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Linz 21

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Z_punkt GmbH The Foresight Company, Klaus Burmeister
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Purpose

The “Linz 21” project was an ambitious attempt to describe future development paths for the Austrian city of Linz. Its purpose was to enable active design of the city’s future in the 21st century, cognizant of the manifold challenges the municipality now faces. The process was designed for public participation. Several exploratory scenarios were developed in the period from 2002 to 2004. Those scenarios depicted the effects of various action alternatives and supported active and successful strategy development.

Why Did the City of Linz Require Futures Scenarios?

The great complexity of the city’s social and economic fabric together with rapid change, accompanied by increasingly intense competition, imposes enormous challenges on today’s society. The Austrian city of Linz thus recognized the need to undertake analysis of possible development vectors in order to survive in the competition for quality of life and economic strength over the long term. Here it was necessary to take account of interactions and to use the knowledge thus obtained when developing futures strategies.

This was the background against which the Linz City Council issued a directive and contracted out scenarios describing the potential futures relevant to the city, covering the coming ten to fifteen years. The initiative started in October of 2001. The scenarios were to be used as landmarks for a broad-based discussion on the city’s future and guideposts for the city’s activities.

The Scenario Process

Participants

The City Council initiated a participatory process in 2002. More than eighty experts from government and public administration, from the business community and from society at large took part. Ars Electronica Center Linz and Z_punkt The Foresight Company were in charge of the methodic and conceptual supervision.

Course of activities

Owing to the multitude of influencing factors and the complexity of the tasks, a three-phase procedure was adopted for the development of the Linz scenarios.

Six central topic areas were first selected and several “rough” scenarios (so-called sub-scenarios) were sketched out for each of these areas. In a second phase these rough scenarios, referenced to specific topics, were brought together to create global



scenarios for the future of Linz. In a third phase, the global scenarios were adapted and refined in respect of each topic area.

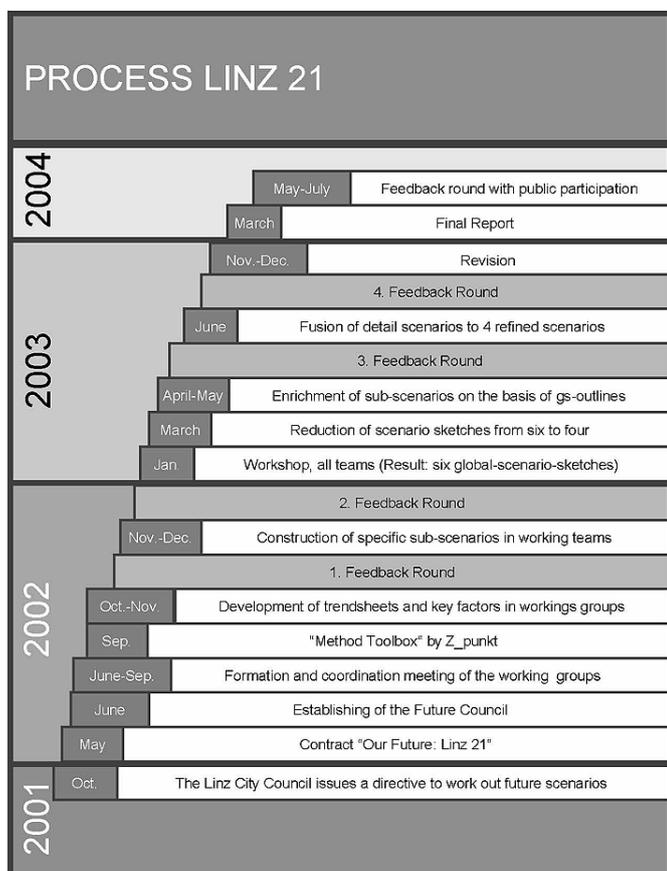


Figure 1: Outline of the process

The three phases, seen in detail, were as described below.

Linz seen from a national, and global perspective ...

A group of experts ("project sub-group") was designated for each of six subject areas:

- Education, science, research, innovation, technology and development
- Efficiency and efficacy of municipal service providers
- Arts and culture, athletics, recreation, information and the media
- Health, social affairs and promoting social involvement
- Business, labor market and tourism
- Residential issues, traffic and transit, urban planning and development, and inter-municipality cooperation.

These project sub-groups first compiled, systematized, and described the most critical trends and developments affecting the city of Linz and its national, European and global setting in each of the six subject areas. Using this collection of trends as a basis, "key factors" were identified for the several topic

areas. These trends will have a decisive effect in the near future.

Since these key factors also harbor considerable uncertainties, each project sub-group drafted, in a workshop, three sketch-like scenarios for its topic area. The basic question here was, "Which potential future developments in certain key factors dovetail with potential future developments for other key factors?" To answer this question, each of the groups conducted a consistency analysis with the aid of the "morphological box" where cross-consistencies in the various embodiments of the key factors were sought. It was on this basis that sub-scenarios specific to the particular topics were identified. These sub-scenarios later formed the starting point for the construction of the global scenarios.

From global scenarios ...

In January 2003, the results of the project sub-groups were merged to form a "unified whole". This was done in a large scenario workshop attended by more than 80 persons drawn from government and administration and public life. The 6 × 3 = 18 topic-specific sub-scenarios were amalgamated to create four global scenarios which describe the alternative blueprints for Linz in the next ten to fifteen years.

The global scenarios were first formulated with software support, using the interaction matrix method. At the scenario workshop the members of the project sub-groups then had the opportunity (in working group brainstorming sessions) to examine the global scenario outlines (the output of the scenario software), to introduce corrections and modifications where appropriate and indicated, and to augment the substance.

To refined scenarios.

Once the global scenarios were available in draft form it was necessary to make them more specific and concrete and to enrich them so that in each case they offered a descriptive and detailed picture of Linz at the beginning of the 21st Century. These scenarios then served as the basis for a discussion on a desirable future for the city. At the same time, the topic-specific sub-scenarios were enhanced – against the background of the global scenarios – and made more precise. Thus they were further refined to form substance-rich, adapted and detailed scenarios. This was affected through intensive feedback in the project sub-groups and with the project team. Both – the more concrete global scenarios and the topic-specific detailed scenarios – were ultimately boiled down to create four detailed scenarios for the future of Linz:

- **Cooperation and participation**
- **Disjointed knowledge society**
- **Concentration on the essentials**
- **New values in the urban sphere**

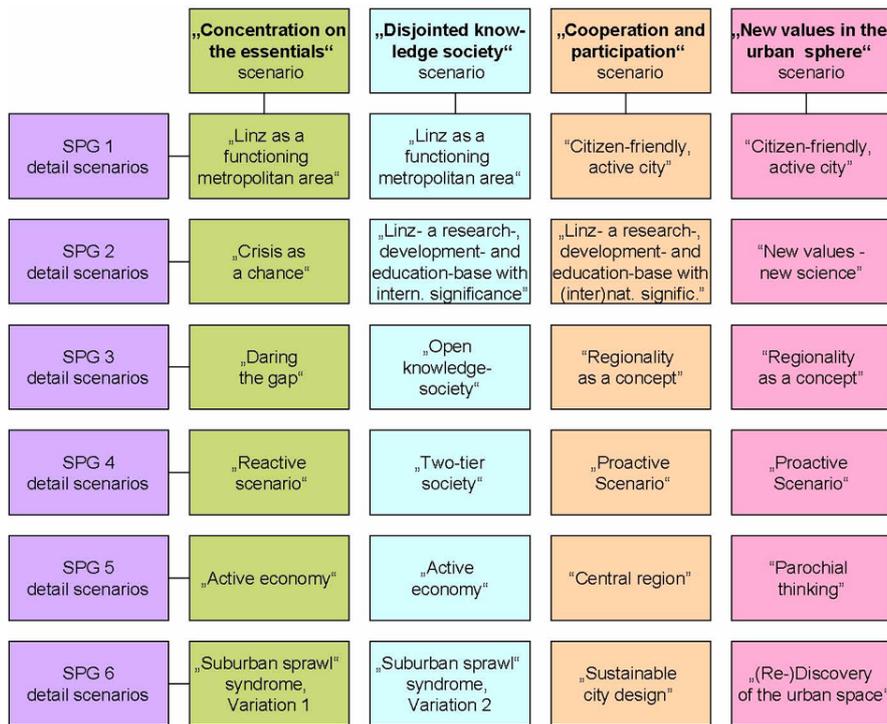


Figure 2: Context of detailed scenarios and global scenarios (morphological box)

The four alternative future images for the City of Linz were presented to the public in the spring of 2004.

Possible Futures of Linz

The four alternative scenarios for Linz are described in brief below. The detailed scenarios, including the individual topics and trend analyses that went into the scenarios, are contained in the final report. It can be obtained free of charge at the Internet address cited below.

Scenario 1: Linz as a functioning metropolitan area

Working under the title “Cooperation and participation”, the focus was on the Linz metropolitan area. It proved to be a region with common interests, unified and requiring cooperative arrangements to the extent that adjacent municipalities are joined primarily by complementary or reciprocal relationships like e.g. housing, employment, and shopping locations. They are also interested in exploiting the synergies of common policies in the region they share. This boosts economic power in the region. The resultant additional revenues can be used to finance investments in sustainable development for “Linz and its environs”, particularly in the fields of traffic and transit, health and social affairs.

The major opportunities offered by this scenario are improved options for governing the “soft factors” such as recreational and sports facilities within the conurbation. Problematic in this scenario is the extremely complex and complicated implemen-

tation of a metropolitan area that actually functions. There is reason to fear that efforts in this direction might slowly stop at the halfway point or not even progress beyond the “ground-breaking” stage.

Scenario 2: The knowledge-divide

The “Disjointed, Knowledge-Driven Society” scenario observes the trend toward increasing significance of knowledge and innovation; it describes a city in which education and research are massively supported. Primarily an alliance of businesses, academic and extra-academic research institutes, and innovative, “future-motivated” citizens and workers will drive economic development in Linz and its metropolitan area. This will give rise to a climate of dynamism and flexibility in all the knowledge-driven industries. Public administration will embrace this definition of the focus but otherwise will withdraw to its core activities – with all the unfavorable impacts on traffic and transit development, health and social welfare for the populace.

The major hazard involved in this scenario is thus the creation of a “two-thirds society” wherein the knowledge-driven society – to the extent that no political countermeasures are launched – will indeed tend to widen the gap between “rich and poor”. However, it will not be the sole cause of the increasing divergence within the populace.

Scenario 3: Limited public services and devolution

“Concentration on the essentials” takes as its starting point the thesis that the City of Linz and its administration – ultimately being forced to do so by budgetary constraints – will focus on its core tasks. Given this perspective, local government sees itself primarily as the guarantor for basic public services. It creates the appropriate framework for their delivery. It concentrates on governing public services and on quality assurance wherever market mechanisms fail. Raising efficiency and reducing expenditures in the city budget are in the foreground here. In some cases, this situation creates greater clarity; focal points in cultural activities might be made clearer. The city foregoes delivering the full spectrum in arts and culture. The individual bears greater responsibility in, for example, the fields of education, in preventive healthcare etc. The suburban area around the city is taken to be set and accepted – with all the consequences for traffic and transit and the infrastructure.

Thus in this scenario there is the hazard that the municipality, as a result of excessive outsourcing or reducing too severely its own options for designing the future, will experience a sharp loss in political influence. Consequently critical sectors

are allowed to “drift along on their own”, without any government intervention.

Scenario 4: Multiple cultures and diversity

In the fourth scenario – “New values in the urban sphere” – urban flair is coupled with an inspiring and uplifting “multi-cultural climate”. Here local government will deliberately support and promote elements of urbanity – such as cultural diversity, multiple city centers, ample traffic and transit infrastructures, generous and innovative architectural and urban planning. Over and above that, the strengths of this scenario are to be found in consciously narrowing the opportunity gap between men and women and, more generally, fostering measures to activate the resources in the populace. In the healthcare sector, for example, there will be an emphasis on preventive medicine.

Enabling and guaranteeing the acceptance of diversity (key words here being immigration and integration) – in economically unsettled times, as well – is a crux of this scenario. A further risk is that Linz will indeed succeed because of other traditional and well-established site factors, but at the same time, it will neglect other sectors associated with (new) technologies. In its strong concentration on itself and its own qualities Linz could “miss the boat” on international development.

Mission Statements Still to be Formulated

Scenarios and trend analyses were worked within the framework of the project “Our future: Linz 21”. They are suitable for sharpening our senses and pointing out relevant parameters in potential developments. They present ranges for action and, as regards to the approach, are explorative in nature. As such, they can be used to depict plausibly the effects of action alternatives and thus serve to support active, sustainable strategy development.

The present scenarios can include only a finite number of measures and concrete examples. To give the residents of Linz an opportunity to embellish the scenarios with their own new ideas, critical comments and creative additions, the city administration has made the scenarios available to the public via the Internet.

The people of Linz thus have an opportunity to question the existing “development proposal”, to examine the relevance and plausibility of the scenarios introduced, and to filter desirable developments out of the sum of all those possible. The objective is to derive, from the various futures scenarios, orientation for individual policy and design fields and to formulate a mission statement for municipal action.

Sources and References

The entire process, including all the reports, has been posted at the City of Linz website: www.linz.at/linz21

About the EFMN: Policy professionals dealing with RTD, innovation and economic development increasingly recognize a need to base decisions on broadly based participative processes of deliberation and consultation with stakeholders. One of the most important tools they apply is FORESIGHT. The EFMN or European Foresight Monitoring Network supports policy professionals by monitoring and analyzing foresight activities in the European Union, in neighboring countries and around the world. The EFMN helps those involved in policy development to stay up to date on current practice in foresight. It helps them tap into a network of expertise and experience on issues related to the day-to-day design, management and execution of foresight and foresight-related processes.