



*Dr. Metka Sitar*  
*University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering - Slovenia*

E-mail: [metka.sitar@uni-mb.si](mailto:metka.sitar@uni-mb.si)

## **Slovenia: Potentials and Limits of Urban Development**

In Slovenia the settlement development processes of the past few decades are marked by the different dynamics that has substantially changed the traditional images of towns and regions. The idea of this paper is to enable the comparative perspective of potentials and limits of urban development to be implied by the context of the European Union.

The dispersed settlement development is the most widespread urban fabric. This is a result of the polycentric concept of the settlement system, introduced some 30 years ago, which was strongly related to the position of central cities. This phenomenon demonstrates the fact that land and housing policy, supported by the strict planning system regulations, did not match the needs and images of the inhabitants. The short overview of geographical conditions and demographic changes is presented in order to illustrate the specific impacts towards suburbanisation processes starting in the 1960s and 1970s, often resulted in the controversial image of the country.

Since 1991 when Slovenia gained the independence, the development trends have nevertheless fundamentally changed. Urban development was strongly influenced by economic restructuring which caused an increasing differentiation between the regions, defining the allocation of the activities within centrifugal forces of the main cities. Additionally, urban development was amplified by the poor transportation links between the regions, while strong traffic flows through highway corridors are creating the condensation of economic activities. It is enabling the sub- and periurbanisation processes around the cities and towns. The increased mobility supported by the private car ownership, is increasing the preferences for housing and business in the outskirts and hinterland. As commuting is an important feature of citizen's behaviour, the continuation of evident urban trends alongside the traffic corridors and in the outskirts is expected. As an alternative, the concept of "deconcentrated concentration", based on the cities networking, was introduced as the model for the strategy of the spatial development lately.

The most explicit characteristic of the current developmental trends in Slovenia is the strengthening of the centres of economic power - dense city areas of three main cities and agglomerations. The spatial conditions are clearly defining the advantages for allocation which profoundly changed the traditional images of urban development. They are often in conflict with the principle of sustainable spatial development of the European Union and will decisively overcome the traditional concept of polycentric development in Slovenia. The traditional instruments, methods and procedures of regional and urban planning can not handle with the new needs of market development. However, the administrative decentralisation improved the strengths of local government and policy management of cities and municipalities.