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## Cross-border Region Graz-Maribor: Challenges and Potentials of Integration Processes

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### 1 ABSTRACT

The paper outlines the spatial development of the cross-border region between the two cities - Graz (Austria) and Maribor (Slovenia) - with regard to the integration processes in the past, present and future. First, the analyses of the past, when both parts of the region shared the national border, will be discussed. It will emphasize the consequences of the 'border effect', which are mostly characterised by growing intensification of urbanization alongside the main transport axis, the emergence of new 'urban nodes', and the gradual urban sprawl in the hinterland. For decades, the area has been generating various integration processes of economic, social and cultural collaboration, which were in most cases partly financed by the European Union (EU). In 2004, after Slovenia joined the EU, some traditional relationships started to perform in the opposite way, demonstrating the gradually diminishing rate of commuter flows, especially those of shopping tourism. However, the current regional development is characterised by strong efforts for balancing the economic, social and cultural standards on both sides of the cross-border region. The paper aims to identify these new dynamics of intraregional interactions as potentials for future developments.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

The territorial transformation is increasingly changing spatial relations between states, regions, cities, and agglomerations from the hierarchical and organisational point of view. The strategic enforcement of transnational authorities is creating the new unique European economic and social space, where different transnational integrations emerge and diminish the role of national states (Sitar, 2005). In this context, the new role of national borders that enables free movement of persons and capital, goods and services between the member states of the EU is arising. These circumstances have not only evoked complex socio-economic processes, but have also raised the new spatial development potentials of border areas. In the paper, there is an attempt to discuss these tendencies in a radically new light in contrast to their historical role: namely, the cross-border areas are becoming the key elements in the process of integration, economic, and social cohesion (EC, 2002). Hence, they are supposed to become the joining links of European integration - as popularly said, 'the cement of Europe under construction' (MOT, 2000). The EU offers a vision and instruments to support these developments areas throughout guidelines in several strategic documents such as the ESDP<sup>1</sup>, and the co-financing of Community initiatives such as Interreg as a new challenge for cross-border regions. However, in practice the new role will be hard to manage since these areas represent the crossroads of often-contrary ideas and interests of different actors (Sitar, 2005). In order to recognize the main forces of spatial development along the transportation axis between the two regional centres of two neighbouring countries, the City of Graz, located in the Southern Styria region (Austria) and the City of Maribor, located in Podravje region (Slovenia), will be presented, while keeping in mind the national border phenomenon between two neighbouring countries<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> European Spatial Development Perspectives, EC, 1999

<sup>2</sup> Speaking of cross-border region between the cities of Graz and Maribor, it has to be mentioned that neither geographic definition nor the administrative unit has ever existed. However, there is an institutionalized form of EU cross-border initiative called EUREGIO Styria-Slovenia (in German 'Steiermark-Slowenien'), established in 2001 in order to link up the North-East Slovenian regions with four Austrian EU-regional managements of Graz, East- and South-West-Styria, and the district Voitsberg by co-financing of common cross-border projects.

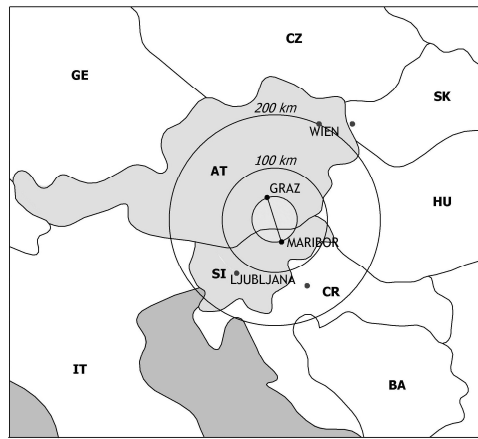


Fig. 1: Geographical position of the axis Graz-Maribor between Austria and Slovenia

Source: Pogačar, 2006

In the past, the spatial development of the research area was submitted to constant changes of geopolitical context, in particular in the 20th and 21st century (i.e. changing borders, territorial frames, etc.) as well as to transformation processes caused by specific development trends. In recent years, these are strongly indicated by changing traditional urban patterns characterised by the transformation of historic compact towns and cities towards dispersed and fragmented urban structures that occur in predominantly rural hinterland. In this regard, a special attention is paid to the new images of land use related to the urban growth of both city regions where the new urban landscape is arising. This development is characterized by new 'urban nodes' growing within the area along the main infrastructural corridor linking both cities. The specific motorway-bound development emerging on green-field areas along the transportation axis during the last 10-15 years in form of cargo centres, shopping centres, business centres, recreational and cultural centres, is changing the visual appearance as well as the relations between both cities. In the literature such a development is being described as characteristic feature of regions with growing interdependence, quoting that "...the cities within such regions have tended to coalesce morphologically and functionally into larger and dispersed regional urban systems where a number of central cities are located at close proximity; two major tendencies are particularly relevant in this respect: the continuing emergence of new 'nodes' and the enlarging of the scopes and the thickness of the interdependencies between both old and new nodes" (Meijers, Romein, 2002). Within this background, we will introduce the methodological framework, based on the bottom-up observations of spatial development in the research area, by indicating the new emerging urban structures which are changing the conventional image of the border region. Additionally, some statistical data concerning main indicators will be included in the investigation.

### 3 APPROACH AND RELEVANCE

The spatial development of the cross-border area Graz-Maribor is reflecting the challenges of the political, economic, and social transformation processes of the last decades, as well as the new market conditions, which raised the new dynamics to the development of areas located outside the traditional cities. Opposite to the traditional way of geographical analyses, the question of the appropriate methodology suitable to the uncertainty of steadily changing spatial structures has been one of the topics of discussions by academics, researchers and scholars. The issue of the emergence of new urban landscapes is especially interesting in the case of border areas between the new and old EU-member states. Generally, the lack of methods and tools caused our decision to transmit from the primarily statistically based analyses to more illustrative ones. We relied upon the describing of the development processes, such as mapping, designating, and decoding the characteristic spatial development images, observed in different time periods. The structural analyses are mainly dealing with urban agglomeration development characterised by urbanisation growth out of the city borders, at urban edges, in the outskirts, and in the hinterland. This kind of approach is well known in contemporary urban and regional planning analyses. There are a few architects and planners from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands etc. who expose the fact that the outward development of cities was crucial for the development of the inter-urban space, often described as the space in-between the cities. According to Sieverts (2005, p.70), who claimed that "...the outwards directed development of the communities represents the internal development of the region...", we try to explain and to understand the emerging urban

landscapes as a new types of urban structures integrating the current spatial trends, potentials, and perspectives of an attractive, prosperous, and successful cross-border region.

According to the above mentioned problematic of steadily changing circumstances in the research area, the analysis of urban development stretching along the Graz-Maribor transportation axis will be presented by a series of maps illustrating the main phases of the spatial transformation processes (Fig. 4). Firstly, the approach taken into the consideration for the analyses of the area attempts to divide the identified and mapped spatial processes into certain periods as the specific spatial-development stages of territorial organization, basically from the point of view of time. The methodology was adopted after Borsdorf (2004), who presented the urbanization processes of the territory on the base of three different phases illustrated as, (a) the Compact settlements/Urban-rural dichotomy, (b) the Urban-rural continuum, and (c) the Urban-rural compound. Secondly, the influence of the national border on the region's development was the other important factor taken into consideration. In order to give valuable information on the complexity of the area's spatial development, both factors of influence, the main spatial development phases and the influence of the national border, will be incorporated in the chapters followed (Pogačar, 2008).

In this paper, the research area of the Graz-Maribor axis is acting as a case-study of the cross-border regions' development which represents the arena for discovering, illustrating and describing various territorial and morphological processes, in relation to different impacts, effecting the image and organization of the inter-urban space. The analyses will incorporate the development of both cities, Graz and Maribor, in their specific role as regional centres located only 60 km apart. In this context, the city of Maribor is being slightly privileged because of its specific role being located only 18 km close to the national border. The development of the city of Graz is taking place app. 45 km away and was not so strongly affected by the presence of the border.

## **4 CASE STUDY: CROSS-BORDER REGION GRAZ-MARIBOR**

### **4.1 The position of the research area within Austria and Slovenia**

The research area is situated in the corridor of the main trans-national transportation route of Europe, which is also the main north-south axis to the Balkans. One of the Pan-European corridors, Corridor X (XA) passes both cities and prolongs in the direction to Slovenian-Croatian border. In addition, Corridor V (Venice-Kiev) crosses the city of Maribor in the east-west direction. Nevertheless, the border area holds an important geostrategic position being often considered as the door to the south-eastern Europe.

### **4.2 Austria and Slovenia as neighbouring border countries**

Both states, Slovenia and Austria, are considered as border countries, since they share a high percentage of borderlands with neighbouring countries in relation to the surface of their national territories. As for example, Slovenia, with approximately 2 Million inhabitants and 20.273 Km<sup>2</sup>, shares the borders with four neighbouring countries. With regard to the size of Slovenia and the influence of the national border on spatial development, it can be advocated that more than half of the territory belongs to the border areas (Pogačnik, 2000). According to that, the areas eligible for the co-financing by the special border related EU funds (e.g. Phare CBC, Interreg) cover quite a large part of the country (Fig. 2).

Discussing the phenomenon of the Slovenian border areas situation, Vršaj (2004) stated two reasons for the generally higher sensitivity, such as:

- Firstly, the structural weaknesses (declining population, low settlement density, problems in maintaining minimum of infrastructural standards, lack of central functions, low accessibility to services); as a consequence, the absence of regional development is most present in the north-eastern part of Slovenia where the borderlands are mainly in the countryside with lack of urbanisation;
- Secondly, the relatively strong pressures among competitive neighbouring regions, which are not only political, but also economic and cultural; the quality of life in the periphery is considered as being lower than in towns and cities, and according to that, the national identity is supposed to be more vulnerable.

In respect to the obstacles mentioned, the border municipalities of the Podravje region are constantly struggling against the demographic decline and prevalent population loss caused mainly by rural-urban

migration. Additionally, the increased mobility has changed the lifestyles of the population, since the area of daily activities of work, education etc. is spreading mainly out of the settlements.

Austria, as the so-called 'Grenzland' (Borderland) with 8.184.700 inhabitants and the area of 83.858 km<sup>2</sup>, shares as much as eight borders with the neighbouring countries. After the World War II, the south-eastern parts of Austria were in an unfavourable geostrategic position, embraced by the Iron curtain towards the communist countries. In relation to the north-western European countries, the Southern Styria as well as Burgenland, and some parts of other regions located on the south-eastern margin of the western Europe, were politically and economically isolated. In fact these areas were the poorest and most underdeveloped in Austria until the mid-late 70ies, when the international relations to former Yugoslavia began to soften. During following decades, the social and economic progress has highly improved their spatial and economic performance. The efforts to raise the quality of living were demonstrated in different regional development measures, with emphasis on subsidies' support for the development of agriculture, tourist farms, and viniculture. The border areas also recovered due to the new impetuosity of 'shopping tourism' realized mainly by the customers from former Yugoslavia. Within this context, the middle-size and small towns on the Austrian side of the border, such as Leibnitz, Strass and Spielfeld, experienced an extremely fast urban growth presented mainly in construction of new retailing and service capacities. In the mid 80ies, due to better mobility and motorization, the city of Graz gained more importance in the cross-border economic flows (shopping, tourism etc.), as well. Recently, the border area of Southern Styria is still showing positive rates of various development indicators. For example, the number of inhabitants of the region grew by almost 2% between 1991 and 2001 with a relatively high share of young people living in the prevalently rural environments, and a relatively high percentage of working places (17%) located on the Austrian side of the border region (KMU Forschung Austria, 2003). In some entrepreneurial investments, the regional cross-border economic integration has launched noticeable opportunities for the revival of the once peripheral and underdeveloped border regions.

### 4.3 Cross-border cooperation network of the cross-border region Graz-Maribor

As the next issue, the short historical overview of the development of the cross-border region Graz-Maribor will be presented. The evaluation indicates the role and importance of the cities from the point of view of the cross-border cooperation in the past. The City of Maribor, at a crossing of two cultures, has traditionally built upon a good relationship with neighbouring Austrian, especially with the City of Graz. Generally, the cross-border cooperation between Slovenia and Austria goes back to the early 1960ies. First, it belonged to the TRIGON community, then to the Alpe-Adria community, and later, to the EU-cooperation framework performed by various Interreg programmes, whereby even small cities and regions independently, without respect for national borders, could build on their own identities (Schindegger, 2003). At present, several regional cooperation based on economic, social, environmental and cultural interests are promoting the attempts to encourage the interdisciplinary approach based on the coordination and harmonisation of different procedures, relations among partners, actions, and EU-projects (e.g. EUREGIO, URBAN, URBACT, etc.) of trans-national and even global dimension (Sitar, 2005). Slightly more ambitious economic impulses are arising on the Austrian side, such as the idea of the development project called Technology-Axis Graz-Maribor, which is obviously lagging behind partly because of time delay in the construction of the motorway from the Slovenian-Austrian border in the direction to Croatia (Sitar, 2005).

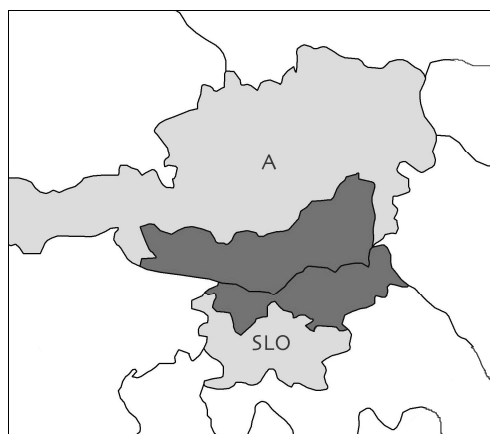


Fig. 2: The example of the cross-border cooperation area of the Interreg III A: Austria – Slovenia  
Source: <http://www.at-si.net> (15.9. 2006)

#### 4.4 Observing the development of the cross-border region Graz-Maribor in four phases

Phase	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Period	19 <sup>th</sup> C. - 1918	1919 - 1970	1970 - 1990	1991 - 2008
Spatial trend	dichotomy	urban sprawl	continuum	compound
Border	no border	division by the national border	national border	EU borders
INFRASTRUCTURE	railway	no improvements	highway sections	highway completed

Fig. 3: Spatial development phases of the research area Graz-Maribor

##### Phase I

From the historical point of view, the cross-border region Graz-Maribor is a part of the territory of the historical province, the Duchy of Styria<sup>3</sup>, which in the past both regions were belonging to, as a whole. The Duchy was a part of the crown-land of Austro-Hungarian Empire until its dissolution in 1918. Due to many territorial and political changes throughout the history the area represents the territory of many European ethnic population groups and cultures and can be treated as a vivid European culture region. Since 1846, apart to the variety of several roads, both cities, Graz and Maribor, have been strongly connected by the Southern Vienna-Trieste railway, which was the basic economic stimulus to the regions' development for a century. The railway has caused the industrialization processes in the city of Maribor followed by an intensive urban growth. In terms of spatial development, the region and its image were based on the traditional European dichotomy that remained its main feature until the late second half of the 20th century. In 1908, on the Austrian side there was Graz as regional capitol and the largest city in the area with the population of 151.781 inhabitants, but there were also some well organised middle-size cities and towns such as Leibnitz and Wildon, situated in the natural environment with agricultural plots in the lowlands and viniculture on the hilly sites. On the other side, there was Maribor with the population of 27.994 inhabitants with its hinterland of predominantly agricultural areas (Karner, 2000).

##### Phase II

After the First World War, in 1919, the research area Graz-Maribor has been divided by the national border between Austria and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Following the Saint Germaine peace treaty, the border caused the separation of the population and the land into two parts that have been functioning as a whole in some aspects until then. The new border has torn many families apart and quite a number of members of ethnic-national groups were left on 'the other side', separated from their homeland and native culture. The following period of approximately 50 years was mainly characterized by the standstill in development, the decline in economic exchange, and cooperation between the two countries. One could speak about the two divided and independent development paths, not only because the national border was functioning as a

<sup>3</sup> German 'Herzogtum Steiermark', Slovenian 'Vojvodina Štajerska'

physical barrier, but also because of the presence of the two completely different political and economic systems concerning the values and priorities of the population. During the same period, from the regional development point of view, the remarkable differences in peripheral and inland areas of both separate countries can be observed. Whereas the close border areas were retreated into a kind of spatial isolation, characterized by population decline and migration flows toward the larger towns and cities, the development of the cities Maribor and Graz resulted in the vivid and intensive growth in the direction to act as important well-organized and prosperous regional centres of separated border regions. During that period, Maribor became the most important Yugoslav centre of textile and metal industry (Lorber, 2006). The intensive development of the economy reached its peak in the 60ies, without taking into account the Second World War's depression and renewal. The spatial structure of Maribor became the location of first industrial zones, followed by the construction of residential neighbourhoods of social housing indicating an important element of the planned economy. The city population grew from 65.000 inhabitants in 1948 to 85.000 inhabitants in 1961, and reached the size of 97.000 inhabitants in 1971 (Pirkovič-Kocbek, 1982). Beside, after World War II, the city gained more political importance due to the national border with Austria, but it has been at the same time loosing the traditional economic relations with Vienna and Graz. Slowly, the city's economic relations have turned toward the southern part of former Yugoslavia (Pirkovič-Kocbek, 1982), relying upon its role as the one of the leading Yugoslav industrial towns.

The urban development of the city of Graz was in 1938 heavily influenced by the annexation of 21 communities ('Katastralgemeinden') to the administrative area of Old Graz ('Alt-Graz'). After the annexation, the area of the Large Graz ('Gross-Graz') region grew from 22 km<sup>2</sup> to app. 120 km<sup>2</sup> (Moser, 1972). According to Moser, the planning of the Graz region was discussed in the context of the development potentials toward the Croatia and other southern regions, particularly in the consideration of the future importance of the city as an industrial and cultural centre of the wider region. In this period, an extensive demographic development of the city region, from 300.000 to 350.000 inhabitants in 1939, compared to 208.000 in 1938, was foreseen. Above all, the expansion of the city was in general oriented towards the south, yet the World War II obstructed the realization of the plans based on this conception. After the World War II in order to stop the uneconomic dispersed development that was already identified in the outskirts at the time, some areas that were already included in urban plans as building land have been converted back into the green areas, (Moser, 1972). According to that, the urban development of the area can be described as a phase of urban sprawl.

### Phase III

The spatial development between 1970 and 1990 was influenced by the warming of the international relations between both countries, accompanied by the rise of strong cross-border flows. It coincided with the rise of mobility and transport infrastructure development in the 70ies and 80ies, as for example, the beginning of the construction of the motorway Graz-Maribor. The Austrian part of the motorway Graz-Leibnitz was completed already in the 70ies and prolonged to the border town Spielfeld in the 80ies, but it took an additional decade for the motorway to be built to the town Šentilj on the Slovenian side and to be prolonged to the city of Maribor. At that time, the area between Maribor and Graz became a part of the most intensive commuters' routes, linking the north-west part of Europe towards the south-east Europe as a 3000 Km long diagonal line. The border crossing Šentilj-Spielfeld became an important gate, yearly passed by over the Millions of trucks and passengers.

Parallel, this period is characterized by growing disparities between the two neighbouring countries. In the 70ies, in the City of Maribor the long lasting process of the economic stagnation started, particularly in the industrial sector, and lasted till 2002 (Lorber, 2006). It was marked by the decline of the production sector, diminishing investments in building sector, and growing social problems, as well. However, several state investments in municipality social housing schemes were erected, among others the largest development project 'Maribor-South' (1976), which tempted to improve the social housing policy, but increased the suburbanization processes of urban land towards the outskirts and hinterland in the south of the city borders.

Since the 60ies, on the contrary to the decline in economic development of the city of Maribor, the development of Graz has been a prosperous one. The pre-war economic predictions reflected in the intensive urban development toward the suburban municipalities, followed by the positive rates of the population growth. The most intensive urbanization occurred alongside the transportation routes in all road directions.

The city faced the most intensive economic development in manufacturing industries (automobile cluster, wood cluster, human technology cluster, materials cluster etc.). In the 1980ies, the asymmetry of the development between Graz and Maribor, as well as between both city regions even increased. However, the most important regional development goal of the Slovenians was reached in 1991 when for the first time in the history, the Republic of Slovenia claimed its independence. Since then, the certain predominance of economic expansion of the area at the Austrian side of the border remained, in spite of strong transformation processes of economic and political structures on the Slovenian side was accompanying the new cooperation tendencies.

From the spatial development point of view the processes of the suburbanisation can be described as the phase of urban-rural continuum.

#### **Phase IV**

The period between 1991 and 2008 is characterized by the new motivation for strengthening cross-border relations in the region after Slovenia's joining the EU in 2004 (Austria joined EU already in 1995). Since then, the ongoing processes, strengthening the necessity of harmonising the development standards on both sides to the European ones, have opened a new path of cooperation of the two cities and regions, as well. From the spatial point of view, this phase is characterized by extreme spreading of the urbanisation out of the city borders into the wider urban landscapes, accordingly growing urban agglomerations, and the appearance of new urban nodes arising predominantly along the infrastructure axis between both cities. If the previous phase was still mainly characterised by urban-rural continuum, the new development represents a shift toward the urban phenomenon called urban-rural compound. Above all, the increased connectivity in the global transportation streams has evoked remarkable changes in the settlement structures in the in-between area Graz-Maribor, in favor to the enlarged scope of functional urban regions of both cities. The renewed strategic allocation along the transnational traffic corridor has offered the space for various specialized development complexes, such as the network of technology centres, big shopping malls (Shopping centre Seiersberg etc.), logistic centres (Cargo center -Terminal Werndorf), recreational centres (Schwarzlsee sports centre) etc. On the other hand, since 2004 the open border between two countries caused a paradox that could still be indicated as the enormous decline of border crossings of daily commuters for work, shopping, and leisure, as well as the negligible presence of public transport in traffic flows crossing the border. However, the ones very important international border-crossing Šentilj-Spielfeld has lost its primary function and was until now unable to establish a new position in the context of the cross-border region (Pogačar, 2008).

Additionally, since 1991, the most dramatic issue of the Slovene economic and social development has been the high unemployment rate, which increased from 3% in 1990 to above 10% in 2005, mainly in areas close to the traditional city borders (Pecar, Faric, 2001). Maribor and its urban agglomeration were confronted with very high unemployment rate accompanied by the lack of entrepreneurial opportunities. In 2004, the unemployment rate reached 16.9% as the highest one in the last 13 years. Recently, small and medium-sized enterprises act as an important base for the economic growth of the region and are seen as new employment opportunities, allocated in the areas of urban expansion (Drozg, 2006). Within the economic activities, the structural changes are clearly reflecting the priorities of the service sector.

In the period from 1999 to 2004, the majority of new commercial and business centres were built in the outskirts of the city of Maribor, few of them of regional importance (Drozg, 2006), indicating the regional interdependency and extremely fast urban growth towards the hinterland. These processes were supported by the population increase in the years between 1991 and 2002 that had been stated particularly around the city edges, as well as alongside the main roads linking the surrounded towns, such as Šentilj, among others. On the contrary, the city core's population decreased (Drozg, 2006).

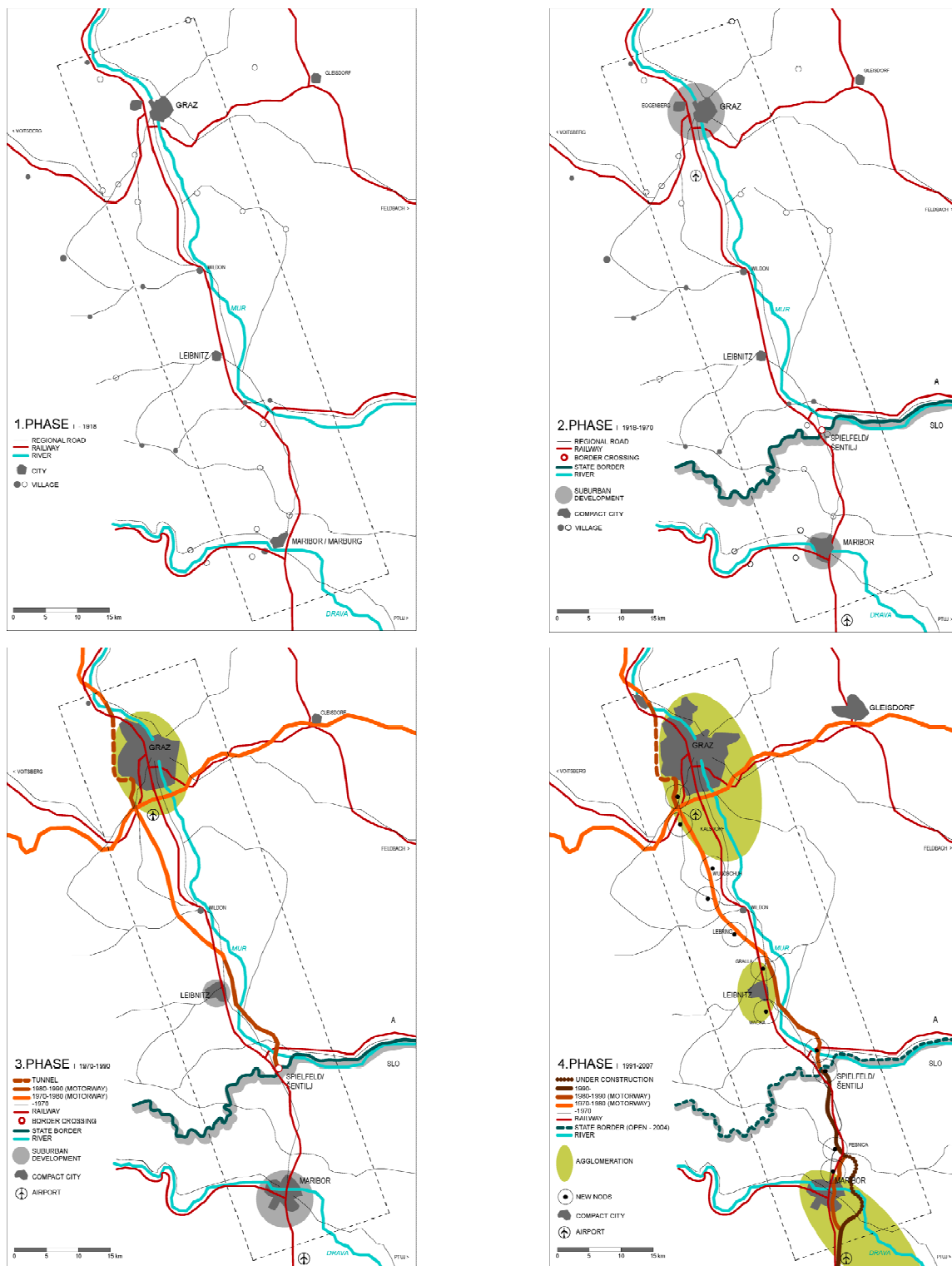


Fig. 4: Observing the spatial development of the cross-border region Graz-Maribor in four phases  
Source: Pogačar, 2008

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

During the last decades, the European integration has set the new spatial vision of regional development based on the priorities of the decentralisation and territorial cohesion presented in the efforts for balancing the living standards, in general. In the cross-border region Graz-Maribor one can recognize these ambitions in the preferences for political and economic networking on the level of inter- and intra-national relations. These endeavors are extremely important for the development of cross-border cooperation from spatial, economic, social, and cultural point of view. In the European perspective, the cities and their agglomerations are considered as engines of growth. In terms of spatial development characteristics the aim of the paper was



to identify the new urban tendencies toward the urban concentration, and to present them in the light of the potentials to create the formation of the attractive and prosperous European cross-border region. The potential region, experienced from the unlike historical background for decades, even centuries, is reflecting dramatic transformations of political, economic and social circumstances. In the past, the Graz-Maribor spatial axis, marked by asymmetrical confrontation of two completely different economic and social systems on both sides of the national border, created obstacles against any kind of integration. Currently, taking into account the enormous structural changes, one can observe that it was perhaps this very asymmetry which has strengthened the continuously growth of the cross-border activities and has in principle acted beneficially. Alongside the main transportation corridor Graz-Maribor, the images of newly developed cross-border structures were mapped and identified as the intraregional interactions in the form of the new urban nodes, and can be understood as a new landmark of the emerging urban landscapes. As an echo, the question how to promote and balance the development of the unique urban region as an attractive place for working and living could be a new focus of the research and discussion among politicians, scholars, professionals, responsible for the future, as well as the other actors interested to invest in the development of the cross-border region Graz-Maribor. Rich history of initiatives on local, regional, and national level is promoting some common bases for economic, cultural, and social collaboration being partly realized in several projects and actions in the past. Since the independency of the Republic of Slovenia in 1991, and Slovenian EU-membership in 2004, the cooperation processes were intensified and promoted to benefit in economic, social, cultural, environmental, and spatial relationships. These new development trends present the new challenges for urban planning on local and regional level, as well.

Searching for the common criteria, there is no simple answer to the question about the most appropriate strategies for the variety of size, position, and role of actors and institutions in regional, national, and trans-national context. In the most vivid urban expansion area alongside the main transportation routes (motorway, railway etc.) there is the dilemma about the correlation of small urban structures in contrast to the large-scale infrastructure projects situated in the extremely sensitive landscapes of the cross-border region. The paradox of the decline of border crossings of daily commuters for work, shopping, and leisure, is diminishing the possibilities for the intensification of the communication processes, necessary for the dissemination and exchange of new ideas, plans and visions to the interested stakeholder and the population of the region. Recently, some new institutionalised initiatives organised by two city municipalities in collaboration with public associations of planners, architects and artists, appear as the new promoters for the cooperation in different fields of cities' development.

From this point of view, the recent development trends can undoubtedly be judged as the chance to obtain the appropriate understanding necessary for the common project and actions. In order to increase the prosperity of the region and its population, the endeavours to collaborate shall be supported by the new information and communication technology relying upon the idea, that the transfer of the data will be adapted to the practitioners needs. Parallel, these processes have to be guided by the inventive forms of city governance incorporating the involvement of the public participation, which might offer the opportunities for strengthening the endogenous potentials of the region.

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