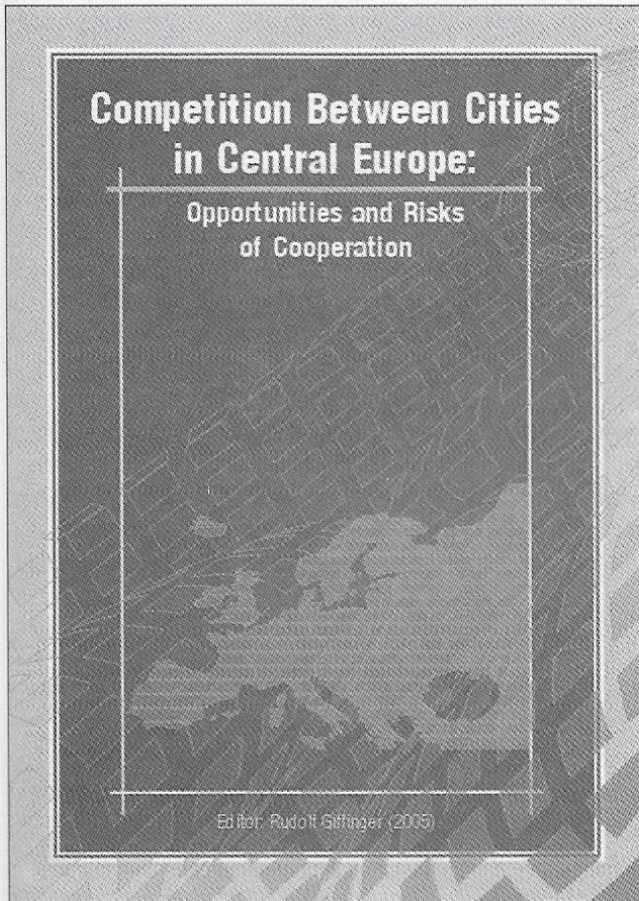




**COMPETITION BETWEEN CITIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE:
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF COOPERATION.**



**Competition between Cities in Central Europe:
Opportunities and Risks of Cooperation.**

**Editor: Rudolf Giffinger (2005),
ROAD Bratislava,**

242 pages

80-88999-27-8

In 2005 the book "Competition between Cities in Central Europe: Opportunities and Risks of Cooperation" written by an international team of researchers from central Europe, gathered under the SPECTRA Centre of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava and supported by the ARL Hannover and TU Vienna has been published, edited by prof. Rudolf Giffinger. It was elaborated and published in the frame of the 5FP project SPECTRA-PERSEUS, EVK4-CT-2002-80006, financed by the European Commission.

It is focused on competition and cooperation between cities in central Europe with a special attention paid to potentials and perspectives of cooperation. The different contributions in this book focus on this issue of "Cooperation between Cities" against a backdrop of inter-city competition. In view of the diversity of possible forms of cooperation, it is essential to specify in more precise terms the scope of the research objectives. Evidently, the main focus is upon cooperation between cities, which we understand as: 'an objective-oriented collaborative action between two or more actors from at least two cities' and not as a simple functional relation between cities. Correspondingly, cooperation between cities means the incorporation/involvement of individuals as representatives of private, semi-public or public institutions. Because of this potential wide spectrum of institutional backgrounds, some actors may have a narrow perception of cooperation due to the seemingly less meaningful involvement of other actors involved. However all combinations of cooperative actors should be of interest in so far as the objectives of cooperation are related to common problems of urban development in general and to common efforts for improving urban competitiveness and position in the European urban system. At the same time, a further perception of cooperation could refer to its character: strategic or technical. Commonly, cooperation between cities or regions has a more strategic character if the cooperative efforts are intended to achieve "joint decisions" with other municipalities. "Technical cooperation" aims at developing common tools or projects.

In this context, cooperation is regarded as a principle of urban governance which gained in importance along with the increasing pressure of competition. The arguments as to why competition is an increasing trend, focus mainly on the processes of globalization and integration. Both processes have been evident over recent years on the back of technological progress and political decision-making. Although the integration process is realized in steps, it seems to be inevitable that cities, understood as the centers of technical and social innovations, become the most important competitive actors in spatial development. Accordingly, cities have to compete for the most attractive actors/investors and highly competitive economic



functions - at least at the European level. In this competition, cities may become losers or winners, thus leading to convergent or divergent spatial processes across Europe.

If the spatial conditions for urban development are well known and stable, then the principles of autonomy and hierarchy are sufficient preconditions for urban governance in the form of traditional urban development policy. The more independent functional economic relations are of local areas and municipalities, the less effective these principles are for shaping spatial development. Evidently, in the urban-regional context, the principle of delegation seems to be adequate, evolving in different forms of collaboration between the city and its surrounding municipalities. However, if cities experience increasingly competitive conditions and an unstable situation, the principle of cooperation will become a complementary principle because, as different contributions in this book demonstrate, it offers new perspectives and possibilities for positioning which would not have been possible on the basis of the others mentioned before. Thus, the more competition will dominate the urban-regional development, the more cooperation will become a fundamentally important principle of urban governance. Therefore, competition and cooperation is regarded as an integral part of spatial development but also as complementary principles of urban governance, as an instrument of strategic planning, itself a tool of urban foreign policy. Cooperation is one of the key aspects of a new governance approach. To achieve a high level of competitiveness within the European settlement system, different forms of cooperation are needed: unified goals at the city level, strong cooperation within the functional urban region, basic agreements at the macro-regional level. Of course, urban foreign policy may

have very different aspects and dimensions. Anyhow, one dimension is significantly related to urban development policy because there are many links between strategic efforts towards the strengthening of urban competitiveness and local planning efforts to evolve and provide competitive spatial structures and sustainable spatial development.

The trend of an increasing competitive situation between cities is clearly leading to changes in political behaviour. This has stimulated in particular new strategies in urban-development policy and planning geared to addressing the challenges of competition at the city level. A variety of comparative analyses of cities reveal corresponding strategic approaches which have been developed to this end. Both academic debate and approaches advanced by the European Union have concentrated on the issue of raising the competitive standing of cities. The question why certain forms of cooperation are frequently propagated, and to what extent they are regarded as key forces for competitiveness, is a matter that has been explored within this book and examined empirically by reference to a number of different case studies, written by: Rudolf Giffinger and Hannes Wimmer (Vienna), Natasha Pichler-Milanovic (Ljubljana), Maros Finka and Matej Jasso (Bratislava), Ivan Tosic (Budapest), Manfred Miosga (Munich), Evelyn Gustedt (Hannover), Joachim Burdack (Leipzig) and several case studies of the border regions and polycentric development (Marjan Ravbar, Peter Mayerhofer, Robert Knippschild, Gabor Kozma, Robert Musil, Friedrich Schindegger and Gabrielle Tatzberger).

Dagmar Petriková