

Urban Viticulture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Central Europe

Abstract: Vine-growing and wine production were to a large extent part of urban economy in late medieval and early modern Europe. This paper takes issue with the concept of *Ackerbürgerstadt* discussed in German urban history since the beginning of the twentieth century, to come to terms with the intense involvement of towns in agrarian production. By drawing on examples from the city of Vienna and the town of Retz in Lower Austria, it is argued that towns specialized in vine-growing, produced a cash-crop for regional and supra-regional markets, were troubled by class conflicts between vineyard owners and wage labourers, regulated labour relations extensively, and strove to dominate the local wine trade. This does not conform to the concept of *Ackerbürgerstadt*, implying food-crop production for subsistence and a low level of social stratification.

Key Words: urban viticulture, *Ackerbürgerstadt*, vine-growing towns, labour relations, market regulation

At the turn to the twentieth century, German economic history, together with the school of historical economics, excelled in the construction of typologies. In regard to the history of towns and urbanisation, Karl Bücher, Werner Sombart and Max Weber devised classifications by stressing the economic basis of towns and their relationship with the surrounding countryside.¹ In this way, Sombart and Weber distinguished “consumer towns”, “producer towns”, “merchant towns”, and a kind of “agrarian town” which they labelled as *Ackerbürgerstadt*. Weber defined this strange creature in his treatise on cities in the following way:

“Historically, the relation of the city to agriculture has in no way been unambiguous and simple. There were and are agrarian cities (*Ackerbürgerstädte*), which as market centres and seats of typically urban traders are sharply differentiated from the average village, but in which a broad stratum of the burghers produces food for their own consumption and even for the market. Normally, to be sure, it is true that the larger a city, the less likely it is that its inhabitants would dispose of farmland sufficient for their food needs.”²

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1 See, for a concise discussion, Friedrich Lenger, *Der Begriff der Stadt und das Wesen der Städtebildung*: Werner Sombart, Karl Bücher and Max Weber im Vergleich, in: Stephan Selzer (ed.), *Die Konsumentenstadt*, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2018 (Städteforschung A 98), 25–38.

2 Max Weber, *Economy and society*, Berkeley et al. 1978, 1217. The treatise on cities was first published – posthumously – in: *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Socialpolitik* 47 (1921), 621pp., and only later integrated into *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*.

Sombart, who defined towns economically as “larger settlements depending for their provision on the products of foreign agrarian labour”, went so far as to question the urban character of this kind of town and surmised that the larger part of medieval European towns were in fact villages, in respect to their economic constitution.³ Following Sombart and Weber, Horst Jecht, in a still much cited essay from 1926, on the social structure of medieval towns, supplemented this typology by stressing the low degree of social differentiation and static character of the *Ackerbürgerstadt*, to which he also denied any urban economic functions. According to him, only large producer- and merchant-towns catering for supra-regional markets had the disposition to develop features of class societies.⁴

Ever since, German urban (economic) history has been haunted by the ghost of the *Ackerbürgerstadt*. Given the fact that in late medieval and early modern times the vast majority of settlements with town charters in Central and East-Central Europe had population figures well below the usually applied thresholds of 5,000 or 10,000 inhabitants and contained considerable elements of agrarian production, historians still discuss whether these places should be considered as towns.⁵ The further east we look, the more pronounced these features become. Around 1500 only six towns (all capitals) in East-Central Europe (the Austrian, Bohemian, Hungarian lands and Poland) had more than 10,000 inhabitants, containing a mere 2 per cent of the overall population in these territories. However, if one includes all towns the share of urban populations amounts to 20–25 per cent, and if we include the large number of market places (*Markt* in German, *mestečko* in Czech, *oppidum* in Hungarian), often much bigger than the towns in demographic terms, the share would be substantially higher.⁶

The most common solution to this dilemma – to stress that in the medieval and early modern period nearly all towns, large or small, contained elements of agrarian production and people working the land,⁷ but that in the end real towns were essentially based on industry and trade – begs the question. That pre-industrial towns strove for autonomy in respect to food provision as far as they could, that the members of the upper strata of urban societies had land holdings and received rent in money and in kind, and that in an organic economy the processing of raw materials grown on land constituted a major sector of the urban economy, is quite evident. In discussing urban agriculture of the past, it is therefore important to stress that there were towns, large and small, in the European past which relied

3 Werner Sombart, *Der moderne Kapitalismus*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., München/Leipzig 1921, 128, 135.

4 Horst Jecht, *Studien zur gesellschaftlichen Struktur mittelalterlicher Städte*, in: *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 19 (1926), 48–85; Eberhard Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Spätmittelalter 1250–1500*, Stuttgart 1988, 268–269, still refers extensively to Jecht.

5 For recent debates see Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke/Christian Schrenk (eds.), *Ackerbürgertum und Stadtwirtschaft* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Stadt Heilbronn 13), Heilbronn 2002; Herbert Knittler (ed.), *Minderstädte, Kümmerformen, gefreite Dörfer* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas 20), Linz 2006; see also Katrin Keller, *Ackerbürgerstadt*, in: *Encyclopedia of Early Modern History Online*, executive editor of the English edition: Graeme Dunphy, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2352-0272_emho_SIM_016561 (last visited 2 Feb. 2020).

6 See the synthesis by Herbert Knittler, *Die europäische Stadt in der frühen Neuzeit*, Wien/München 2000, 267–280; and Markus Cerman/Herbert Knittler, *Town and country in the Austrian and Czech lands, 1450–1800*, in: Stephen. R. Epstein (ed.), *Town and country in Europe, 1300–1800*, Cambridge 2001, 176–201.

7 Klaus Fink, *Feld- und Waldwirtschaft im spätmittelalterlichen Alltag rheinischer Städte*, in: Jäschke/Schrenk (eds.), *Ackerbürgertum*, 157–184, describes the concept of *Ackerbürgerstadt* as a misnomer concealing the agrarian foundations of medieval towns.

to a large extent on agrarian production and whose inhabitants lived primarily from the proceeds of their agrarian activities. It is equally important to define clearly what kind of agrarian production, according to the particular circumstances, we are dealing with. The German terms *Ackerbürgerstadt* and *Ackerbürger* have a strong connotation of subsistence production of basic food-crops, with eventual marketing of surpluses (see the quote from Max Weber above). But what about cash-crops such as wine?

According to Roger Dion, a French geographer and author of a still widely cited history of French viticulture, vineyards in pre-industrial times were urban creations, just like suburbs and vegetable gardens.⁸ I am not convinced that this is correct for the gardens, but with respect to the historical geography of vine-growing there is ample evidence that Dion got it right – with some qualifications. What Dion had in mind was extra-Mediterranean vine-growing, which was and is confined to climatically suitable regions (admittedly, the limits have shifted over time due to climate change), tends therefore to monoculture and regional agglomeration, and produces a commodity for regional and supra-regional markets. In contrast, and due to the firm integration of vines into the Mediterranean agrosystem – often based on the combination of cereals, tree crops and vines – vine-growing in this part of Europe was nearly ubiquitous, wine was part of the daily popular diet, and the wine trade together with other produce, often took place mainly at the local level. This general contrast in the degree of specialisation and market integration between Mediterranean and extra-Mediterranean viticulture is mirrored by significant contrasts in the techniques of vine cultivation. It seems appropriate to speak of extensive and intensive ways of vine-growing, the latter being marked by monocultural vineyards, with high plant densities and much higher manual labour requirements than the intercropping systems (*coltura promiscua*) of the Mediterranean zone.⁹

Due to these structural features, vine-growing regions in the extra-Mediterranean zone were largely urbanized landscapes.¹⁰ The river valleys of the Upper and Lower Rhine, the Moselle, the Neckar, the Main and the Saale (Thuringia), the Danube in Austria and Western Hungary, and many of their tributaries as well as the foothills of many mountain regions, where wine was grown in the past to a far larger extent than today, were all densely filled with towns and market places based on vine-growing.¹¹ The same holds true for the Garonne and

8 Roger Dion, *Histoire de la vigne et du vin en France des origines au XIXe siècle*, Paris 1977 [1st ed. 1959], 41: “Le vignoble, dans les temps antérieurs au machinisme, naît de la ville, quelle que soit la nature du terrain qui le port, comme naissent les faubourgs ou les jardins maraîchers.”

9 Cf. Erich Landsteiner, *Wine-growing and agricultural specialisation in late medieval and early modern Europe*, in: Annie Antoine (ed.), *Agricultural specialization and rural patterns of development (Rural History in Europe 12)*, Turnhout 2016, 249–272, 251–255.

10 Karl-Heinz Schröder, *Weinbau und Siedlung in Württemberg (Forschungen zur deutschen Landeskunde 73)*, Remagen 1953, 93: “Weinland ist Städteland”; Tom Scott, *Medium-sized and small towns on the Upper Rhine in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries between domination and competition*, in: idem, *Town, country and regions in Reformation Germany*, Leiden/Boston 2005, 283–306, 286, following Franz Irsigler, defines, “urbanized landscapes” (*Stadtlandschaften*) as regions “characterized by an above-average provision of urban centres – more than 25 per cent of the population – and very intensive relations with their hinterlands, which cause the autonomy of the rural area tangibly to recede”.

11 Cf., in general, Tom Scott, *Medieval viticulture in the German-speaking lands*, in: *German History 20* (2002), 95–115; and more specifically, Otto Volk, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft am Mittelrhein vom 12. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1998, 660–668; Franz Irsigler, *Weinstädte an der Mosel im Mittelalter*, in: Ferdinand Opll (ed.), *Stadt und Wein*, Linz 1996, 165–179; Erich Landsteiner, *Weinbau und bürgerliche Hantierung*,

Dordogne, and vast stretches the Loire, Marne, Rhône, Seine and Yonne in France.¹² These often very small towns were so close together that they hardly had a hinterland of their own. Sebastian Münster in his *Cosmographie* (1550) quipped about the Alsatian vine-growing towns in the foothills of the Vosges, that they “lie so close together that one may fire a rifle from one to the other”.¹³ The frequent location along rivers is of course related to transport facilities provided by the waterways, since all these regions produced wine for export. The intimate relationship between wine production and urbanisation was from very early on clearly linked to the high level of commercialisation of this sector of the agrarian economy, but it is less clear what was cause and what was effect in this relationship. On the one hand, the high land-use and labour intensity of specialized vine-growing led to high population densities; on the other hand, the demand by urban consumers (in the case of larger agglomerates) propelled wine production and the penetration of the surrounding countryside by urban investors.¹⁴ This seems to be a hen and egg problem, but it is evident that these vine-growing towns, especially the smaller ones with their rural appearances, were not *Ackerbürgerstädte* in the sense that they catered essentially to their own needs. They produced a cash-crop for export and depended on supplies from adjacent regions for food-crops.

Drawing on the example of Trier, the main vine-growing town in the Moselle valley, Lucas Clemens has made an attempt to define a “wine town” by five criteria:

- the location in a vine-growing region;
- the participation of a large segment of the population in wine production;
- organized craft groups (guilds) related to the commodity chain of wine production;
- the concentration of capital-intensive wine-processing equipment (presses and cellars);
- the existence of a wine market and suitable transport facilities for wine export.¹⁵

Clemens rightly stresses the difference between wine-producing towns and wine-trading towns. Although the producing towns depended on trade for the commercialisation of their main product, the trading towns such as Strasbourg, Cologne, Frankfurt, Ulm or Nuremberg were eager to attract as much wine as possible to their wine markets for consumption and wider distribution, whereas the producing towns strove to exclude foreign wine from their markets out of a fear of over-supply, competition, and loss of reputation for their own brand.

The emblematic model of a European “wine town” is Bordeaux, whose present-day status as a world heritage site (since 2007) is based on three criteria: its port, its architecture, and its *vignoble*.¹⁶ The capital of the Gironde had an extensive viticultural hinterland owned by

Weinproduktion und Weinhandel in den landesfürstlichen Städten und Märkten Niederösterreichs in der frühen Neuzeit, in: Opll (ed.), *Stadt und Wein*, 17–50.

12 Thomas E. Brennan, *Burgundy to Champagne. The wine trade in early modern France*, Baltimore/London 1997, 94–100; see also Dion, *Histoire*, for the historical geography of French vine-growing regions.

13 Cited in Scott, *Medium-sized and small towns*, 290.

14 Scott, *Medieval viticulture*, 104; Dion, *Histoire*, 205–206, for south-western France.

15 Lucas Clemens, *Trier – Eine Weinstadt im Mittelalter* (Trierer Historische Forschungen 22), Trier 1993, 413–414.

16 Sandrine Lavaud, *Le vignoble de Bordeaux au miroir de l’Imago Urbis: la lente reconnaissance d’un paysage identitaire (Moyen Âge–XVIIIe siècle)*, in: Marie-Claude Marandet (ed.), *La ville et le plat pays (XIIIe–XVIIIe siècles)*, Perpignan 2016, 233–261, 233.

its citizens, which was transformed through the creation of large wine-producing estates by the *notables*, cultivated by a salaried labour-force, from the sixteenth century until today. “In 1744 the Subdelegate of Bordeaux asserted that over half of his jurisdiction was devoted to grapevines and that nine-tenths of this vast vineyard was owned by the nobility and wealthy ‘Bourgeois de Bordeaux’”.¹⁷ By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Bordeaux exported huge quantities of wine and dominated the wine trade of the whole region through its extensive trading privileges acquired during the fourteenth and fifteenth century from the English and French kings. By blocking the introduction and sale of wine from other vine-growing centres upstream of the Garonne until Christmas, it secured in this way the privileged sale of the wine produced by its citizens.¹⁸

Considering the example of Bordeaux, we can add two further criteria to the list proposed by Clemens. In contrast to what has been claimed to be typical for the social structure of *Ackerbürgerstädte*, I will stress the development of a labour market in these towns, its regulation, and the frequent struggles between vineyard owners and their labour force over wages and working hours (in case of wage labour), the partition of the product (in case of share-cropping), and employment conditions in general. Furthermore, not merely the existence of a wine market, but its regulation and domination by privileged towns, is of interest.

To corroborate these general propositions, the rest of this paper is dedicated to two examples of vine-growing towns in Lower Austria, one large and one small.¹⁹

Vienna

Vienna was by far the largest, and up to the middle of the eighteenth century the only town in the territory of present-day Austria with constantly more than 10,000 inhabitants during the late medieval and early modern periods. Its population rose from 20,000 in about 1500 to 25,000–30,000 in 1600, and 175,000 in 1750. Even in the town charter of 1296 it is stated that the honour and well-being of the town was mostly based on vine-growing. A vivid description of the town by Enea Silvio Piccolomini (the later pope Pius II) from the middle of the fifteenth century reveals that the subterranean wine cellars in the town were as spacious as the buildings on the surface. According to Piccolomini, the vintage lasted up to 40 days; every day during this period 300 wagons drawn by 1,200 horses brought grapes into the city.

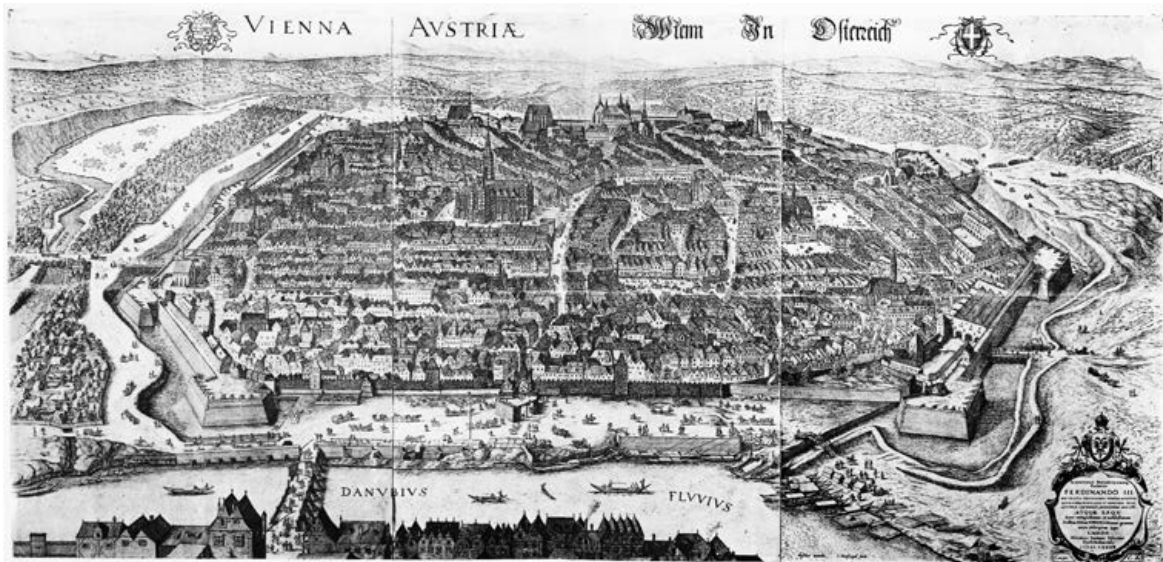
17 Robert Forster, The noble wine producers of the Bordelais in the eighteenth century, in: *The Economic History Review*, New Series 14 (1961), 18–33, 22; see also Sandrine Lavaud, D’un vignoble populaire à un vignoble de notables: les transformations du vignoble suburbain de Bordeaux du XVe au XVIIIe siècle, in: *Annales du Midi* 107 (1995), 195–217.

18 Sandrine Lavaud, Vignobles et vins d’Aquitaine au Moyen Âge, in: *Territoires du vin* 5 (2013), <http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/territoiresduvin/index.php?id=782> (last visited 2 Feb. 2020), provides a concise overview. The *locus classicus* is Roger Dion, L’ancien privilege de Bordeaux, in: *Revue géographique des Pyrénées et du Sud-Ouest* 26 (1955), 223–236. For export figures see Mary K. James, The fluctuations of the Anglo-Gascon wine trade during the fourteenth century, in: *The Economic History Review*, New Series 4 (1951), 170–196.

19 In what follows I will draw heavily on my own research, where the manuscript sources are referenced: Erich Landsteiner, *Weinbau und Gesellschaft in Ostmitteleuropa*, unprinted doctoral thesis, University of Vienna 1992; idem, *Weinbau und bürgerliche Hantierung*; idem, *Wien – eine Weinbaustadt?*, in: Peter Cendes/Ferdinand Opll (eds.), *Wien. Geschichte einer Stadt*, vol. 2: *Die frühneuzeitliche Residenz (16. bis 18. Jahrhundert)*, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2003, 141–146.

Nearly every citizen sold wine in his house and huge quantities were exported. *Incredibile dictum est, quanta vis inducator vini, quod vel Viennae bibitur, vel ad extraneos per Danubiam contra cursum aque magno labore mittitur.*²⁰ A favourable constellation of sources from the middle of the fifteenth century allows us to offer a more detailed account of the extent of the Viennese wine economy and its institutional ramifications during this period. It suggests that the picture drawn by Piccolomini is quite realistic.

Figure 1: Bird's-eye view of Vienna in 1609. Engraving by Jacob Hoefnagel, re-edited by Claes Jansz Visscher 1640



Source: Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, Inv. Nr. 31043. Public domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1176920> (last visited 2 Feb. 2020).

Up to 1705, one of the pillars of the fiscal system of the city of Vienna was the levy of taxes on the wine harvests of all those under the fiscal authority of the city. The harvest was registered at the city gates during the vintage, and once more on Saint Martin's Day, in the cellars and dwellings of the taxpayers. The assessment of 11 November 1461 amounted to 140,245 hectolitres (hl).²¹ Part of this wine stock was consumed by the locals, but a much larger share went into export. In the 1580s, 45,000 hl (on average per year) were sold by the pot, according to the proceeds of the excise tax. In 1445, 140,600 hl of wine were exported out of the city, mainly on the Danube westwards to Upper Austria, Salzburg, and Bavaria as well as over land to Bohemia and Moravia; in 1446, exports amounted to 71,600 hl.²²

When the grapes in the vineyards surrounding Vienna were ready, the city authorities used the edict rules and regulations for proceeding with the vintage. The oldest of the preserved vintage ordinances, dated 28 September 1461, provides valuable insights into the busiest

20 Rudolf Wolkan (ed.), *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*, Wien 1909 (*Fontes Rerum Austriacarum* II/61), 80–84, the quotation 82–83. Wolkan dated this description to 1438. Today it is considered to be part of Piccolomini's *Historia Australis* (ca. 1450/51).

21 Hartmann J. Zeibig (ed.), *Copey-Buch der Gemainen Stat Wien 1454–1464* (*Fontes Rerum Austriacarum* II/7), Wien 1853, 284–285.

22 Landsteiner, *Weinbau und bürgerliche Hantierung*, 40.

period of the economic life of the city. Only grape-must grown in a district limited by the rivers Danube to the north, Leitha to the east (the borderline with the Hungarian kingdom), Fischa to the south, and Piesting to the west was allowed to be brought into town. Nearly every vine-growing settlement in Lower Austria knew such limitations concerning the introduction and storage of wine to avoid oversupply, and in many cases, storage and sales rights were limited to wine produced by the inhabitants within the territory of the settlement.

In the case of Vienna, the district was unusually expanded and reflected the area where townspeople owned vineyards. Those possessing vineyards outside of the said district had to provide proof that the grapes had been grown on their properties. Citizens could bring in their own harvest as well as grapes and must bought from others in this delimited area until Saint Martin's Day. According to what is known from later periods, an allowance for bringing purchased grape must into town was by no means the rule and depended on the size of the vintage. The tax rate for purchased must was twice as high as the rate for must grown by the citizens in their own vineyards, and in 1461, everyone introducing purchased must had to bring an equivalent amount of grain into town. All those who cultivated their vineyards by sharecropping and bought up the shares of the cultivators, as well as those farming wine tithes, were liable to the tax rate for purchased wine must. Finally, the prohibition for introducing Hungarian or any other foreign wine into the city, going back to the thirteenth century, was enforced once again.²³

During the vintage season all other businesses in the town came to a standstill. Even the city council suspended its sessions and proceedings. Given the fact that 108 winepresses were counted within the city walls in 1566, a significant share of the vintage was processed within the city, although king Ferdinand I had attempted to prohibit this for sanitary reasons in 1563.²⁴ That the city authorities were willing to safeguard the vintage by all possible means, became clear during the siege by the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus in 1483, when the city – to the dismay of its overlord emperor Friedrich III – paid a ransom of 3,000 Hungarian florins to bring in the grape harvest.²⁵

The peculiarities of the Viennese tax system allow us to determine the proportion of taxpayers bringing in a wine harvest. At the turn of the sixteenth century no less than a third of all taxed households and 53 per cent of all house-owners within the city walls owned vineyards and were therefore liable to pay the tax for bringing their harvest into the city and its suburbs (Table 1). For the sixteenth century, tax assessments are preserved for one quarter of the city (with suburbs) only. Their analysis suggests a decline in the proportion of taxpayers involved in vine-growing by 10 per cent over the course of the sixteenth century. Since Vienna had no significant export trade in industrial goods, it is obvious that wine production and the wine trade constituted the largest and most important sector of the urban economy during this period.

According to the tax registers, slightly more than half of those paying the wine tax at the beginning of the seventeenth century were craftsmen and traders. 13 per cent of all craftsmen in town were in some way related to wine production as coopers, transporters of wine

23 The ordinance is edited in Zeibig (ed.), *Copey-Buch*, 271–276.

24 Landsteiner, *Weinbau und bürgerliche Hantierung*, 21.

25 Ferdinand Opll/Richard Perger, *Kaiser Friedrich III. und die Wiener 1483–1485 (Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 24)*, Wien 1993, 45.

casks, and bartenders employed in the retailing of wine. Of particular interest is the group of citizens without any specified occupation: they comprised 25 per cent of all taxpayers, but produced 50 per cent of the recorded quantity of must or grapes introduced into the city in 1618.²⁶ This suggests that a substantial part of the wealthier citizens was composed of land-owners producing wine.²⁷

An essential prerequisite for this ample property of vineyards by the citizens of Vienna was a specific property right. Land planted with vines, although liable for rent in money and in kind to the landlord (in the sense of *dominium directum* versus *dominium utile*), could be freely sold, partitioned, and transferred through inheritance, and, most importantly, its possession entailed no subjection to the lord of the land. These were exactly the terms of the specific urban property land right held by citizens (called *Burgrecht*, whereas vineyards were held under conditions of *Bergrecht*). Town charters limited the rights of interference of landlords in many ways, especially the taking of rents and the timing of the vintage.²⁸

Table 1: Number of wine producers and amount of wine harvest in Vienna, sixteenth to seventeenth centuries (according to tax assessments)

	Number of taxpayers	Taxpayers with wine harvest		Harvest (hl)
		n	%	
Widmer quarter with suburbs 1527	969	407	42	18,515
Widmer quarter with suburbs 1618	684	221	32	29,670
City ca. 1600	1,734	572	33	51,852
City and suburbs 1618	2,583	833	32	109,884
City and suburbs 1650	2,314	649	28	26,518
City 1681	1,717	552	32	46,152

Sources: Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), Tax assessment registers, series 1.1.3.1: B4.11 (Widmer quarter 1527); B4.13 (Widmer quarter 1618); B2.1, B3.1, B4.12, B5.1 (City ca. 1600 – 1616 for the Widmer quarter); B2.19, B3.17, B4.13, B5.18 (City and suburbs 1618); B2.51, B3.48, B4.30, B5.39 (City and suburbs 1650); B2.82, B3.79, B4.61, B5.70 (City 1681).

The amount of wine registered in the tax assessments poses some problems of interpretation. It is evident that it was determined by the size of the vintage, and I suppose that this relates to the vintage of the previous autumn of the assessment year. Figures are always rounded, and the smallest amount recorded is half of a *Dreiling* containing twelve buckets of 58 litres each or 796 litres. By drawing on the yields of the vine-growing estate of the Vienna City Hospital, the biggest wine producer in town, it is possible to estimate the vineyard area of

26 Dominik Schiesser, *Die Wiener Gewerbe im Spiegel des Steuerregisters des Jahres 1618*, unprinted diploma thesis, University of Vienna 2019, 37.

27 This sheds some light on the so-called *Erbbürger* (“hereditary citizens”), a social group long discussed in the historiography on medieval Vienna. Cf. Friedrich Walter, *Beiträge zur älteren Wiener Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, in: *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 15 (1935), 42–62.

28 See, for example, the charter for Vienna 1296, edited in: Johann A. Tomaschek (ed.), *Die Rechte und Freiheiten der Stadt Wien*, vol. 1, Wien 1877, no. XXII, 69–75, 72.

the harvest figures. 1617 (34.5 hl/ha) and 1680 (48.2 hl/ha) were years with copious wine harvest, 1599 (27.4 hl/ha) was about average, whereas in 1649 (5.8 hl/ha) the vintage resulted in a disaster. Dividing the harvest amounts stated in the tax assessments by these yields we arrive at the following estimates of the vineyard area farmed by the citizens of Vienna: 1,892 hectares in 1600 (without suburbs), 3,189 hectares (with suburbs) in 1618, 4,567 hectares (with suburbs) in 1650, and 947 hectares (without suburbs) in 1680. The estimate for 1650 is wholly implausible, but those for 1600 and 1680 could be accurate, which would suggest a 50 per cent decline over the course of the seventeenth century.

Although Table 1 seems to suggest that the picture just presented did not change much over the course of the seventeenth century, this is mistaken insofar as already in 1563 only 62 per cent of all households were taxed by the city magistrate; the rest, being composed of members of the court, the clergy, civil servants, university members, and the nobility, was not under the fiscal authority of the city. During the seventeenth century, this proportion shifted more and more in favour of the later groups.²⁹ At the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century the old regulations of the wine market were abolished. The 440,000 hl of wine introduced into the city in 1730,³⁰ now the booming centre of a vast central European empire, came from all over Lower Austria and Moravia. Vienna had obviously switched from a wine production to a wine consumption city.

The labour market and its regulation

In the tax assessment of the Widmer quarter for 1527, 191 out of the 969 taxpayers (19.7 per cent) were registered as vine-dressers (*Hauer*). 174 of them lived in the suburbs of this quarter and 97 (50.8 per cent) were assessed for their wine harvests. Since the term *Hauer* included small growers as well as vineyard labourers, this indicates that half of them were wage labourers without any landed property. Their numbers declined steeply over the course of the sixteenth century and in 1618 only 50 taxpayers designated as *Hauer* were registered in the entire city (including suburbs). The reason for this decline seems to have been connected to the rearrangement of the suburbs after the first siege of Vienna by Ottoman troops in 1529. During the siege the suburbs were completely destroyed and the government intended to house these homeless inhabitants within the city walls. The negative response of the city council to this plan contains information about the economic situation and living conditions of the suburban vine-dressers. It was stressed that they were much too poor to dwell in the city, that they would lose several hours of worktime due to the fact that the city gates opened too late in the morning and closed too early in the evening, that they tended animals which could not be kept within the city limits, and that they used dried vine-shoots to heat their dwellings, which would create a continuing threat of fire outbreaks. The most telling argument was, however, that these people were an unruly folk, having caused much trouble in the past. Therefore, the council suggested allowing them to build wooden dwellings in

29 Elisabeth Lichtenberger, *Die Wiener Altstadt*, Wien 1977, 101.

30 Erich Landsteiner, *Weinbau und Alkoholproduktion. Eine langfristige Perspektive (16.–19. Jahrhundert)*, in: *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 48/5 (2004), 266–284, 278.

the suburbs at a certain distance from town, which could easily be burned down in case of danger. Otherwise they would settle elsewhere and the citizens would lose their workforce.³¹

Viennese vineyard owners cultivated their vineyards by hiring wage labourers. Wage labour was the common form of labour recruitment in urban viticulture all over Europe, and disputes about wage levels, working time, and other features of the labour contract occurred frequently.³² To handle these conflicts towns and their lords devised and implemented rules and regulations for setting wages, regulating work hours, and disciplining the labourers. Following the implementation of labour laws in the aftermath of the Black Death, this kind of legislation started during the fifth decade of the fourteenth century in Vienna, in the form of daily wage rates for vine-dressers. They were to be hired at specific hiring places, outside the city gates and in the surrounding villages.³³

In the fourteenth and early fifteenth century male and female workers were expected to be hired by the day.³⁴ Later on contracts for the cultivation of single vineyards over the whole season became the rule. Thus, a two-tiered labour force took shape: resident vine-dressers, frequently organized in guilds and brotherhoods, contracted with vineyard owners for the cultivation of their vineyards and hired, if necessary, labourers themselves either by the day or throughout the season. The vine-dressers visible in the tax assessments can be identified with the first group, whereas the second group, often single migrant workers, hired and housed by the members of the first group or living as lodgers, are not reflected in the tax registers. Since the more substantial growers of Vienna frequently owned houses in the suburbs, it is plausible that they used them for housing migrant labourers. These labourers, called *ledige Hauerknechte* (single or independent vine-dressers' servants), became the main target of extended vine-growing ordinances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A first one was published in 1534 for the Viennese vine-growing district (in accordance with the area outlined above). Others followed in 1540 and 1548 for the other vine-growing centres of the country. From this point on, representatives of the local communities assembled at the beginning of the year in the Vienna city hall to set up wage rates and to discuss current problems. A major concern in all these ordinances was the frequent absconding of labourers during the working season. Labourers were required to carry passports testifying that they had not run away from their former employer without his consent. Another pressing problem was the lacking qualification of migrant labourers. As a remedy, apprenticeship terms were imposed. Inexperienced workers had to learn from a resident vine-dresser over a period of two to three years to acquire the necessary skills.³⁵

31 The report, dated 30 July 1530, is edited in: *Notizenblatt der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 8 (1858), 289–291.

32 See for examples from other vine-growing towns and regions: Marcel Delafosse, *Notes d'histoire sociale. Les vigneronns d'Auxerrois (XIVe–XVIe siècles)*, in: *Annales de Bourgogne* 77 (1948), 7–41; Alessandro Stella, *Un conflit du travail dans les vignes d'Auxerre aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, in: *Histoire et Sociétés Rurales* 3/1 (1996), 221–251; Knut Schulz, *Handwerksgesellen und Lohnarbeiter. Untersuchungen zur oberrheinischen und oberdeutschen Stadtgeschichte des 14. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, Sigmaringen 1985, 343–361.

33 The relevant edicts are edited in Tomaschek (ed.), *Rechte und Freiheiten der Stadt Wien*, vol. 1, no. XLVII (1352), XLVIII (1353), LXVII (1364), vol. 2, no. CVII (1412).

34 For this paragraph and source references see Erich Landsteiner, *Einen Bären anbinden*, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 4/2 (1993), 218–252.

35 For the institution of apprenticeship for wine-dressers in other vine-growing towns see Françoise Michaud-Frejaville, *Apprentis et ouvriers vigneronns. Les contrats à Orleons au XVe siècle*, in: *Le vigneron, la viticulture*

This massive and oppressive legislation could not reconcile a major contradiction behind all these conflicts: rapidly declining real wages of the labourers, especially during the second half of the sixteenth century. It actually contributed to the problem by setting strict limits on nominal wage rates. The situation exploded in April 1597 when large numbers of migrant workers went on strike in the Viennese vine-growing district demanding higher wages. The revolt was brutally suppressed within a few days and the leaders were executed or condemned to forced labour.³⁶ In any case, this reveals how far off the base established opinions about a low grade of social differentiation and absent class conflicts in so-called agrarian towns is.

Retz

In the sixteenth century, all other towns of Lower Austria, consisting of 100–300 houses and perhaps 1,000–5,000 inhabitants, were tiny in comparison to Vienna. 14 out of 18 towns (including four “markets”) under the direct jurisdiction of the Habsburg rulers relied economically on vine-growing. Retz, at the border to Moravia, was among the smallest. The town presided over an area comprising nine villages, whose territories were densely planted with vines. No foreign wine was allowed to enter this district in order to protect the reputation of the local *cru*. Based on the trading privileges in its charter and an extensive network of cellars,³⁷ the town was the central storage place and the hub of the wine trade in the region. Every year in autumn and spring, caravans of horse-drawn wagons arrived from Bohemia and Moravia to carry the barrels, marked by the coat of arms of the town of Retz, to places for consumption.

At the end of the sixteenth century, 90 per cent of the citizens of this small town owned land, consisting of 262 hectares of vineyards and 119 hectares of arable land. Vineyards made up for half of all assets valued for tax purposes. Slightly more than half of the 116 citizens in 1590 lived solely from their wine production and wine trade, and less than 10 per cent based their livelihood exclusively on craft production and the non-wine trade, whereas 46 per cent combined craft and agrarian production (Tables 2 and 3).³⁸

After the severe disruptions of the Thirty Years’ War, during which the number of citizens was reduced to 66, the extent of citizens’ vineyard property declined to 58 hectares in 1665. Although it recovered during the following century, it never again attained the level of the late sixteenth century. On the other hand, the role of craft production increased and by middle of the eighteenth century 83 per cent of the citizens were artisans or traders. What is not clear from these figures is the importance of the wine trade based on the privilege of the town, which amounted to a monopoly of the citizens on the local intermediary trade in wine.

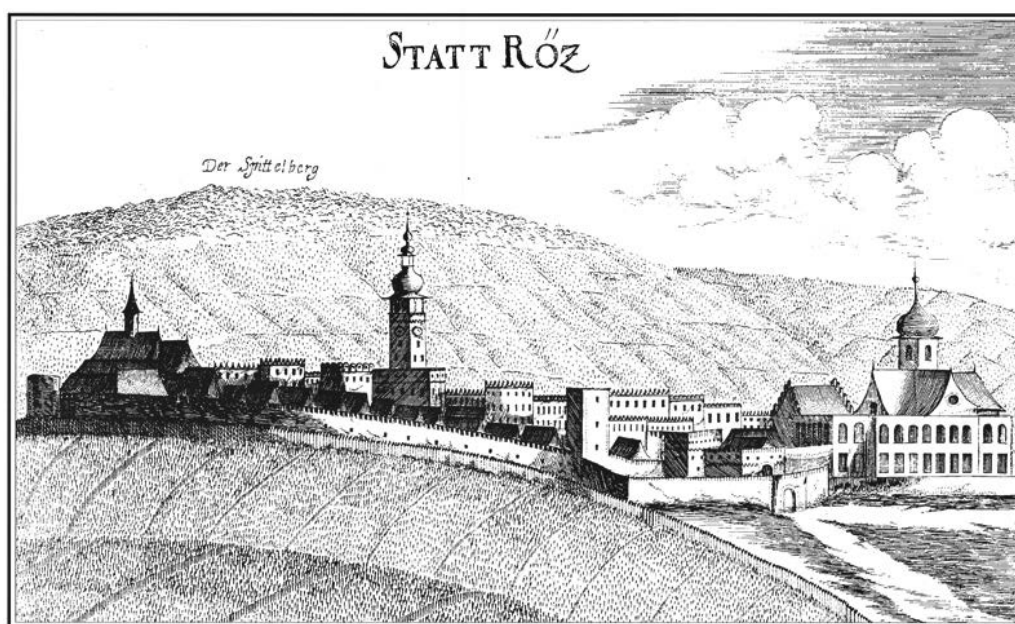
et la vinification en Europe occidentale au Moyen Age et à l’époque modern (Flaran 11), Auch 1991, 273–286; Schulz, Handwerksgelesen, 361 (Colmar).

36 Landsteiner, Einen Bären anbinden, 251–252.

37 Erich Landsteiner, Cellars in town and countryside. Wine storage architecture and the social relations of production in East Central Europe, in: Douro – Estudos & Documentos 7/3 (2002), 125–133.

38 Landsteiner, Weinbau und Gesellschaft, 158–168.

Figure 2: View of Retz. Engraving by Georg Matthäus Vischer (1672)



Source: By courtesy of the Town Archive Retz.

Table 2: Economic structure of the town of Retz (Lower Austria), 1558–1746 (percentage of citizens owning assets based on tax registers)

	1558	1590	1665	1702	1746
Only house property	11.7	0.9	10.6	1.9	2.8
House and land property	50.0	53.4	36.4	14.7	13.9
House and craft production	7.4	7.8	9.1	24.5	17.6
House, land, and craft	30.9	37.9	43.9	57.8	65.7
Artisans and traders	38.3	45.7	53.0	82.3	83.3
Landowners	80.9	91.3	80.3	72.5	79.6
n	90	116	66	102	108

Table 3: Composition of property assets of the citizens of the town of Retz (Lower Austria) according to tax assessments, 1558–1746 (percentages of assets by value)

	1558	1590	1665	1702	1746
Houses	42	40	28	46	46
Craft and trade	10	6	24	35	25
Land	48	54	48	19	29
(Vineyards)	(43)	(51)	(40)	(14)	(?)
Total	100	100	100	100	100

For the source references of Table 2 and 3, see Erich Landsteiner, *Weinbau und Gesellschaft in Ostmitteleuropa*, unprinted doctoral thesis, University of Vienna 1992, 158–168.

Controlling and dominating the wine market

Over the course of the seventeenth century the social base of wine production in Lower Austria underwent a massive restructuring. Falling relative prices of wine, due to the loss of export markets and changing consumer preferences (the rise of beer consumption in Central Europe), the subsequent decline in the profitability of vine-growing conducted with waged labour, and the general crisis of the urban sector of the economy caused by the Thirty Years' War, led to a contraction of urban viticulture. Vine-growing became rural, carried out now mainly by smallholders drawing on their household labour force. Under these circumstances, members of privileged urban communities invested with trading rights began to concentrate on trade in wine and ceded the production of the 'raw material' to the rural population.

Although wine production was a thoroughly commercialized sector of the agrarian economy, the wine market was neatly regulated. Most settlements in Lower Austria limited the introduction and storage to wine grown on their territory by local inhabitants. Vine-growers usually did not trade their wine actively and waited for buyers who came to them. The local trade in wine in the sense of buying, storing, and reselling was the prerogative of privileged actors.³⁹ On the northern frontier of wine production, the unstable yields, with a huge range of variation from one vintage to the next, made speculative behaviour extremely attractive. Buying cheap on the occasion of a bumper harvest from small growers obliged to sell their produce under any circumstance shortly after the harvest and selling at a high price after a small harvest was a lucrative option for all those with the necessary rights, capital, and storage facilities.

The town of Retz was particularly well equipped for this purpose. It had an extensive network of wine cellars within the town's walls and, although having no territory of its own, it dominated a hinterland that included nine villages. Villagers could sell their wine to buyers coming from the outside, but according to the charter of the town only the citizens of Retz had the right to buy wine-must and wine in this district, to store, age, and resell them to visiting customers. This privilege, first documented in a decree from 1486, became the major object of contention between the town and inhabitants of the surrounding countryside, who were eager to participate in this lucrative business after the majority of vineyards were passed into the hands of the village population during the crises of the seventeenth century. Ever since the late seventeenth century, town authorities used every means of confirmation of this privilege to adapt it to the new constellation of town and countryside. The time limit for the introduction of wine purchased from village producers was increasingly extended, up to February, reflecting the mounting capacities to process grapes and store the wine in the village cellars. Legal action was taken against everyone trying to participate in intermediary trade in wine within the district of the town. In the last confirmation of the privilege (1756) unauthorized dealers (i.e. everyone except the burghers of the town) were threatened with heavy fines for disobedience. Only twelve years later, privileges of this kind were abolished and the free trade in agrarian commodities finally was conceded to all producers.⁴⁰

39 Landsteiner, *Weinbau und Gesellschaft*, 238–252.

40 *Ibid.*, 252–274. See the decree on free trade in agrarian commodities, dated 10 Sept. 1768, in: Joseph Kropatschek (ed.), *Sammlung aller k. k. Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1740 bis 1780 [...]*, vol. 5, Wien 1786, no. 1039, 370.