

# Struggle for Change – Process of Urban Transformation of Koroska Street in Maribor

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## 1 ABSTRACT

The function of city streets has been in recent century mainly focused on the movement. This has often resulted in urban spaces dominated by motor vehicles to the extent that they failed to make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the city. Nevertheless, in recent decades a noticeable effort has been made to change the use and design of city streets so they could host a broader variety of functions thus becoming more user-friendly and sustainable. However the process of introducing change is often considered long-term and difficult, accompanied with hot public debates.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the broad range of the processes leading to substantial transformation and reuse of city streets, ranging from the political top-down approaches to the more recent bottom-up community led approaches using tactical urbanism. Theoretical part is supported by the case-study presenting the processes and attempts of urban transformation of Koroška street in Maribor through the period of two decades. The study shows the multitude of approaches trying to redesign the oldest street in Maribor, ranging from classic urban planning, architectural competition, interdisciplinary approach in the frame of Actors of urban change project, toward tactical urbanism and monitoring of traffic flows within the European mobility week 2015. In conclusion, the transformation processes of city streets can be successfully supported by civil initiatives, but the most decisive factor remains a clear vision and determination to facilitate change by the public administration.

Keywords: Maribor, European Mobility Week, streets for people, tactical urbanism, urban transformation

## 2 INTRODUCTION

“Streets are the lifeblood of our communities and the foundation of our urban economies. They make up more than 80 percent of all public space in cities and have the potential to foster business activity, serve as front yard for residents, and provide safe place for people to get around, whether on foot, by bicycle, car, or transit. The vitality of urban life demands a design approach sensitive to the multifaceted role streets play in our cities” (NACTO, 2013)

Most of the mankind’s urban history streets were used as multifunctional spaces. A road was a market, a playground, a park, and it was also a thoroughfare – but before 1903 no city had a traffic code. There were no traffic lights, painted lines or zebra crossings (Montgomery, 2013). A street as a public space represented one of the most important social and economic environments for people in the cities, as quoted “Streets are a primary ingredient of urban existence as they provide the structure on which to weave the complex interactions of the architectural fabric with human organisation” (Çelik et al., 1994).

However, since the rise of motorization (predominantly after the WWII), city streets became predominantly used for mobility and transport function, which on one hand benefited personal mobility and paved the way for fast economic development, but at the same time caused the immense rise of traffic and related problems. Environmental problems such as poor air quality and unacceptable levels of noise have consequently reduced the quality of life in many city areas. Heavy motor traffic has weakened the sense of neighbourhood and local community (European Commission, 2014), as showcased in the 1980s by Donald Appleyard’s analysis of social interaction on three streets with heavy, moderate and light traffic (Livable Streets, 1981). For the past 100 years streets were considered as mostly technical/infrastructural spaces, their standardisation subordinated to motor vehicles has shaped the environments we live in and caused physical and social impacts (Çelik et al., 1994). Consequently, an average of 80% of the street space is nowadays dedicated to motor traffic, the remaining 20% for the movement and interaction of people – such as sidewalks for pedestrians, cyclists and other possible activities (Lydon, Garcia, 2015). Furthermore, the use of streets is still predominantly monofunctional, the inclusion of multifaceted contents into the street space on the regular basis is usually prevented by the traffic regulation intended to assure health and safety. Last but not least, motor traffic proved to consume a lot of space in the cities – at least one third of all developed land is devoted to roads, parking lots, and other motor vehicle infrastructure, in USA an automobile consumes close

to the half the land of cities – therefore the waste of street space and its economic impact has been a prolonged phenomenon (Çelik et al., 1994).

Nevertheless, the need for the redesign of streets into more human and heterogenous places of the city, in a way reclaiming city streets for people, occurred not only in professional and scientific work but also in concrete actions already since the 1960s of the 20th century. The importance of a street as a social space and living environment was promoted by Jane Jacobs (*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961), followed by William H. Whyte (*The Street Life Project*, 1971), Christofer Alexander (*A Pattern Language*, 1977), Donald Appleyard (*Livable Streets*, 1981), Allan Jacobs (*Great Streets*, 1993), Jan Gehl (*Cities for people*, 2010) and others (Gehl, Swarre, 2013). The latter supported several transformations of city streets and city centers in recent decade with an aim to create better conditions for quality public life in the cities, by improving conditions for pedestrians in accordance to the mantra of spatial planning on a human scale (Gehl, 2010).

One has to consider streets as particular spaces of our cities that will undertake even bigger changes in their function and appearance in the future - e.g. be it the implementation of driverless mobility and its broad consequences, from new models of public transport and car-sharing to reorganisation of space use, above all the shaping of more inclusive streets (Smolnicki, Soltys, 2016), or be it the continuative rise and influence of cycling and walking as the most sustainable transport means, land appropriation processes and engagement of communities or even new regulations. The shift should happen mainly because of the arguments related to environmental sustainability, but also to social change. “Over the coming century, the challenges borne by cities and the burdens placed upon their streets will multiply in quantity and complexity. Growing urban populations will demand that their streets serve not only as corridors for conveyance of people, goods, and services, but as front yards, parks, playgrounds, and public spaces. Street must accommodate and ever-expanding set of needs. They must be safe, sustainable, resilient, multi-modal, and economically beneficial, all while accommodating traffic” (NACTO, 2013).

### 3 APPROACHES TO TRANSFORMATION OF CITY STREETS

How to initiate, support and achieve the expected change of street spaces into places that function above sole traffic corridors? In general, the processes that stimulate change vary from case to case, since they affect the change of gained rights and habits of users on one side (especially car drivers), as well as regulations and practices of street planning on the other. Traffic and building engineers are mostly responsible for latter, whereas involvement of architects and other experts is not a common practice, let alone participation of citizens and interested public. The approaches can be different, ranging from the classic top-down solutions, wherein the correct, but often very formally regulated street spaces are conceived. More creative and complex spatial solutions of transformation of street spaces can be obtained by the means of urban-planning and architectural competitions, especially when achieving professional and political consensus, along with sufficient financial support.

However, in the past 10 years one can notice successful examples of transformation of influential street spaces in bigger cities such as New York, Sydney, Montreal... which utterly differ from previous practices and provide a model and encouragement to other cities and actors. Earlier practices often proved to be inefficient<sup>1</sup>, mainly because they lack resources, power and control to implement formal masterplans (Bishop, Williams, 2012). On the contrary, new approaches often work as experiments on site, characterised by direct action, creative, temporary solutions and involvement of interested public. Their main aim is “to activate urban public space by setting in motion certain aspects of the public, social, political, cultural, and economic spheres of the city, to generate or accelerate particular reactions in the users” (Zotes, 2012). Furthermore, Zotes states that there is “an urgent need to find new ways to reclaim public spaces and urban structures in order to challenge the limited and outdated uses for which they were originally intended since cities are increasingly becoming more restrictive and exclusionary, not only in physical terms but also in terms of self-autonomy and spontaneous social manifestation” (Zotes, 2012). The ‘DIY urbanism’, ‘temporary urbanism’ (Bishop, Williams, 2012), ‘handmade urbanism’ (Rosa, Weiland, 2013), above all

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kaplan, 80% of all planned projects are never implemented (Kaplan et al, 2005; from Lydon, Garcia, 2015).

‘tactical urbanism’ (Lydon, Garcia, 2015) describe the less framed and rigid approach to urban change<sup>2</sup>, as the word tactical explains it well: “a) of or relating to small-scale actions serving a large purpose and b) adroit in planning and manoeuvring to accomplish a purpose” (Lydon, Garcia, 2015). Regardless of name, the new approaches emerge in different, often interconnected formats as presented below.

### 3.1 Temporary use of space

Temporary use of street spaces is driven by rapidly changing possibilities, need for expression, time-limited exclusivity, need for flexibility and opportunity to unlock the site potentials (Bishop, Williams, 2012) such as pop-up events, art installations, urban agriculture, sports and recreation activities, exploration of street spaces. “Some are planned and formal, some informal, accidental, spontaneous or even illegal” (Bishop, Williams, 2012). Some already formed in initiatives such as ‘Open street project’ (started in 2010, involving more than 70 American cities), which shows the change of paradigm and the growing importance of street space (Lydon et.al, 2013). Its aim is to introduce gradual change e.g. by closing roads for traffic on weekends, so that people can gain positive experience of different mobility than driving, especially walking and cycling, but also to instigate a long-term change of perspective. Temporary use of space is often accompanied by a need for physical change of space which can be a successful tool in the process of urban change (i.e. Temporary landscaping in Times square, New York).

### 3.2 Interim spatial solutions

According to Bishop and Williams “landowners and developers are recognising that their plans need to be more flexible, and that there may be a role for temporary activities or interim phases of development” (2012). Interim design stages are promoted as a tool when funding streams are limited, complex approval and regulatory processes are challenging to deliver results that communities demand. “Interim design strategies are tools and tactics that cities can use to improve their roadways and public spaces in near term” (NACTO, 2013). Changes are taking place toward physical transformation of streets, as in the case of Montreal and many other cities, where actors try to make streets visually attractive for users with smaller and less financially demanding interventions, especially by greening, by designating space for pedestrians and cyclists, and for other purposes (Lydon, Garcia, 2015) but also to expose certain societal or political problems (i.e. urban hacking, art guerrilla). Mike Lydon, founder and supporter of tactical urbanism, states that achieving the objective often requires future solutions to be ‘shown’ as a one to one model and constructed by the simple material resources (i.e. benches, greenery pots, markings, railings, etc.) adding new interesting contents (i.e. yoga on the street, basketball, seating in the middle of the street, concerts, chess, ...). In addition, the high costs at the later stage of the project can be avoided by the so-called ‘live rendering’ at the early stages of the project development. Such physical simulation can encourage people’s interest, inspiration and integration, it is possible to directly measure the effects, suggest improvements, enable quick learning, promote change, as well experiment with different ideas, etc... and all this in a relatively short period of time, with a little risk taken, and often with the high degree of efficiency (Lydon, Garcia, 2015).

### 3.3 Partitipation of citizens

In cases of small and gradual changes in the area, as well as in cases solving more problematic traffic situations or introducing advanced traffic-spatial solutions, the participation of the lay and the wider professional public is highly recommended. This confirms the example of the design and implementation of the first shared space in Graz (Sonnenfelsplatz) in 2009/2010, which was conceived as the result of collaboration between municipality, experts and interested public and would not have been imaginable without their contribution (understanding, acceptance, involvement).

Furthermore, examples from the Netherlands show the participation of residents, involved in a very broad range of activities, such as taking care for the street space, maintaining, bringing content and even transforming. Van Eggerat states that in the frame of the project OpzoomerMee in Rotterdam, over 1800

<sup>2</sup> In previous decades, such approaches were frequently despised and looked down upon as marginal projects without any true value, primarily because they were economically marginal and were often labelled with derogatory terms related to urban squats or gardening and shantytowns. Nowadays, many such forms of community and hence space organisation are slowly becoming more legitimate, mostly due to their social cohesion element (Pogačar, 2012).

street communities were registered since 1994. There are many other similar small initiatives such as 'Mens maken de stad: Rotterdam Ideeand Meerdoen', 'Gebiedscommissie'... Due to inefficiency of public services, and the need of the urban population to integrate and decide upon the development of the street they live in, the initiatives of engaged citizens are generally in uprise.

### 3.4 Creative regulations

Standardization and byrocratic procedures often prevent creative use of streetspaces. An example of overcoming byrocratic obstacles when dealing with streets as public spaces is the concept of 'Playfull commons' – licensing co-creation in public spaces (Karjevsky, Quack, 2015). According to Karjevsky and Quack users of public spaces face boring and mundane environments that are either neglected or optimized for commercial activities. As surveillance and regulation grows, users are criminalised. In most cases, users are distanced from decision making processes and separated from the definition, design and creation of public spaces (Karjevsky, Quack, 2015). Therefore, the tool 'Playfull commons' should trigger public debate on the regulation of public spaces, licensing to enable owners and administrators of public spaces to allow for clearly defined kinds of playful uses, to create high quality, safe and fun environments and influence the design and construction of new public spaces (Karjevsky, Quack, 2015).

## 4 CASE STUDY OF KOROŠKA STREET

Case study describes different approaches for urban transformation of the Koroška street, which is the oldest straight road in the city of Maribor.<sup>3</sup> Its foundations were layed around 1250 when the medieval town of Markburg (Mark an der Burg) was formed inside the fortification walls. According to Sapač (2013), Koroška street is considered to be "the mother of all city streets in Maribor". Situated at the old city centre of Maribor with well preserved medieval parcelation (typical houses with 2 innercourtyards), it bears historic importance as some of the cities oldest buildings are still located there, at the same time it has been considered as one of the most degraded and congested road in the city centre. Traffic meassurments performed in winter 2015 reported a daily average of 18.181 vehicles, aprox. 1 million vehicles per year (Gornik, Pogačar, 2016). The part of the street taken in observation is only 250m long and connects the Main square with the location of the historic gates called 'Koroška vrata'. The street profile is at its narrowest part only 9 m wide and as such unapropriate for high traffic density (especially trucks and busses), causing imbalance for other users of space as pedestrains and cyclists, but also for other people working and living there. As a result of longlasting nagative effect of traffic, the whole area has been visible degraded, the level of noise and PM10 particles had been clearly exceeding the allowed values. One can notice empty buildings, dusty and degraded facades, poor economic activity at the ground floor, etc. Once a vivid city street (still so in the first half of the 20th Century) full of small craftmans and artisan shops (bakeries, pubs, tailors, carpenters, glaziers...) got suffocated by motorised traffic. However, not only the intense traffic caused the degradation of the street, but also other factors such as the contested nationalisation of property in 1945, the attitude of the new owners without historic bounds to the land and properties, denationalisation processes after 1991 and new economic development, general shift of the centre of economic activities from the old city centre to the periphery, ageing and depopulation of the area, poor economic capacity of ist inhabitants/owners, and demanding renovation of the built historic heritage. It must have been clear from the start that the task to revitalise the area as a whole is a complex one and that not all problems can be solved only by proposing the reorganisation of the traffic and street redesign. However, the necessity to reduce motorised traffic on this particular street has been recognised by architects and urban planners as one of the major problems since the turn of the millenium.

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<sup>3</sup> Maribor is the second largest city in Slovenia, with approx. 110.000 inhabitatnts. It was an important industrial city in times of former Yougoslavia, involved in car, metal and textile industry. Since the 1990s most factories collapsed, causing big unemployment, and the need for restructuring. The city also beared the title of European Capial of Culture in 2012. The unemployment is still above the countries average.



Fig. 1: Main square and Koroška street as shared spaces in 1961 (photo: Jože Gal). Fig. 2: (right): Motorised traffic at Koroška street in 2015 (photo: Urška Pignar)

#### 4.1 Classic vs. contemporary approach to urban transformation

The process of the redevelopment of Koroška street can be segmented into two major phases. One is characterised by classic urban development approach. The other is characterised by using elements of tactical urbanism, e.g. small physical interventions into the street space, as well participation of the local community (see Fig. 3). Upon the list of released documents, studies, different activities related to Koroška street, the process aiming at urban renewal is described.

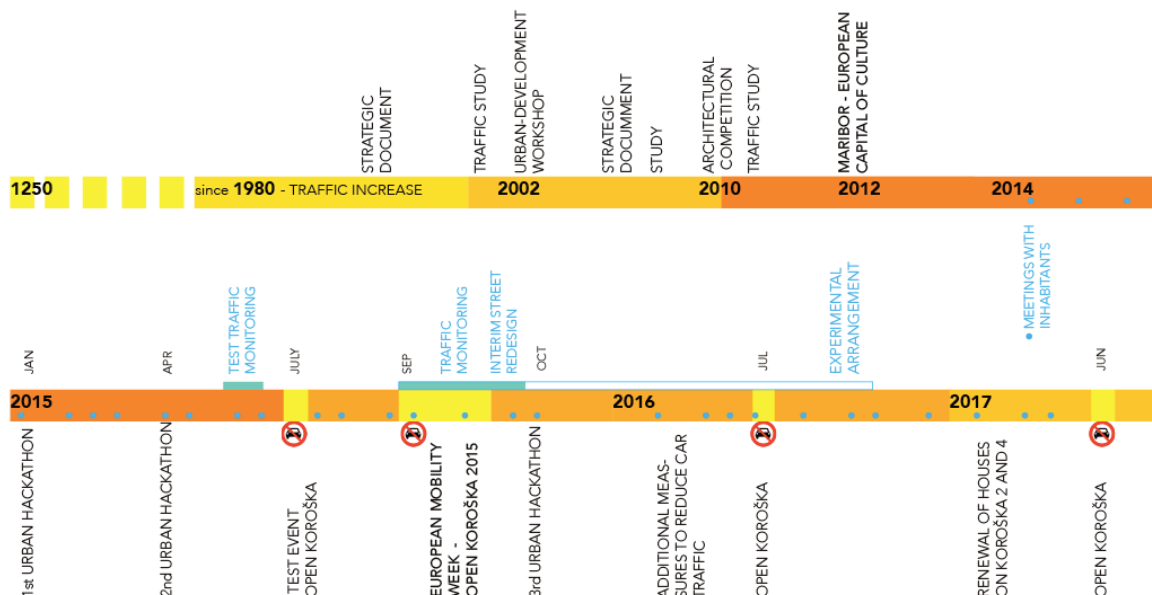


Fig. 3: Timeline of activities related to urban transformation of Koroška street (time scale in not proportionate), (source: author).

##### 4.1.1 Classic approach (1985-2013)

(1) Recognition of the problem by architects, urban planners, as well municipality. The need to revive Koroška street was first mentioned in the official document named 'General plan of the renewal of the old core of Maribor' (Recer, Reichenberg, 1985), released in 1985 as the first strategic document to deal with the built substance of the medieval part of the city.

(2) 'Traffic analysis of the new traffic regime of the central area of Maribor' in 2002 (org. 'Prometna analiza novega prometnega režima na centralnem območju Maribora', by Cestno-prometni institut/Traffic institute); the study is proposing tendency to reduce traffic on Koroška street to become a one-way street (in the west/east direction); the concept is incorporated into the so called 'PUP Old city center' – the official planning document of the Municipality of Maribor.

(3) 'Pilot project for the renewal of buildings on Koroška street 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10' was proposed in 2002. Project included consulting as well preparation of the planning documentation, arrangements with the house owners and residents, proposals for the use of stores in the ground floor. The renovation of facades did not occur.

(4) International urban-development workshop ‘Reminiscence’ was carried out in 2002 by 6 teams from Slovenia, Austria and Holland (organised by the Institute for spatial planning – Municipality of Maribor, Architects Association Maribor, private architectural office Igre d.o.o.). The aim was to search for reason for degradation of the area along Koroška street and for spatial solutions for its revitalisation. An exhibition took place in 2003 (Recer et al., 2003).

(5) Strategic document ‘Project of renovation of the old town core, 2003 (org. ‘Projekt prenove starega mestnega jedra’, Igre d.o.o.) has dedicated a considerate sequence to Koroška street and its historic importance as well problems related to traffic and degradation, e.g. “Koroška street is one of the traffic routes, that conditioned the birth of the city. On the west side of the fortification wall, the entrance gates ‘Koroška vrata’ were built as a powerful fort. On the other side Koroška street expanded and formed the Main Square. The facts speak about the destiny of the medieval city connected to the destiny of Koroška street and vice versa, even today the destiny of Koroška street is related with the destiny of the whole old city centre” (Recer et al., 2003).

(6) ‘Study of urban development and revitalisation of the old city, with an emphasis on renovation of façades on Koroška street’ in 2010 (org. ‘Študija urbanistične ureditve ter revitalizacije mestnega jedra, s poudarkom na ureditvi fasad Koroške ceste v poteku starega mestnega jedra Maribora’). Study was conducted in a frame of cross-border project scheme City Network Graz-Maribor. Part of the study was a questionnaire related to the traffic development options for Koroška street (among 590 responses, 68% answered that pedestrian zone would be the best solution). Excerpt from the text shows the description of the situation of the street at the time i.e. “Koroška street is degraded into two-way traffic route with narrow pavements and without bicycle lanes. Buildings adjacent to it are degraded, many stores are abandoned or they mostly have, by few exceptions, a dubious purpose considered for a part of the city with the highest historic and urban value” (Ambrožič, 2010). One of the local architects, Lobnik states “one of the main conditions that the planned can be realised, is that the main role on Koroška street should be gained by the pedestrians” (Ambrožič, 2010).

(7) ‘Architectural and urban planning competition for the wider area of the Main square, Koroška street and Kneza Koclja street’ in 2010. The competition results divide the area by three different solutions of three architectural teams. The one for Koroška street is designed by the Slovene-Mexican architects (MX\_SI architects), Boris Bežan and partners (competition is organised by the Chamber of Architects, Municipality of Maribor, Architects Association Maribor). It proposes a new ambient, with more space devoted for pedestrians along with the one-way street for motorised traffic (Fig. 5), (ZAPS, 2010).



Fig. 4 (left): Old city centre of Maribor with Main Square and Koroška street. Fig. 5 (right): Koroška street according to architectural competition of MX\_SI architects, Boris Bežan and partners

(8) New traffic study was conducted in 2011 (Pavlinič, 2011), (org. ‘Maribor stara mestna sredica: prometna študija vplivov režimskih ukrepov in planiranih prometnih novogradenj na prometno sliko območja stare mestne sredice’, Municipality of Maribor, Traffic institute). Traffic simulations were made to test the possibility of the partial or complete closing of Koroška street for motorised traffic. Simulations were made by the assumption of constant growth of the motorised traffic and they did not include any consideration of other types of mobility such as cycling. Study proved that closing of the Koroška street for motorised traffic is not possible at all, as it will cause the collapse of the traffic system. The study among others proposed the building of the tunnel under the Koroška street, that should be connected to the already planned rather big underground garage at the Main square.

Further, results of the first phase show several different approaches to transform Koroška street. The most important among them is the recognition of the historic and urban importance of the street that got embedded into the strategic documents. The list shows rather serious intentions of formal preparation for the urban transformation of the street, however, conducted studies, strategies, workshops, competitions, etc. did not have any concrete or positive effect on the space of the street itself. On contrary, within the period of 20 years since the problematic was first tracked, the number of motor vehicles has risen and the degradation of space – e.g. demolished road surface, dilapidating buildings facades, unused courtyards, abandoned buildings – got more severe. One could argue that the lack of finance or the change of local government (in 2013) prevented the realisation of bold plans, but the fact that the European Capital of Culture<sup>4</sup> took place in 2012 could mean that the opportunity and challenge was big enough. The peak of the phase could be marked by the proposal for building the tunnel<sup>5</sup> that could solve traffic problems in the east–west direction through the city centre and that would entirely release Koroška street from motorised traffic. However, it would be the biggest and the most expensive project of the city for the past 10 years and as such even more difficult to achieve. In addition, the underground garage also did not find investor until now.

#### 4.1.2 Informal approach (2014-2017)

The second phase of the urban transformation of Koroška street can however be characterised by alternative approach to urban development. Since the year 2014 many different and for the local environment rather untypical activities took place with an aim to activate inhabitants of the street, to activate local authorities, to activate the experts and interested public, but most importantly to activate the space of the street itself. In the following page, each approach is briefly described. A series of 'events' and actions undertaken in recent years, is presented below.

(1) 'Living city project' 2013-2015 - Research of the area along the Koroška street' in the frame of the program 'Actors of Urban Change'<sup>6</sup> (Schwegmann, 2015). The project at first place addressed the revival of the degraded courtyards in the city centre together with local participants. It resulted in many different activities (such as cleaning actions in the courtyards, exhibition with students of architecture, picnics with residents...). Research was systematically conducted on every courtyard with an aim to get data from the field and to establish direct contact with the inhabitants of the area. In 2014 the scope of the project spread from the courtyards to involving the street space of Koroška street.

(2) 'Regular meetings with the inhabitants of Koroška street' – with an established direct contact with the inhabitants, but also owners and employees of local shops and stores, regular meetings have been organised since April 2014. 10 meetings were organised in the frame of the 'Living city project'. Since April 2015 to April 2016, 27 meetings were organised in the frame of 'Actors of Koroška street'. Participants, usually between 10 and 20 meet on different locations on Koroška street, that were mostly unknown to them before, although they live nearby (i.e. gathering space for local divers' club, gathering space for local fire brigade, local galleries...). The meetings were moderated by Association House! (main partner at the 'Living city project'), guests were from Municipality, University of Maribor and local media. The aim of meetings was to mobilise local population for active involvement in the street revitalisation, but also to deal with the daily problems of vandalism on the street, safety, garbage disposal problems, etc. One of the more visible results of the meeting process was the self-organisation of the smaller group of inhabitants who formed the 'Initiative of Koroška street' in April 2016 and organised 11 meetings until today.

(3) 'Urban Hackathons', in 2015, as a part of the 'Actors of urban change' pilot program, the 'Maribor team' (Living city project) organized 3 urban hackathons related to the renewal of the old city centre of Maribor (Schwegmann, 2015). The three two-day's events took place in January 2015 ('City-toolbox: Revive the city

<sup>4</sup> Two art interventions took place at Koroška street for the ECOC 2012 – one was laser illumination to impose the location of the historic gates, the other was an outdoor exhibition of the renown comics artist on the topic of aggression and local football team.

<sup>5</sup> Maribor has 80% of inhabitants living within the radius of 3 km measured from the Main square. Distance of 3 km is supposed to be easy to overcome by bicycle.

<sup>6</sup> The program Actors of Urban Change aims to achieve sustainable and participatory urban development through cultural activities. Actors from the cultural scene, the administration, and the private sector are given an opportunity to strengthen their competencies in cross-sector collaboration. Through local projects, process-related consulting, and Europe-wide exchange, the program participants put their skills into practice.

together’), April 2015 (‘Reviving Koroška street’) and October 2015 (‘Reviving the city centre’) of 2015 with 40-60 participants at each event. All three hackathons were organized with an intention to activate, inform and empower those willing to support urban change in the area. There was a conscious attempt to merge different groups of stakeholders. Consequently, all three hackathons were characterized by a broad variety of participants, ranging from municipal officials, university researchers (architect and traffic engineers), experts from different fields of urban development, representatives of NGO’s, civil initiatives (e.g. Initiative City Council), students and most importantly by local people who were interested in helping to solve the problems of their own living environment. (Pogačar, Žižek, 2016)



Fig. 6 (left): 2<sup>nd</sup> Urban Hackathon – Reviving Koroška street in 2015 (photo: Igor Unuk). Fig. 7 (right): Inhabitants meeting of Koroška street (photo: Kaja Pogačar)

(4) Research project ‘Contemporary Spatial Analysis’ (April - July 2015) was conducted by the students and mentors of the Department of Architecture and Department of Sociology (University of Maribor) – 14 days observation and analysis of user’s behaviour and counting of pedestrians, cyclists, car drivers deviations (i.e. parking on the pavement...), recording age structure. Among interesting results were high numbers of cyclists driving on the pavement, crossing the street by pedestrians outside of marked areas, incorrect parking upon the pavements, people using the street for transit and not evolving in conversation, only few children spotted on the street... Counting of pedestrian and cyclist was never performed on that street before (Pogačar et al., 2015).

(5) Interviews (22 June 2015 – 3 July 2015) - part of the previously mentioned research were also interviews with more than 40 coincidentally chosen passerby. Method was a half-structured interview consisting of questions: how often are you found in Koroška street, why do you use Koroška street, what do you like and dislike about the Koroška street and commentary about the current traffic arrangement. The most common answers were: the street is neglected, interviewers expressed that they mostly like ‘nothing’, there were little positive commentars about the street, those who were had a nostalgic note, more than half of the interviewers mentioned they thought the street had too much traffic, less than half reported that they don’t mind the traffic (Pogačar et al., 2015).

(6) ‘OPEN Koroška Street’ (5 July 2015) – One-day event in July 2015 was the first time the street was not used for motor-traffic. More than 30 volunteers help to arrange temporary equipment (30 tables and benches, 3 bath tubs filled with water by fireman brigade located in the middle of Koroška street, 20 bamboo plants and exhibition stands were inserted). Many different activities were organised such as urban sports (basketball, football), cultural events (dancing performances, street theatre, visiting exhibitions at 5 galleries located at Koroška street...), culinary and children workshops, direct action such as marking new pedestrian crossings with colour chalks. A series of interviews were performed on that day, with answers completely diametrical to those gathered just shortly before. Most interesting answers were that visitors feel like being at the sea-site or even as being in Ljubljana (the capital of Slovenia), which showed that people perception on the street changed instantly. As a part of the event, an exhibition about Koroška street was organised explaining the origins of the street, presented data of traffic flows and the results of the architectural competition on the renovation of Koroška street (Odporna Koroška, 2016).





Fig. 8 and 9: Open Koroška street – test event in 2015 (photo: Kaja Pogačar)

(7) ‘European Mobility Week - Open Koroška street 2015’ – Based on the good experience from the test day in July 2015, municipality of Maribor, together with the University of Maribor (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture, University Sports Association Maribor), NGO’s (Maribor cycling network, Association House!, Citilab Institute, Institute Breath, Living city initiative,...) decided to use the opportunity of the European Mobility Week to foster further activities related to the revitalisation of the Koroška street, related mainly to motorised traffic reduction. In September 2015, the street was closed for motorised traffic (except for taxis and buses) for entire three weeks. Many events were organised along it in order to rise awareness on sustainable mobility. As a part of the project, Koroška street was partly redesigned<sup>7</sup> and renewed (new pavement on one side of the street, 4 new creative dotted street crossings, 6 trees in large pots, stands for bicycles, new stations for buses...). A more comprehensive exhibition was prepared (20 posters), adding short information about each of the buildings history (sticker on each house), interactive wall for exchange of opinions was prepared (Gornik, Pogačar, 2016). Although the change was mainly positively accepted, the whole project was accompanied with rather unexpected and extremely emotional response of individuals through the local media (local radio station got warned by the ‘State information protection agent’ because of the hostile speech and negative campaign against the project<sup>8</sup>). There was a huge media response in the local newspaper *Večer* (daily at least 3 main articles were released related to the topic), the project launched hot public debates, also an extremely negative response from the side of the Architects Association. As a consequence municipality stopped supporting the project and the dotted street crossing were erased and replaced by normal ones. In addition, after three weeks of ‘Open Koroška’ traffic returned on the street.

(8) ‘Traffic monitoring’ – Parallel to the European Mobility week, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture (University of Maribor) conducted the monitoring on 13 streets, to measure what happened with the distribution of traffic if Koroška street was closed for motor traffic. Results proved the tendency of evaporation, since approx. 15% of vehicles counted were not present at any of the surrounding streets where measurements were conducted. Smaller congestions were noticed, but only in peak hours and not more than 10 minutes’ delay and part of the traffic was redistributed to Lent (historic side along the river Drava), which was found unacceptable. “The initial thesis was proven to be correct. As much as 3200 vehicles daily “evaporated”. The main importance of monitoring was to gain concrete numbers on car redistribution - data that wasn’t available before in such an extent. The experiment simultaneously showed the flexibility of changing the traffic habits, but also the aggressivity of certain population groups (in report male age group of around 55 years was identified as being the least acceptable of the temporary regulations). The experiment was considered as one step toward implementation of sustainable mobility in the city of Maribor” (Gornik, Pogačar, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Architects that won the competition were informed and agreed about the planned interim design of the street.

<sup>8</sup> Car still represents important status symbol in Maribor.



Fig. 10 and 11: Koroška street with the new interim appearance at European Mobility Week 2015 (photo: Alexia Tyriakidou).



Fig. 12: Koroška street with the dotted street crossings, that were erased and replaced by the classic ones just after the European Mobility Week 2015.

(9) ‘Lent festival - OPEN Koroška 2016’ – still once a year as a part of the yearly summer festival (Lent Festival), Koroška street is closed for traffic. Similar to the first event in 2015, it aims to open new perspective on the street, to enable genuine physical experience of the street without the traffic and to walk in the middle of the street, to dance in the middle of the street, to play football on the street in the middle of the city centre. It will be closed again on 25 June 2017.

(10) ‘ISUDS’ – The city of Maribor is taking part in Integrated urban strategies, co-funded by the ERDF. The strategic part was confirmed at the City council at the end of 2016 (Naterer, Žižek, 2017). The renewal of Koroška street according to architectural plan gained at the competition 2010, is put into the strategic plan. Through that mechanism financial means for renewal will be assured.

Furthermore, the results of the second phase of urban transformation of Koroška street show visible changes in the appearance of the street as well improved conditions mainly for pedestrians with 4 new pedestrian crossings and for cyclist by inserting cycle lanes on both side of the street. Greenery was added to improve the ambient quality of the street space. At the same time conditions for car-drivers got worse (e.g. cycle lanes were inserted within the widths of the driving lanes – the so called Dutch model and bus stops were also put on driving lanes, so drivers must wait for bus to fill). There was an intentional decision to try to change the hierarchy on the street by imposing pedestrians and cyclist and at the same time to subordinate car drivers. The latter should get the feeling as being strangers on that historic street. As a result, the new spatial constellation caused a lot of complaints by car-drivers. With better communication strategy and campaign by the Municipality, many negative effects of the experiment could be mitigated. The scale of the project also changed immensely, since in the preparation phase all stakeholders were mostly personally informed, involved and prepared for the change, which wasn’t the case in the phase that included all citizens. Urban transformation of Koroška street was a main topic in the city of Maribor in the fall 2015 and even later. The street was for the entire year after the experiment marked by the sign ‘Experimental arrangement’.

Nowadays one can see a further change in the offer on the street as many café-owners put chairs on sideways, where possible. Buildings at Koroška street 2 and 4 got renovated, there are less empty buildings than 5 years ago. Although there is still too much traffic on the street, the traffic got slower (speed restriction to 30 km/h). With interim design street looks livelier and more dynamic than before.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Process of urban transformation of cities towards sustainable urban development can often turn into a long-term struggle, especially if street spaces are those that need to be changed. The habits of users gained in the previous century, when streets were hijacked by the motorised traffic, demand a sustained effort to be transformed. Streets as public spaces are at the junction of various interests, above that there will be many new demands put on them for the future. If we want streets to become more than just traffic corridors, efforts from many different expert profiles such as architects, traffic engineers, urban planners, civil engineers, landscape architects, urban sociologist, etc., but also municipality administration, local inhabitants, interested public will be necessary.

Reasons why important centrally located historic street in the town of Maribor still hasn't got its new role and appearance are many, but similarly the steps and the processes that would lead to improving the conditions of Koroška street were many. One can notice different actions and different actors being involved in different steps of the process spreading through more than 2 decades.

First phase

- Step 1: Recognition of the problems from the side of experts, architects, urban planners, informal search for development options
- Step 2: Traffic studies, Incorporation into the strategic documents
- Step 3: Architectural and urban planning competition
- Second phase
- Step 4: Promotion of the redevelopment from the side of different bottom-up initiatives
- Step 5: Experiment on site – testing the new traffic model on site and temporary urban interventions on site
- Step 6: Redevelopment of Koroška street included into the Integrated Urban Strategy (ISUDS /ERDF)

The first phase of the redevelopment process of the Koroška street, characterised by the classic approach, did not result in any physical intervention or any kind of improvement of the street itself, however the second phase supported by the small physical interventions showed the citizens as one to one model the perspective of the future development possibilities of the street. Although the street got a bit of fresh atmosphere, most problems are still not resolved and the demand for a serious approach taken from the side of responsible institutions is still more than necessary. Ineffective long term struggle relates mainly to bad planning and organisational capacities from the side of municipality (no clear priorities, bad decision-making...), divided public opinion (pro–motor vehicle community), no consensus about the general traffic scheme of the inner-city area and others.

Finally, the location of Koroška street proved to be a neuralgic point of the city of Maribor. As shown in the case-study, certain classical practices and approaches aiming at urban transformation proved to be inefficient and even outdated. However, the potential of contemporary approaches exists. It is thus necessary to find new solutions and to try out creative and more efficient approaches, such as tactical urbanism and participatory practices, which should be taken seriously primarily by the architects and urban planners. Top down practices should be complemented by the bottom-up approaches or vice-versa. It can be concluded that the transformation processes of the city streets can be successfully supported by the small physical interventions and bottom-up approaches of civil initiatives, but the most decisive factor remains a clear vision and determination to facilitate change on the side of public administration.

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