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City 2030 – Shaping the City of the Future Guiding Principles, Scenarios and Concepts Foresight Brief No. 106

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Purpose

In the year 2000 the German Ministry of Education and Research initiated a programme inviting German cities to create principles and models for their long-term development. In cooperation with scientific institutions and experts, the cities were not only supposed to envisage possible or likely future scenarios, but also were asked to think about the goals they wanted to accomplish and criteria to evaluate their progress. All in all, the research network functioned as a research and learning laboratory. Not only cities participating in the exercises were able to profit from Cities 2030, but also cities and regions not participating in the programme benefited from the exchange of ideas and concepts.

Planning Cities' Futures

German cities are being transformed by structural changes that will alter urban life in the next two decades. It goes without saying that these developments have increased the cities' need to adjust to these changes. However, cities and their administrations are accustomed to focusing on contemporary issues and short-term goals. They find it difficult to spend time and resources on reflecting on long-term concepts or guiding principles. But, if cities want to deal with these changes, they will have to develop sufficiently simple and straightforward visions and scenarios to direct political and social change. Cities will have to conceive an idea of their future envisioned in the year 2030. They will only be able to shape and influence their development using such a scenario. This is where the project "City 2030" kicks in: it provides cities with resources and expertise to reflect on and develop long-term concepts, guiding principles or scenarios. Basically this means returning to tradi-

tional concepts of urban planning, in spite of the fact that structural dilemmas are inherent therein.

Urban Planning Dilemmas

It is strange, but although modern societies seem destined for change, they ignore the future at the same time. Social, economic or political changes are taking place at an increasing rate, while the capacity of cities to plan for the future is waning. As far as urban planning is concerned, one can identify three dilemmas:

- "Knowledge dilemma": Basically we are aware of the questionable validity of previous knowledge, of its continual renewal and expansion. Nonetheless, planning is carried out under the assumption that it is possible to apply current knowledge to future problems.
- "Democratic dilemma": From a democratic point of view, politicians' decisions should be legitimized by the people affected. However, this would rule out long-term



planning, which necessarily has an impact on the living conditions of people not yet born.

- “Innovative dilemma”: Planning aims at setting up rules, norms and legally standardized procedures – exactly those structures that undermine a society’s capacity to innovate.

Combined, the three dilemmas add up to what can be called “future dilemma”. This dilemma is due to structural contradictions inherent to urban planning.

“City 2030” also had to tackle this problem. But it did so only in an indirect way by enabling cities to develop their own visions and ideas according to their regional and urban needs. More importantly, these visions did not have to be implemented. They were not required to be “practical” in the sense that they had to be “tested” in reality. On the contrary, the project’s overall goal was to liberate the participants from this burden and to set up a sort of laboratory, leading to new ideas and concepts.

“City 2030” is, therefore, not about implementing academic concepts. Rather, it should be viewed as providing an opportunity, enabling cities to reflect on their current state of affairs, to identify problems ahead and generate ideas for the future. In short: “City 2030” aimed to set up a research network and to

match “theory” of urban planning with “practice” of urban politics and administration in Germany.

Research Laboratory: Matching Urban Planning Theory with Urban Political Practice

“City 2030” was started in the year 2000 with an invitation to tender. 110 cities submitted proposals; 21 of these were eventually accepted without further evaluation.

A successful proposal had to link local politics with public administration and academic expertise. A city required an academic partner in order to receive funding. Accordingly, academic institutions necessitated a city as a local partner. This kind of “top-down cooperation” was intended to foster a synthesis between local practice and scholarly expertise.

Furthermore, the contents of a successful proposal had to meet three criteria. Firstly, a proposal had to address one of the concerns identified by the ministry as among the most challenging: i.e. integration, identity or regionalisation. Secondly, the research network as a whole had to include a number of shrinking cities in order to find solutions for such demographic changes. Thirdly, the size of the cities had to be taken into account, too. Consequently, proposals from cities of varying size (big, medium-sized and small) were accepted.

Fig. 1: Cities involved in the project

	Integration	Identity	Regionalisation
Big cities >250,000 citizens	Stuttgart		Karlsruhe
	Munich		
	<i>Bremen</i>	<i>Mönchengladbach</i>	<i>Braunschweig</i>
	<i>Leipzig</i>		<i>Städteregion Ruhr</i>
Medium-sized cities Between 50,000 and 250,000 citizens	Esslingen	Erlangen	
	<i>Saarbrücken</i>	<i>Kiel</i>	<i>Görlitz/Zgorzelec</i>
			<i>Gießen-Wetzlar</i>
Small cities <50,000 citizens	Dietzenbach	Günzburg	Schkeuditz
		<i>Guben/Gubin</i>	
		<i>Eisenhüttenstadt</i>	<i>Schwalm-Eder-West</i>
		<i>Beeskow</i>	

Note: Names in italics indicate shrinking cities.

Source: Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik

Cities Involved

Based on the overall goals of the project, the cities participating in the project were distinguished according to size, region and demographic prospects.

- As mentioned, eight cities have a population over 250,000, six between 50,000 and 250,000, and seven less than 50,000 (see table).
- Regionally, the cities are located in 10 out of 16 German states (Länder). Nine cities belong to prospering South Germany, being: *Munich, Günzburg, Erlangen* (all three are in Bavaria), *Dietzenbach, Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Esslingen* (all four are in Baden-Württemberg), *Gießen-Wetzlar, Schwalm-Eder-West* (these two are in Hesse). *Mönchengladbach, Saarbrücken, Städteregion Ruhr* are located in Northrhine-Westfalia and Saarland, i.e., in states hard hit by economic restructuring in the past three decades, mainly due to fact that the coal and mining industry has been downsized or has totally vanished. *Bremen, Kiel and Braunschweig* are situated in the northern states of Bremen (which is a city-state), Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. They, too, face economic problems. Finally, six cities are located in former East Germany, three in Brandenburg (*Eisenhüttenstadt, Beeskow, Guben/Gubin*) and three in Saxony (*Schkeuditz, Leipzig, Görlitz/Zgorzelec*). It is worth mentioning that three border cities were included (*Guben/Gubin, Görlitz/Zgorzelec, Karlsruhe*), and all three addressed this specific situation.
- As a rule of thumb, one can say that economic problems trigger or intensify demographic problems. Hence, it is

not surprising that cities experiencing deindustrialization and high unemployment are mostly also shrinking.

Apart from the various aspects of demographic changes (e.g., immigration, older people, a shrinking population), the cities' forecasts addressed the following problems:

- deindustrialisation (*Kiel, Eisenhüttenstadt, Mönchengladbach*)
- modernisation of medium- and small-sized cities in rural areas (*Günzburg, Erlangen, Beeskow*),
- cooperation between cities (*Guben/Gubin, Braunschweig, Gießen-Wetzlar, Görlitz/Zgorzelec, Karlsruhe, Scheuditz, Schwalm-Eder-West, Städteregion Ruhr*)
- sustainability (*Munich*)
- integration, participation and social justice (*Bremen, Dietzenbach, Esslingen, Leipzig, Saarbrücken, Stuttgart*).

Exploring Cities' Futures

Needless to say, different, even conflicting models and scenarios were eventually presented. Each city had to define the problem at hand based on regional and local circumstances. The same is true for the models and scenarios that also had to fit into the local or regional environment. Consequently, the tentative way in which ideas and visions were developed makes it difficult to apply them to other cities, especially as none of the concepts have been put into practice. Nonetheless, the project led to a number of ideas that other cities might refer to and adapt to their needs. Altogether scenarios and models were discussed in six areas:

- identity and image
- regionalisation
- integration
- demographic change and shrinking cities
- citizen participation
- gender mainstreaming

Four of these shall be described in more detail.

Dealing with Shrinking Cities

Until the mid 1990s nobody could imagine shrinking German cities. The very nature of cities, by necessity, seemed to embrace a steady growth in many respects. However, due to suburbanisation, increasing mobility and demographic changes, shrinking cities have not only become a widespread reality in East Germany, but also in West Germany. Therefore, more than half of the cities involved in the project (13 out of 21) addressed respective issues.

It is a difficult problem to tackle with optimism. A declining population is always viewed critically. The different concepts presented by the cities clearly reveal this difficulty.

- *Leipzig*, e.g., stressed the fact that some parts of the city will be shrinking while others will be growing and ex-

panding. This uneven development will require urban planning and adjustments to the infrastructure.

- Other cities (*Eisenhüttenstadt, Guben/Gubin, Beeskow*) want to establish and nurture a specific identity that is expected to help retain long-established citizens and will hopefully attract new ones.
- A more sombre picture was drawn of *Braunschweig-Salzgitter-Wolfsburg*, where a perforated city-landscape is foreseeable.

On the whole, the project highlighted the inadequacy of simply remodelling the urban landscape to combat the problem of shrinking cities. Long-term concepts must be set up. In addition, the research network revealed that local politicians as well as administrators are sometimes reluctant to discuss this kind of long-term problem, partly because they are tied up by more pressing short-term issues, partly because of the difficulty in doing something about it. Very often the experts involved in the project had to put the topic on the agenda.

Identity and Image

Urban or regional identities are complex concepts. And one could even argue that cities do not have such a thing as an identity. Nonetheless, seven of the cities participating in the project addressed this topic. Notably cities with identities shaped by the industrial age and the features of mass production regarded the question of identity – or the loss of it – as a challenge. For these cities the project was a perfect opportunity to reflect on a post-industrial image, combining urban flair with local traditions and cultural events. In essence, to find or model a new identity proved to be a quest to create a unique selling point. Again, the cities presented different concepts. Three examples suffice.

- *Kiel's* major economic sectors (navy and shipyards) have lost their importance, leaving the city without an economic backbone. Being an integral part of the city of Kiel, the sea was to be transformed into a new point of reference for the city's self-image.
- *Guben/Gubin* faced a twofold problem: its location at the German-Polish border and the fact that it is a shrinking city. In addition, as downtown *Guben* was destroyed during the war, the city can neither resort to tradition nor to an architecturally integrated city centre. But these problems can also provide a basis for a new city image. Recreating and rebuilding the city's core can potentially comprise a new identity. Furthermore, *Guben/Gubin* could picture itself as a bridge between two nations.
- *Beeskow* rediscovered its history and tradition, capitalizing on nature and its rural environment. In short, it sought to combine history and modernity.

These examples show that the cities strove both to conserve their local heritage and tradition, on the one hand, and to embrace features of a modern post-industrial society, on the other. However, images and identities can only work effectively if they are clear and explicit. In addition, an image can neither be created artificially nor can a city easily get rid of an

established one. On the contrary, *Günzburg*, for example, demonstrated that its image was not affected by the establishment of a large new factory. It basically continued to be a small, quiet city in a rural area.

Networks and Regionalisation

Globalization has increased the importance of regions and devaluated cities as the basis for economic and social developments. Similarly, individual mobility has enabled citizens to use the regional infrastructure and combine the advantages of rural and city life. Finally, many problems require cooperation between cities. Nonetheless, cities have legally and politically defined borders.

In the framework of the research network “City 2030”, a number of aspects related to regionalisation were discussed. For example, cities can be dissolved and blended into a region. Hence, cities would lose their political and legal autonomy. Another option discussed in the network focused on cooperation between cities. This means that a city would retain its legal and political status but regionalize its scope of action by cooperating with other cities and local communities. Such an approach would necessarily raise the issue of the need for regional identity.

On the whole, the project disclosed two basic options in dealing with regionalisation. Cities can either transform themselves into a kind of regional community or set up a system of cooperation with their neighbouring cities.

Social Integration

Increasing social inequalities and immigration might lead to segregated cities, which, of course, will also result in differentiation between prosperous and declining city quarters. Hence, integration will become a pressing aim to be pursued by cities different ways. *Esslingen*, e.g., focused on citizens’ participation. The city organized a number of panels and discussions, inviting citizens living in the respective quarters to participate and voice their expectations. *Munich*, on the other hand, gave preference to measures that foster and support families and children.

All and all, it was shown that cities must pay special attention to integration, which also involves the underpinning of increased citizens’ participation, voluntary social services and expanded public social services.

Policy Implications: Long-term Concepts Needed

“City 2030” did not include policy recommendations in the sense that local government should implement measures laid down in the various projects. The implementation of policies was deliberately not part of the projects in order to stress the laboratory character and to give the cities as much leeway as possible. The overall goal of the project was to initiate a discourse in the cities on guiding principles, scenarios and models. In consequence, no follow-up project was planned.

However, the strength of the research network marked also its weakness. Some projects ran into a number of problems. Notably the cooperation between local practitioners and academic experts turned out to be difficult and sometimes unmanageable. In a few cities the failure to cooperate and communicate led to a breakdown of the whole project, in other cases the conflicts could only be solved by mediation.

Nonetheless, the successful projects sent out a clear message to local policy-makers as well as to academic experts: if cities want to have a say in their own future, they must have long-term concepts transcending day-to-day business reality.

Sources and References

(available only in German)

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