances and milieus. Evaluations of a place depended greatly on the individual resident and their stage in life. In the medium-sized towns studied, those who complained most about the town and expressed an aim of moving to the city if at all possible were overwhelmingly young adults, i.e. people who had yet to establish careers or start a family. They described their own town as a deficient space that combined all the disadvantages of the city and the countryside, and they aspired to relocate to the metropolis of Vienna or to Berlin, the currently most desirable destinations for a creative and youthful clientele (Eckert, Schmidt-Lauber and Wolfmayr, 2019; Wolfmayr, 2019). Indeed, the city as a place of personal growth and autonomy plays a central role in and constitutes an inherent part of a "normal biography", especially from the perspective of middle-class milieus. In many cases, a "good life" for today's young people includes experiences of and an aptitude for the city, which, in turn, can fuel a discourse that defends and justifies the rural.

The values associated with different spaces can evoke moments of shame in the case of "still" living in the countryside or smaller towns. They correspond, to some extent, to structural inequalities. Many regions of Europe are experiencing a sustained rural exodus, which has given rise to EU funding streams, such as the LEADER programme for strengthening local communities. This also exists in Austria and, as part of the multistage "Programme for

Rural Development in Austria 2014–2020", it seeks to develop future strategies for rural areas. One hallmark of the Austrian city-countryside relationship is a historically determined centralism, in which a symbolically all-powerful Vienna acts against the interests of the other provinces – in short, "the countryside". Economically small, agricultural (family) businesses predominate there, which reinforces the contrast. Due to these economic structures, but also the geographical proximity, the situation of rural areas and their residents in Austria differs from that in many other countries, particularly those with large landowners in remote areas.

Finally, transformations are also emerging in other respects: We can observe the beginnings of a more general societal shift away from social (class) and political (party-political, voting behaviour) allegiance towards biography and lifestyle as guiding factors, with life goals and ways of living determined by age and interest; for example, when young entrepreneurs deliberately decide to base themselves in rural areas and implement sustainable forms of production, as in the Waldviertel region. This should by no means suggest a levelling of socio-structural factors in social development or the full-scale individualisation of life paths. Economic and educational factors, as well as gender, are still significant parameters determining the way in which we each live.

As a result of my urban-rural research and socio-political observations, I propose a change of perspective: It makes sense not only to follow obvious polarisations between city and countryside but, at the same time and above all, to use examples of concrete living arrangements to take a more differentiated look at everyday lives in our societies. The forms and histories of these entanglements must be traced more closely in order to reveal the lived practices and social realities that produce new assemblages of city and countryside, i.e. not an either/or but a combination of "routines and ties to both city and countryside".

Notes

1 I would like to thank Manuel Liebig and Maren Sacherer for their pointers and discussions on the topics dealt with in this article and Joanna White for her translation into English resp. linguistic revision.

2 "Red Vienna" designates the capital for the period from 1918 to 1934 when the Social Democratic Workers Party of German Austria repeatedly won an absolute majority in elections and initiated significant changes in municipal politics and planning, especially in the areas of housing – through large-scale social housing programmes – and in social, health and education policy. Within Austria, these politics has had a lasting impact on the city and how it sees itself, which can still be felt in everyday life and public awareness today.

3 This was sparked by the release of a secretly filmed video, in which two high-ranking FPÖ politicians express an openness to corruption. Contacts with the SPÖ, for example, continue to play a major role in the city when it comes to filling important positions or realizing public projects, and the reform programs in social and housing policy also continue to have an impact to the present day, such as in the "Wiener Gemeindebau", a block of municipal social housing that has left a sustainable mark on Vienna's architecture and everyday culture.

4 Gender and age are also relevant factors in voting behaviour, as an analysis of voting patterns in Austria carried out by the Institut für Strategieanalyse has shown:

> In the 2017 parliamentary elections, men voted with above-average frequency for the FPÖ, women gave their vote more often to the SPÖ and the Greens, for the ÖVP the differences were minimal. […] In terms of age, SPÖ and ÖVP enjoyed greater approval among older voters. […] Overall, the FPÖ was stronger among the under-60s than among the generation 60-plus.
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> (SORA/ISA, 2017)

5 Positive references to *Heimat* have an important flipside in "Anti-*Heimat* literature" and concomitant structures of feeling in Austrian literature and social observations and attitudes more broadly. As Robert Menasse puts it:

> It is certainly no accident that the so-called Anti-Heimat literature emerged in Austria and created an internationally entirely unique, new literary genre: For Austria is Anti-Heimat par excellence. But the Anti-Heimat literature is not only a distinctly Austrian genre, it is essentially the most significant, dominant form of literature in the Second Republic: The authors who shaped and developed this form and genre constitute an all but complete who's who of modern Austrian literature.
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> (Menasse, 1993, pp.101-102; translation by the editors)

6 The following section is based on interviews and observations gathered in 2018 for an exploratory project on "rurban assemblages" at the Department of European Ethnology, University of Vienna, and on a completed research project on middle-size cities in Austria and Germany.

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