

Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture: A Stocktaking

1) Linz09 in Numbers:

Visitors:

More than 7,700 Linz09 events attracted approximately 2.8 million visitors during Culture Capital Year. Events marking the run-up to the programme proper of Linz09 drew 600,000 visitors between 2006 and 2008. For details see the enclosed Facts & Figures.

Tourism:

The great number of day visitors (more than 2 million) and an increase of more than 11% in overnight stays during Culture Capital Year are significant as benchmarks for the success of Linz09 and underline the fact that Linz09 as a cultural event has been able not just to absorb the present economic crisis both in Upper Austria and in the capital but to give it a positive twist.

In terms of tourism Culture Capital Year was able to reverse the trend that was observable in the other provincial capitals. Between January and October 2009 Linz recorded an increase of 11.4% in overnight stays, whereas other Austrian provincial capitals had to cope with a significant drop in overnight stays, with Graz reporting a shortfall of 1.8%, Salzburg 3.2% and Vienna 4.6%.

In terms of the tourists' countries of origin Linz experienced an increase in visitors from Switzerland (+26.8%), the Czech Republic (+24.8 %), Austria (+22.9%), Germany (+17.5%) and Italy (+5.7%); there was a sharp drop in 2009 in the numbers of traditional business travellers from the USA, China, Great Britain and Russia.

Compared with the number of overnight stays clocked up in Austria's other provinces, Upper Austria is in the lead even in October 2009, which is due to the massive rise in overnight stays in Linz. If it were not for Linz's contribution, Upper Austria would be in the same league as the other provinces, with Salzburg recording a drop of 3.2%, Tyrol 5.3% and Vorarlberg 7.4%.

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Budget:

Linz 2009 Kulturhauptstadt Europas OrganisationsGmbH has a basic funding of 61.5 million euro, a sum that was stipulated by contract and covers the entire timespan of the project from 2005 to 2010. Linz09's official sponsors are the City of Linz, the Province of Upper Austria, the Federal Republic of Austria (Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture), each of whom has contributed 20 million euros, and the European Union (1.5 million euro).

Additional sponsoring contributed around 10.5 million euro to the budget of Linz09, which includes around 6.5 million euros worth of contributions in kind (services, advertising, non-cash benefits). Ticketing and merchandising yielded 1.7 million euro.

More than 60% of the total budget was earmarked for programming. Around 19% were assigned to advertising the Culture Capital and to marketing activities.

Its statement of revenues and expenditures shows that Linz09 not only breaks even but carries over significant cash reserves to 2010.

Image:

According to a poll carried out in August 2009 by Spectra Marktforschungsinstitut, the general perception of Linz has continued to improve significantly since the beginning of Culture Capital Year. The image of Linz as a modern, dynamic city that has a great deal to offer in terms of industry, technology and culture has become even more firmly established and it has been possible to alert a majority of Austrians to Linz's role of Culture Capital. In August 2009 97% of Linzers, 90% of Upper Austrians and 60% of Austrians were aware of this fact and called the degree of their awareness "high" or "very high". The fact that Linz's role as Culture Capital was made note of on such a scale and resulted in such a high degree of awareness is owed above all to a whole range of PR activities (advertising, announcements, reminders) that kept the majority of Austrians who were interested in the programme of Linz09 up to date. Information vehicles were the print media, TV, radio, the official Linz09 freebie, the "Neuner", word of mouth and the Internet. In Culture Capital Year alone, Linz09 was a topic in something like 2,600 national and international media (print media, TV, radio and Internet) and was featured in approximately 20,000 articles and news items.

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2) The Programme of Linz09:

The expectations and hopes entertained by local cultural institutions, artists and other actors involved with culture in regard to Culture Capital Year were understandably very high. Programming, for which the artistic directorate of Linz was solely responsible – the Supervisory Board of Directors was in charge of the financial aspects of the company, but had no right whatever to interfere with the cultural programme – was a protracted process punctuated by surprises, disappointments and controversies. The task was to distil more than 2,000 submitted projects into a programme that was compatible both with the artistic directors' own ideas and a host of the most diverse expectations. There were those who counted on an extensive involvement of Linz and Upper Austrian artists, while others were looking forward to pronounced European or even global dimensions and/or to the potential of a cultural programme to act as a thorn in the flesh of the status quo. Metaphorically speaking, some wanted Culture Capital Year to bathe Linz all year round in the lightning and thunder of big bangers – to the extent, of course, that it wasn't entirely given over to peace, silence, and the simple poetry of everyday culture, while at the same time the whole range of different styles and disciplines guaranteed in terms of cultural policy had to be kept in sight. The hopes and needs entertained by Linzers and visitors, the goals of urban planning regarding the city and the pressures and exigencies arising from the imperative to ensure exceptional artistic standards were the ingredients that had to be combined into the right mixture. This required time and dramaturgical parameters, such as the decision to make sure that each single day in Culture Capital Year would have something to offer that was original and attractive.

In order to prepare the public for Culture Capital Year in terms of its substance, it was decided to get the programme rolling two years in advance. "Art into the City!!", as the motto had it at the time, was supposed to give Linzers a first taste of what being Culture Capital might actually be like. And it did indeed work out according to plan: Using the experience gained from the contemporary art exhibition SCHAURAUSCH (in the shop windows of more than 50 stores in Linz's old city) and TIEFENRAUSCH (in the city's system of tunnels and horizontal mine shafts) as perches, we found it much easier to reach for the stars in the concluding HÖHENRAUSCH. This exhibition on the city's rooftops turned out to be Linz09's most successful project. It attracted 270,000 visitors, more than any other exhibition of contemporary art in Austria. The approximation to Europe was likewise supposed to be a gradual, step-by-step one. Therefore the LINZ EUROPA TOUR 2007 – 2009 dispatched

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Hubert von Goisern first to the Black Sea as Linz09's musical ambassador and, a year later, to the North Sea, before his friends from all the countries bordering on two of Europe's great rivers were invited to take part in the LINZ EUROPA HAFENFEST in the summer of Culture Capital Year.

European Capital of Culture Year was experienced in Linz as a time brimming with new impressions, surprises and experiences – from the glitzy opening night, when 130,000 people gathered along Nibelungen Bridge and the Danube Embankment to usher in the New Year in tandem with Culture Capital Year, to the soft farewells at the year's end. And the space in between housed a programme that combined a superlative density of events with high artistic standards.

The theatre festival THEATRE MANIA1: SNOWSTORM, the opening of the ARS ELECTRONICA CENTER, the CULTURE CAPITAL NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE MONTH, the Lentos exhibition BEST OF AUSTRIA, the lunchtime readings at the StifterHaus, the opera FOUCHÉ, the KEPLER SALON and other programme elements were designed to invite Linzers and Upper Austrians to explore new territories. During those first weeks, before even the most seasoned of city tourists showed any inclination to venture forth, we were overwhelmed by the reactions we got: 86% capacity utilisation in Hafenhalle09, record numbers of visitors in museums and other cultural institutions, and the Linz09 Infocenter humming along in top gear were living proof of the public's inquisitive and adventurous spirit.

And when spring and its mild temperatures enabled Linz09 to move under the open sky and make use of public spaces as planned, when some 8,000 youngsters joined forces for choral song for the project MEGAHERTZ in the Hauptplatz and 300 boys and girls from ten cities took part in a European Soccer Cup, when the great theatre project for schools I LIKE TO MOVE IT MOVE IT started to unfold, when the CIRCUS and the HÖRSTADT project (ACOUSTIC CITY) with its oases of quiet began to weave their different kinds of magic and when Linz, on the evidence of the languages spoken in its streets, was becoming more cosmopolitan by the day, a sense of euphoria began to spread that took Linz's hardened sceptics and habitual gripers by surprise.

The holiday months, usually a season of cultural drought, saw countless young visitors turn up at the highly unusual venues chosen by the theatre festival THEATRE MANIA2: SUNBURN, travel around the world in the Ars Electronica cyber project 80+1 or marvel at an

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uncommonly lively and cheerful Linz from the Schlossmuseum's new South Wing. The temporary structure of the yellow house on the hill, BELLEVUE, designed as a venue for a wide range of cultural activities sponsored by various Linz neighbourhoods, proved the runaway success of the rainy summer months.

There was one more key project that demanded a great deal of attention. A city that is going to be the focus of European attention for a whole year is well advised to confront its own history in a self-confident and self-critical manner. That Linz addressed the topic of the Nazi era and its terror earlier and more thoroughly than other Austrian cities is a point in its favour. In Culture Capital Year it has been possible to ensure that the City is now getting the recognition it deserves for its courageous attitude. Linz09 has managed to stage this encounter with Austria's history in the time between 1938 and 1945 in the public space and to give it a face; it has found ways of telling stories that were by no means unknown but that had not been told in that way before. The decision to have the controversial exhibition "KULTURHAUPTSTADT DES FÜHRERS" ("THE CULTURAL CAPITAL OF THE FUHRER") open at the Schlossmuseum several months before the official start of Culture Capital Year achieved its end: in this way the road was clear for today's Linz when Linz09 kicked off in earnest.

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3) Linz09 as a Model:

Linz09 has left its mark both in local and international contexts. In the European Commission in Brussels and in ECOC, a network of former, present and future European Capitals of Culture, Linz09 is considered a model for the role of a successful Culture Capital. This is due among other things to the inspired work of the artistic directorate, which in turn was made possible by the stability and the high quality of conditions in Linz. More than 100 delegations, who paid Linz a visit in the course of Culture Capital Year, and the keen interest shown by future Culture Capitals and by potential candidates for the title are proof of the exemplary character and the success of Linz09.

In view of all that has been said so far it will not come as a surprise that the media echo for Linz09 was overwhelmingly positive. This is particularly true of the international media, which devoted a great deal of attention to Linz as Culture Capital. What they considered especially noteworthy was the transformation process that Linz09 did its utmost to boost, along the lines laid down by the City in the mid-1980s. Other recurring themes were the credibility with which Linz09 presented the City in terms of the triad of industry, culture and nature, and hospitality, whose scope is not limited to the area of culture.

Structural aspects have also contributed to the success of Linz09. The fact that Linz09 was shaped by a team of independent artistic directors who were capable of turning that very independence into an advantage for the whole enterprise was widely commented on – particularly in view of other Culture Capitals that operate on far less clear guidelines, which has frequently resulted in conflicts of one kind or another. What has also quite rightly been repeatedly noted is the impressive stability of the Linz09 environment in terms of project development. Both the operations of the Linz09 OrganisationsGmbH and its funding have profited significantly from the utter reliability of its sponsors and partners and from the transparency and consistency of its planning.

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4) Linz09 Creates Alliances:

A number of different reasons that interacted with each other in various ways have enabled Linz09 to take stock in such a positive way. These include for instance Linz09's attempts to spell out for a large number of participants the demands inherent in the host role in as concrete terms as possible. Initiatives such as hotspots, in which a wide range of hospitality industry businesses managed to improve their quality standards may be cited here as well as the achievement of Austria Guides, who developed a new style of guided city tours to do justice to Linz09's cultural programme. The results in both cases were quite spectacular and endorsed the energetic alliance between culture and tourism that had been struck up regardless of the religious wars of a bygone age. It was with astonishment and pride that the Linzers noted the unexpected inundation of the Hauptplatz with visitors speaking an impressive variety of tongues. Even the rather sedate Linz hotel landscape felt a burst of rejuvenation and many a taxi driver of either sex suddenly found themselves in great demand as committed spokespersons for the Culture Capital.

This collective treasure is what we stand to gain above all from the Culture Capital project – alongside with the newly built and the newly refurbished buildings, the serendipitous partnerships, the friends that Linz and all of us have made, and the prestige and respect that this small European city has gained for itself.

Such gains are a good basis to build on and to continue to work for Linz. What needs to be cultivated and developed above all are the lessons that Linz has learnt in this exceptional year. Much has been shown to be possible that hitherto used to be considered impossible. Linz09 has been able to bundle under the Culture Capital umbrella occasionally divergent strategies sponsored by Linz and Upper Austria respectively. Cultural managers and tourist experts have been taking cues from each other in matters related to their shared public and have found that acting in concert yields more beneficial effects than splendid isolation. Cooperation in terms of joint ticketing, the Linz09 Card, the Linz09 Insider (with more than 7,000 bookings), a supraregional marketing strategy and, last but not least, the establishment of contacts to the international press – all these measures have set standards that will serve as benchmarks for future activities, even though the environment will be a fundamentally different one after 2009.

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What will also remain relevant in future are newly acquired competencies, experience in terms of concrete project work that is aiming to meet international standards, the degree of networking that has been established among various cultural institutions and the certainty on the part of all Linzers that they are living in the Republic's most innovation-friendly city.

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5) Linz09 and Sustainability:

It goes without saying that the road to this kind of self-confidence was a long one. Linz underwent massive and lasting changes even before 2009 – from an industrial, working-class city in the old mould with its catastrophic air parameters to a place with a high quality of life and with cultural ambitions. This means that Linz is offering a combination almost unique in Europe of a modern, highly productive industrial infrastructure, a growing cultural potential rapidly approaching top standards and attractive nature enclaves both within the city's boundaries and in its immediate surroundings.

The province of Upper Austria and the City of Linz together invested a total of 338 million euros in the cultural infrastructure of Linz in preparation of Culture Capital Year, which included the newly built South Wing of the Schlossmuseum, the extension and adaptation of the Ars Electronica Center, Internationales Atelierhaus Salzamt, the new Music Theatre, etc. Investments in cultural infrastructure directly connected to Linz09 or triggered by it have been doubly welcome at a time of economic crisis. It is owing to them that there is now a new city to be reckoned with, situated halfway between Vienna and Salzburg, that is determined consistently and successfully to cut its own path and to defend the economic position it has attained.

Linz has its work cut out for the period after 2009. Tasks that urgently need to be addressed include safeguarding HÖRSTADT (ACOUSTIC CITY) and the AKUSTIKON, with its location in the heart of the city, as pioneering ventures that are unique in Europe. Clearcut decisions and the activation of funding bodies are needed regarding such projects as KEPLER SALON that have a massive contribution to make to Linz's profile as an agent of cultural facilitation and empowerment. Experiences gained with projects whose very essence consisted in their transitory nature, such as HÖHENRAUSCH and BELLEVUE, need to be translated into new ventures. And, finally, seminal scenarios and formats in terms of cultural policies must be developed and the city's place on the maps of European city tourism must be guaranteed.

The newly formed alliances, the boost to Linz's self-confidence, the positioning of the city on the maps of international tourism and cultural marketing, the improvements in quality in the areas of the hospitality and culture industries and all those positive experiences and memories together form a legacy that is bound to exert a lasting influence on the city.

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