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THE PRACTICE AND EFFECT OF THE POLICENTRIC SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE RELATION SYSTEM OF THE DKMT (DUNA-KÖRÖS-MAROS-TISZA) REGION

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Abstract: In today's spatial development policy, the examination of the towns, town networks poses several yet unsolved questions. It is undisputable that the international role of certain towns can increase with regards to the balanced multi-polar spatial development intention of the European Union, and they can have a greater support in the future as the potential counterbalance of the so-called Pentagon areas.

The aim of this study is to compare the polycentric spatial development of the European countries with a greater economic influence from the aspect how their specific characters contribute to the balanced development of the European area. The subject of further examination of the analysis of the spatial development documents of the countries neighbouring Hungary, with special regard to their polycentric aspects and effects, the transforming of the basic monocentric Hungarian space structure, including the European role and relations of the towns of an international level, primarily Szeged.

Keywords: polycentric, PUSH, PIA, DKMT region

1. THE ROOTS AND PRACTICE OF THE POLYCENTRIC SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

Although since the 1950s there had been spatial policy initiatives (e.g. "métropoles d' équilibre" of France) which imagined the balance of the inner disparity of a national economy with the polydevelopment of certain centres, the idea of polycentric development appeared in the European Union only in the 1990s [1]. The acceptance of the Single European Act in 1987 meant the beginning of significant changes. In accordance with this act the regional policy belongs to the common policies of the Union. This was a milestone from the view of spatial development, since, consequently, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which was considered the fundamental document of the spatial development of the European Union, was accepted in 1999. In this document the polycentric region development and the balanced spatial development gained a significant role [2]. According to about sixty development policy suggestions of the documents of the ESDP (1999), the balanced and sustainable development of the area of the European Union can be realised with the establishment of a united polycentric town network.

After accepting the ESDP, in the first period of the European Spatial Observation Network, "ESPON 2006" program, the ESPON 1.1.1. project (title: the role, specific location and potential of urban areas and junctions in the polycentric development) brought several useful and interesting results in connection with this issue¹. According to the final results of the project in 2005 led by the Swedish Nordregio, partnering with the Hungarian VÁTI Nonprofit Kft. the polycentricism has to be regarded as the key element of the European spatial development [3].

The results of the research showed that we cannot speak about balanced spatial development on a European level, since the regions in the Pentagon determined by five big cities (London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg) give the 43% of the GDP. In order to solve the problem some research was conducted, consequently, the poles potentially counterbalancing the Pentagon were examined on the basis of four points:

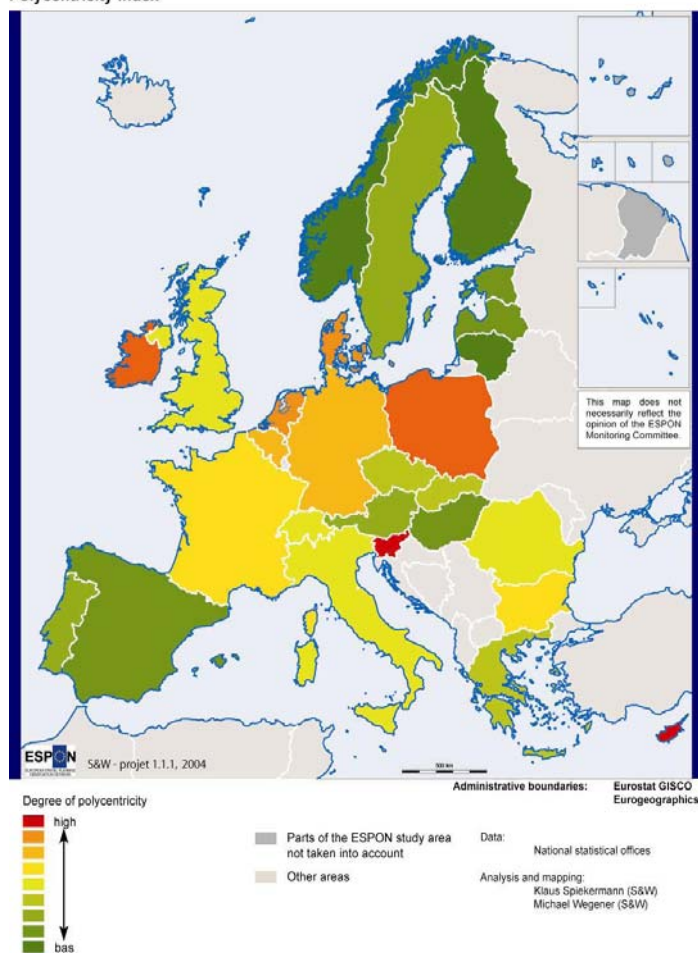
- ✚ the mass (the size of the urban population and the economy)

¹ According the Faragó (2009), in case of the foundation of the national new region network, the strengthening of the "weak mega" position of Budapest in the European polycentric dimension has to be taken into consideration. Its success can affect the successfulness of the cooperation of the Hungarian town network.

- ✚ competitiveness (to generate the local settling of the entrepreneurs on the basis of the GDP/capita and the headquarters of the 500 biggest European companies)
- ✚ relationship possibility (to measure the availability of areas in a given region referring to other regions on the basis of airport passenger number and multimodal availability)
- ✚ knowledge (the number of people with a degree in the area and the attraction based on the symmetry of the workers on the R+D areas).

On the basis of the research, the basic elements of the analysis are the smallest components of the spatial structure, the so-called FUAs (Functional Urban Areas), which include the urban centres and the surrounding rural/urban economic integration. From these areas 76 bigger, so-called MEGA areas (Metropolitan European Growth Area) were appointed. They were divided into four categories² regarding their roles in counterbalancing the Pentagon. Besides this the research expanded to the inner balance situation of certain countries too, on the basis of which it can be stated that in the European area – besides London and Paris – the functional areas near the Pentagon are the most competitive [4]. Besides the German, French and Italian towns, the Spanish (Madrid, Barcelona), the Belgian (Brussels and “Flemish Diamond”), the Dutch (Randstad), the Austrian (Vienna), the Swedish (Stockholm), the Danish (Copenhagen) and the Swiss (Zurich) represent themselves as the certain jewels of the multi-polar spatial structure of the European Union.

Polycentricity index



Source: The final report of the ESPON 1.1.1 project (ESPON 2005, 76)

Figure 1. The categorisation of the member states of the European Union regarding polycentricism

This categorisation of the towns shows that although the Pentagon areas are the real economic engines of Europe, a strong development potential is given in case of other towns. In the fight for the equality of the regional development the issue of the strengthening of the position of these towns is very important since it is essential to the polarisation of the European area with the further development of the areas/regions represented by them. In this issue it is also important what back area basis the FUAs as potential rivals have. The more balanced the inner space of the given country is, the less the conflicts coming from the unhealthy competition for the positions are, and the bigger the inner support of the Functional Urban Areas can be. During the research it was also discussed how the multi-polar development of the member states of the European Union can be valued. The number of the functional areas of the countries, their population number, their GDP, the size of the service areas and the approachability of the areas were also analysed. On the basis of the Polycentricity Index generated by the figures, the result of the analysis showed that from the member states the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Cyprus, Poland and Slovenia are the most polycentric [3](Figure 1).

In the Netherlands it has traditions, since after World War II this country represented itself in the European integration as the member of the Benelux states – besides France and Germany. They continued this tradition in establishing the inner balance of the European area, since the Dutch experts

² Besides the four categories, globally London and Paris are treated separately as centres with strong competitiveness [4].

took an active part in creating the ESPD, which describes the basis of the polycentric, balanced spatial development. Due to its great density of population and the constant fight with the sea for the land, they were forced to work out the most effective spatial designing system of Europe. The fantastic openness of the country, its massive participation in the initiatives over the border, and due to the important trading role of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, fulfilling the north-eastern gateway position of Europe contributed to this development. Although the experienced Dutch experts of spatial development had a leading role in creating the designing directives, today they seem not to follow the path of polycentricism.

Of course, it does not mean that the Netherlands will go through drastic spatial structure modifications, but rather it indicates that the emphasis of the influence of the supranational spatial development policy of the Union seems to decrease. Its cause can be found in the political changes after the Dutch elections. Instead of strengthening the limited numbered town position, generating the development of the complex town network and the regions has the priority, that is, the focus of spatial development shifted [5]. However, this influences less negatively the Dutch role in creating the European spatial balance, since the role of the country in global competition is crucial for the governance of the country. Here Amsterdam, which belongs to MEGA 1 category in the ESPON 1.1.1 project, also has an important role. Additionally, since the 1950s “Randstad” including Amsterdam and Rotterdam has been mentioned as a global town region, which – in case of favourable processes and planned measures – can be the third globally competitive unit³ besides the Greater London Area and the Île de France [6].

From the point of view of the polycentric spatial structure, Germany is not among the firsts but regarding the balanced spatial development, it is a country which has serious traditions on the field of development on spatial balance. Like the Netherlands, the German specialists took an active part in creating the ESDP, since the polycentric basic of the document, that is, the aim of the development of the balanced, multi-polar town network, as the basic of the European spatial development, was worked out by the German Federal Ministry responsible for spatial organisation, building and town building. The structure of the federal system also supports the preference of the polycentric spatial development, unlike Austria, where the multi-polar development is a priority on provincial level.

In Germany the necessity of polycentric development has been present on a national and provincial level since World War II. The German identified separated agglomerations limited by the functional area of the given town, moving the structure of the German town network towards a polycentric system. So the German town network without a central outstanding function can be regarded as the system of well limited agglomeration areas (e.g. in some towns the capital is similar to this). These areas cooperate with each other and they integrate the country areas more or less into their economic processes [7].

Regarding the European balanced spatial development, a big part of the German areas does not belong to those that have to compensate the developed regions. The German areas and more big towns (Stuttgart, Munich, Hamburg and the Rhineland towns) belong to the areas determined by the Pentagon. So the task of Germany is primarily to establish the country's inner polycentric structural balance which is represented by six (the Rhineland, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Munich, Berlin and Hamburg) agglomeration areas (Metropolregionen) in the country⁴. Nearly two decades after uniting the country the Germans have to face with the fact that the development of the eastern region of the country falls behind that of the western areas. From the previous Eastern-German towns only one town (Berlin) belongs to one of the MEGA categories, the role of the other German towns in the European balance cannot be evaluated.

The analysis of the European polycentricism has to be continued with France that also has great traditions similar to the above mentioned two countries. Besides the early initiatives mentioned earlier (in the 1950s), the country was mentioned in the 1960s as an area where Paris was the oasis, the other areas symbolise the desert. Effective changes were brought in the 1980s, when the government gave the towns and the regions a greater administrative autonomy, which is also mentioned as a decentralisation reform. The next greater change was in 1999, when there were changes affecting the administrative system. There were three laws in the background of the changes. The law about the

³ In certain places four or rather five regional units which can represent the competitiveness of Europe globally are mentioned. The four Belgian towns (Antwerp, Brussels, Gent and Leuven), the so-called “Flemish Diamond” and the Rhine-Ruhr area belong to the four mentioned ones [4].

⁴ In certain cases, Leipzig, Dresden and Halle are mentioned with the six “Metropolregionen”. This triangle wants to get a more significant position in the economic map of Europe. It is also interesting that this area, like the Rhine-Ruhr, Stuttgart and Frankfurt agglomeration, represents polycentricism in its inner structure [8].

solidarity and the renewal of the towns provided a completely new means of spatial development and a complex spatial development system [7].

The law requires a global view of the towns, on the basis of which the town has to be treated together with its suburbs besides the validation of the principle of the sustainable development. The legal regulation supervised the cooperation system of the towns, and it tried to simplify it in favour of the real, effective town network. The point of the changes is to create such homogenous community agglomerations which, working together, can help their development even with establishing horizontal institutional systems. Such agglomerations are the urbanised communities of the areas surrounding the big town. These communities have a population of at least half a million people and towns which are competitive on a European level can emerge from them.

The French government's decision determining the development policy on the long run was that it gave DATAR (Planning and Regional Action Delegation of the French Republic) charge of making a potential scenario regarding the balanced spatial development. The prepared four scenarios built on two counterparts: one of them is the global-local economic paradox, the other one is its political projection, the Jacobin (centralist politics)-Girondist (network decentralism) ideological opposition. The DATAR considered the enforcement of the later polycentric country structure acceptable. It has to affect the spatial planning of the country till 2020. The reason of this was that it meets the three requirements of the sustainable development written also in the ESDP: social cohesion, economic competitiveness and environmental balance [2].

However, a unique way was chosen in realising the polycentric spatial development. Instead of/besides the development idea on the centres, the development of inner regional connection communities of the metropolises and middle towns is being thought about. In the certain agglomerations, cohesion and solidarity have an important role. Basically, the development strategies build on these agglomerations, and there is no distinction between urban, country or natural areas. With the strengthening of these interregional communities, it can be stated that they have their own development paths which create interregional structural systems. So in France, there are six big residential network units which together build the polycentric town network system of the country. In these agglomerations there are towns which are competitive in Europe (e.g. MEGA category 4 Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille) and globally (Paris) and they build the stones of the European polycentric spatial development.

Naturally, during this short demonstration of the European polycentric development, the British areas (precisely England) have to be mentioned. The ESPON examinations showed that in the United Kingdom the principles of the polycentric development are realised on a regional not on a national level [4]. Practically, the development of the whole country is treated in an outstanding way on a national level, and the growth is supported in general. However, the situation is different on a regional level. For example the key element of the regional development strategies in North-Ireland is to generate the polycentric development, since the other regions in North-Ireland significantly lag behind the dominant Belfast. The situation is similar in the case of West Midland, where the attention is on the two polar structural divisions.

The two determinant poles of the region are Liverpool and Manchester, whose relation systems cover the whole southern area of the region. However, near the southern areas of the region the proportion of the areas which – because of their weak position – are not able to join the much more competitive southern areas on a regional and national level is bigger and bigger. The regional presence of the polycentricism is also hallmarked by the name of the developmental strategy of the West-Midland region ('network of places'), which puts a great effect on the simultaneous development of the multi-polar, urban and country areas.

On the basis of the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) it can be affirmed that on a regional level the polycentricism is very important, which is resulted from the influence of the ESDP principles of the regional documents [9]. Since the polycentric thinking does not have big traditions in the United Kingdom, this process can be felt less on a national level. However, in order to realise the balanced spatial development there are efforts which are signed by the fact that besides the area of 'Greater London' and Manchester, which belongs to the second category of MEGA, other British towns, such as the MEGA 3 Glasgow, Edinburgh and Birmingham, and Southampton in the fourth category want to have a role in the fight for breaking the Pentagon hegemony.

After the success of the ESPON 1.1.1 project, within the first priority of the ESPON 2003 program accepted on 7th November 2007, several research issues were mentioned that give another chance, by using the research results of the ESPON 1.1.1 project, to generate the balanced development of the European area widened with other four countries (Switzerland, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) [10]. The winner project of the first drawn issue titled 'Towns and agglomerations: their functionality and development possibilities regarding the European competitiveness and cohesion' is

the FOCI (Future orientation for cities), whose supervisor is the Free University of Brussels. In the important development documents of the past years (e.g. in the Leipzig Charta the documents of the European Cohesion policy regarding 2007-2013) the towns are regarded as the engines of growth and establishing workplaces⁵. In accordance with the application drawn to realise the research project, the aim of the research is to analyse the role of the towns (primarily the bigger towns and urban agglomerations) in spatial development and to show their development tendencies and determine the development influential forces of these areas.

The FOCI project will have a totalised result at the end of 2010, however, it can be seen from the reports that the research has several interesting aspects⁶. The examinations cover the analysis of the cooperation possibility between certain towns, analysing the regional characteristics of these relations, and the effects of these agglomerations playing an important role in creating the polycentric space structure on the economic achievements [11].

In the next chapter I am looking for the answer regarding Hungary and the polycentric development policy of the neighbouring countries and its influence on the Hungarian space structure.

2. THE EFFECT OF THE POLYCENTRIC SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES ON THE HUNGARIAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Evaluating the present situation of the Hungarian residential network, it can be stated that it struggles with structural and functional deficiency, which makes the proper positioning of the country really difficult in the global competition. Naturally, the problem has basic historical roots: in the first half of the 20th century, the fact that the size of the area changed more times, then the socialist system hindered the establishment of a polycentric residential network, which is essential for the balanced economic development. However, in connection with the Trianon Treaty, in Hungary the final political and economic solutions to the negative spatial effects – from the landscape theory of Lord Pál Teleki in the 1920s through Zoltán Magyar's ideas about the administration reforms in the 1930s to the establishment of the National Residential Network Development conception in 1971 aiming at abolishing the monocentric region structure – have not been met so far.

It does not mean that the positive measures generating positive movement from the monocentric space structure have not happened so far, however, these brought only part results. It is proved by the fact that Somlyódiné Pfeil (2006), who in 2006, that is, after the approval of the National Spatial Development Concept (OTK) and the National Development Policy Concept (OFK)⁷, but before the approval of the New Hungary Development Plan (UMFT) had the opinion that although the integration of the competitive poles into the UMFT is a big means, but finding their real roles and the sufficiency of their operation would not be easy [7]. According to the composition of the UMFT, ensuring the development objective on the long run (the expansion of the employment and constant growth) can be realised with the contribution to the economic development of the towns as development poles and with the help of the polycentric cooperating town network system [15].

In order to ensure the balanced spatial development on the long run, it is necessary to counterbalance the economic domination of the capital (Budapest) and to dissolve the monocentric structure of the country, which will be grounded by the functional towns' development built on technological innovation. However, according to the anticipation of Somlyódiné Pfeil Edit, this idea weakened in the period of the planning and later social harmonisation of the UMFT. In certain operative programs it seems less that the regional cluster development which means great economic development should be realised with generating the regional concentration and the cooperation of the researching and training institutions playing an important role in grounding the innovation of the given region, and the companies realising the economic use of the scientific knowledge (e.g. in the frame of public-private partnership).

However, the aim of the study is not to analyse the planning deficiency of the UMFT (2007) in details. The real aim is to analyse the international position of the five big towns appointed by the

⁵ "The Leipzig Charta significantly deals with the towns emphasising the importance of the towns in establishing the future Union policy. The Charta states that the development of the urban and rural areas has to be considered [12].

⁶ The competition issue – which will be posted in the 3rd round of the 1st priority – titled Secondary growth poles in territorial development will be interesting regarding the polycentric spatial development. Project ideas could be entered for the competition till 16th September 2009.

⁷ By the approval of the OTK 96/2005 (XII.25) and the 97/2005 (XII.), certain elements of the polycentric spatial development officially got into the Hungarian spatial development policy. One of their main ideas corresponding with the principles in the ESDP is to generate the balanced spatial development of the country [13] [14].

principles of the balanced polycentric spatial development, which is appointed by the OTK and the OFK and worked out in the materials of the ÚMFT (2007) in details, regarding the effects of the spatial development documents of the neighbouring countries on the Hungarian space structure. It is sure that it is a great deficiency of the national development policy that it tries to generate such processes (clustering) which develop besides a bottom-up planning, yet, the actual appointment of the competitive poles does not seem to be a wrong decision, since the appointed five big towns (Győr, Pécs, Szeged, Debrecen and Miskolc) are most able to have an economic development effect on their regions and to join the international town network with the help of their economic potential.

However, the problem is what the economic potential of the Hungarian big towns is worth on an international level. On the basis of the ESPON 1.1.1 project, 77 out of the national regions were appointed as potential FUA. Practically, they mean the units satisfying the FUA listing of the Hungarian statistical small regions. From the Hungarian FUAs only one is in the MEGA listing (Budapest), while from the East-European countries there are eight towns in case of Poland, and 2 towns in case of Romania. There are only four Hungarian towns (Debrecen, Győr, Miskolc and Szeged) among the big towns with international significance, but now Pécs also belongs to them in the frame of the Planet Cense project [16]. In the region Budapest as a 3rd category MEGA has a place before towns like Bucharest, Ljubljana, Cracow or Timisoara.

Regarding the European region balance it means that Budapest has a chance to strengthen among the important towns of the region, even enter the 2nd category next to Athens and Helsinki, but there is the danger that it loses its position against Cracow, Ljubljana and Bucharest in the European competition. Regarding Hungary another negative result is that Hungary got the worst rating besides Norway, Finland, Spain, Portugal and Sweden in analysing polycentricism. So these countries are the most monocentric countries of the European region, which can be the barrier of equal development possibility of the European region.

Regarding the size of the country, the positive space structure characteristics, there can be interesting things. Slovenia is a good example, though, the country is the most polycentric state of Europe⁸ on the basis of the ESPON 1.1.1 research project, but it can have less positive effects on the balanced spatial development of the European region. On the basis of the spatial development documents approved in 2001, the country determines its development in a multi-polar development directive where three urban areas are the poles: besides Ljubljana, Maribor and Koper there are such smaller, more or less equal, national and regional towns as Kranj, Celje, Murska Sobota, Novo mesto and Nova Gorica [17].

This advantageous space structure, however, does not have a significant effect on the polycentric development of the European and even the Middle-European region. Its reason – similarly to the Hungarian example – is that there are no significant big towns on an international level. Ljubljana is the only town which got into the MEGA categorisation, it can represent the 4th category. So lacking the critical mass, the Slovenian processes influence the Hungarian spatial development less. Perhaps there will be a chance for Hungary to generate the development of its underdeveloped regions in a Europe without borders through the relationship to Murska Sobota, supporting the Maribor-Graz axis⁹.

The situation is different in case of Romania. The country does not belong to the firsts regarding the polycentric space structure, but it has more areas that can be important centres of the region in the near future. In terms of Hungary, Bucharest and because of the closeness of the border the growth of the role of Timisoara, Arad and Oradea influence the town development processes of Hungary best. In Romania, before the approval of the national spatial development plan in 2001, there were no measures that reacted to the spatial changes in the 20th century¹⁰ and to the deficient town development based on the industrialisation of the socialist system. In this document the residential system hierarchy of the country was first mentioned, and similarly to the other parts of the document their roles in the national and interregional relations were also mentioned.

What is typical of Romania is that the motorway and the clearway reconstructions influence strongly the polycentric spatial development of the country because of the getting through the infrastructural underdevelopment. The Romanian spatial development policy gives an important role

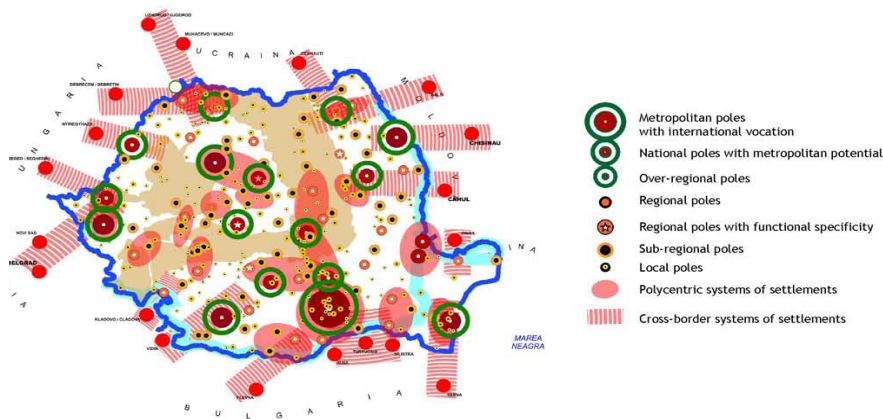
⁸ In spite of the positive judgements, in Slovenia there are also disparity questions which, similarly to other countries, come from the disparity between the capital and the other parts of the country, and the specific developed western and middle areas and the underdeveloped eastern parts.

⁹ Regarding the international relations, the 'Graz-Maribor cross border (urban) region' is a determining element of the town network conception of Austria and Slovenia.

¹⁰ As a result of the industrialisation beginning from the 1950s, in certain towns there were developments in basic functions, but there were no infrastructural investments [4].

to Timisoara, which is near the motorway A1 (Nagylak – Bucharest), and Oradea, which is near the motorway A3 (Oradea – Bucharest). The document about the spatial development till 2030 is about the international role of the towns [18]. Besides the development of Bucharest, which is in the junction of the two European corridor, the gate towns and their regions are given an important attention. So Timisoara, Arad, Oradea, Constanta next to Satu Mare, Craiova, Suceava and Galati have a stronger inner support. These towns have a greater significance not only on a national level but they get a leading role in the development of the border relations as well (Figure 2).

STRUCTURING AND BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS NETWORK



STRATEGIC CONCEPT OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT ROMANIA 2030

Source: Own design on the basis of the strategic concept of territorial development Romania 2030
Figure 2. Emphasising the national and border relations in the Romanian spatial development

It is especially true for Timisoara, which according to the analysis of the competitiveness, availability and connection possibilities – similarly to Bucharest – deserved the position of MEGA 4th category. Regarding Hungary it does not mean that Timisoara can only be a rival of the Hungarian big towns – primarily Szeged – but also it can weaken the international positions of Budapest in certain areas. According to the study in the edition of January 2008 of the journal ‘Területi statisztika’ (Regional Statistics), the town competition of Szeged and Timisoara was analysed on the basis of the 12th dimension [19]. The economic activity (e.g. economic structure, R+D capacity), the educational and research possibilities, the traffic of the town and the relation system of the region were analysed similarly to the analysing criterion of the ESPON 1.1.1 project.

According to the analysis, Timisoara is before Szeged in the question of openness regarding the education¹¹, certain aspects of the traffic (e.g. airport services), more qualified work force and the different characteristics of the society. Szeged has a position before Timisoara regarding a more diverse economic structure, tourism, traffic (motorway network), environmental protection, good relation systems (e.g. a leading role in the establishment of the Danube-Tisza-Körös-Maros euro region) (Gulyás 2004). This does not mean that Szeged can be more determining than Timisoara in the European polycentricism. Practically, Szeged as a Hungarian competitive pole does not have a chance to gain the interregional leading position. In the areas where Szeged is stronger at present, it depends only on the time when Timisoara will start to develop. The restriction of the environmental regulation and keeping it have a stronger and stronger influence on the Romanian development policy, consequently, Romania can close up to Europe in this field in a few years.

It is continuously strengthening its positions regarding the important areas in the strengthening of the international position: in terms of availability the town has such an airport whose runway (3500x45m) is capable for accepting Airbus or Boeing aeroplanes. The reconstruction of the motorway in Romania has already begun (it is expected that the motorway A1 will reach Timisoara in 2014), which can give another chance in the economic development. This can effect the Hungarian polycentric development – and the role of Szeged. If, similarly to the documents of the ÚMFT (2007), the operative elements which provide a competitive pole role in Hungary fall out of the planning period 2013-2020, then Timisoara will oppress Szeged in the international competition. However, in the case of positive measures, a strong Szeged can generate not only the falling of the monocentric space structure but, starting from the initiatives of the DTKM region, the expansion of the European

¹¹ In the higher educational institutes of Timisoara, there are nearly twice as many students as in Szeged and their educational scale is also wider (e.g. strong technical training) [19].

polycentric space as well by strengthening the three-poled agglomeration of Timisoara-Arad-Szeged (four-poled agglomeration with the joining of Subotica DTKM region).

In case of Slovakia the polycentric spatial development regarding Hungary has similar situation to Romania, since it falls behind Hungary in the number of the urban areas¹², but more of these areas are located within the so-called international visibility. In Slovakia, besides Bratislava, there is no area with MEGA category, but Kosice, Banská Bystrica, Nitra, Poprad, Trnava and Trencín (due to the Planet cense project, similarly to Pécs) are regarded as internationally big towns [20]. The international judging of the Slovakian towns is influenced by the fact that, according to the ESPON research, they have a more balanced town network than the Hungarian space structure (polycentric index – Hungary: 56,1; Slovakia: 64,2; Romania: 66,3). The domination of the capital can be felt here too, we there is not such a strong monocentric country structure as Hungary. Kosice with its 250 000 population and more middle towns with nearly 100 000 population try to counterbalance the capital with about half a million people.

Naturally, it means a benefit for the Slovakian middle towns in the fight for the international position, since the capital takes away less development and other economic opportunities than Budapest from the Hungarian towns. Even in the Slovakian spatial development document (similarly to the Romanian), there is a great emphasis on the interregional relations of the big towns near the border. The role of Bratislava seems to be internationally strengthening in the relation of Vienna-Brno-Bratislava-Győr, while Kosice in the cooperation with Miskolc, and in case of Romania, in the cooperation of Oradea-Debrecen and Timisoara-Arad-Szeged. Enyedi's research results regarding the regional development (2004) confirm these development ideas. According to these results, the deciding junctions emerge from the space structure and they influence the development of the national space structure by their economic-social relations over the border.

Naturally, this effect works reverse as well, since the economic space structure of the country can influence the international strengthening of the relations of the big towns over the border. According to Enyedi (2004), regarding the three-poled space structure¹³, it means that, in the international town agglomeration (centre in Vienna and Timisoara), Győr and Szeged can contribute to the development of the polycentric junctions of East-Middle Europe [21].

Austria has a significant role in the polycentric development of the European region because of Vienna. From this point of view, Vienna is the member of an illustrious company where Munich, Rome, Barcelona and Berlin also belong to. The University of Vienna has an adequate knowledge basis due to the MEGA 1st category Vienna's relation system, good traffic opportunities and competitive economy¹⁴. The university is the 80th of the THES-QS list, which ranges the universities of the world from year to year[22]. However, as far as the space structure of the town is concerned, the situation in Slovenia is the opposite. Although, the country is significant in the balanced development of the European area due to the strong position of its capital, its inner space structure is not polycentric (it was barely given a better grading regarding the polycentric index: 57,4).

In fact, its provincial system, which is similar to Hungary, handles the inner judgement of the polycentrism similarly to the British areas: the polycentric principles appear on a provincial level and on a federal (that is national) level there is no harmonic spatial and regional development policy. The OEROK (Austrian Spatial Development Concept) speaks about the Länders and discusses the endeavour to decentralisation and balanced spatial development [23]. However, it is not irresponsible to say that the role of the strong Vienna can be more strengthened by the stronger relations with the above mentioned big towns, and this more-polar agglomeration can counterbalance the Pentagon.

3. THE INNER DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES OF THE DUNA-KÓRÖS-MAROS-TISZA (DKMT) REGION REGARDING THE PUSH AND PIA AREAS

The establishment of the cooperation over the border can have a strategic significance for Hungary, since the length of the Hungarian borders comparing the size of the country is great, and a large part of the population lives near the border, since 14 counties are border on a neighbouring country. So near the border there have been several euro regions and euro regional initiatives in the

¹² In accordance with the ESPON 1.1.1 project, there are 27 Slovakian and 59 Romanian FUA's.

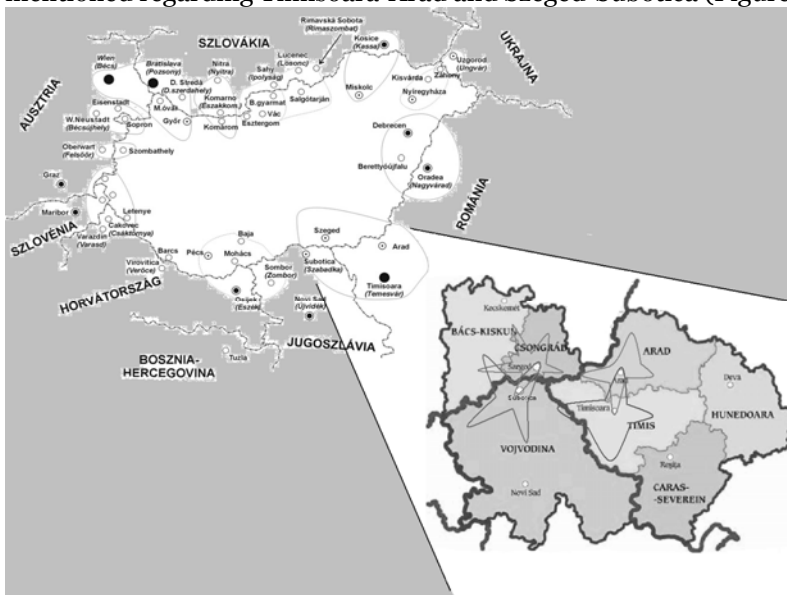
¹³ According to Enyedi (2004), the economic division of the Hungary cannot be identified only with east-western dichotomies. Due to the networking process started also in Hungary, the space structure of the country can be divided into three today, where the capital (Budapest) region, the axis connecting this region with Vienna, Balaton and Szeged are important regions and they have a direct connection to the international networks.

¹⁴ According to the result of the Eurostat in 2005, Vienna was the 5th richest region of the European Union in 2004-2005, where the GDP/capita was more than EUR 17 000.

recent years, the biggest part – the DKMT region too – was established after the declaration of the Madrid Convent (1997) [24]. The Danube-Kőrös-Maros-Tisza Regional Cooperation established on 21st November 1997 includes 71 879 km² and a population of about 5,3 million. One of the most important objectives of the members of the cooperation is to develop and extend the relations between the local communities and the local governments in the fields of the economy, education, culture, science and sport – to generate the joining of the region into the process of the European integration [25].

In connection with the European integration, generating the balanced spatial development of the European Union can be identified as a future objective, as long as the bigger towns of the region help the economic rise of the region cooperating – and of course competing – with each other regarding the principles of national polycentric spatial development.

One of the research results of the ESPON 1.1.1 project can be a base, where the Potential Urban Strategic Horizons (PUSH) are determined regarding the FUAs. As the precondition of the limitation of the PUSH is that the whole area can be approachable by car in 45 minutes, so some PUSH areas cover each other. Where the PUSH areas cover each other, a functional integration, that is, the cooperation of the towns can be established. These are the so-called PIA areas (Potential Polycentric Integration Areas). Taking the bigger towns of the DKMT region into consideration PIA areas can be mentioned regarding Timisoara-Arad and Szeged-Subotica (Figure 3).



Source: Own design on the basis of Hardi (2004)

Figure 3. The international PIA areas including the DKMT region's big towns near the border¹⁵

As the above mentioned unions are established between the towns playing an important role in the polycentric spatial development of the neighbouring countries – similarly to the Hungarian competitive poles – so the PIA areas have international relations too. The development principles of the given country, the position of the poles in the country significantly influence the leading role and the international judgement of the areas in the PIA areas in the future. So – returning to the statement of Faragó (2006) – the support of the competitive poles becomes very important regarding not only the handling of the national imbalance but also the international judgement of the Hungarian big towns [26].

It can mean the delegation of the national tasks in the important big towns, the strengthening of the contact with the suburbs with the more concentrated allocation of the sources and with the start of their economic roles and clustering. With this the expansion of the regional suburbs of the big towns over the borders (Bratislava, Kosice, Timisoara, Oradea) can be prevented.

4. SUMMARY

The contribution of the PIA areas over the border to the balanced spatial development of Europe can be questioned. Like in the spatial development documents of the neighbouring countries, in certain chapters of the ÚMFT (2007) the support of the cooperation over the border is not mentioned in details. As one of the main European principles, the ÚMFT (2007) considers these initiatives important regarding the regional dimension of the economic competitiveness, but separate sources are not provided in the indicative financial plan of the Operative Programs.

¹⁵ On the basis of own calculations – taking into consideration the 45-minute-drive – the PUSH borders of the mentioned towns:

- a) Szeged: east – Nadlac; west – Mélykút; north – Kistelek; south (west) – Subotica
- b) Timisoara: east – Lugoj; west – Kikinda; north – Arad; south – Moravita
- c) Arad: east – Lipova; west – Nadlac; north – Chisineu-Cris; south – Timisoara
- d) Subotica: north-east – Szeged; north-west – Kiskunhalas; south-west – Sombor; south – Mali Idos

Independently of this, it can be disputable that the joining of Hungary into the European space can be realised in the regions and development over the border. Establishing international euro-regions and the development of their relations significantly contributes to the development of the country and the region, and the competitiveness.

In case of the South-Plain region the underdevelopment is very significant. In the spatial development conception of the region on of the important steps of getting over the competitive disadvantages is to develop the international functions of the big towns of the South-Plain. It has an important role in learning the region and transmission of market information to the regions [27]. Its positive effects can be expanded to certain less dynamically developing regions of the DKMT by the towns constructing a network and the functionally related PIA areas with the mutual cooperation in the euro-regions.

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