



Regional Foresight in an Enlarged European Union

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„We are not made wise by the recollections of the past but by our responsibility for the future“

George Bernard Shaw

Quo vadis European Regions?

„What will be the future of the European regions in an enlarged European Union“ is a question very often asked by those responsible for regional planning, by politicians, investors, technicians and citizens. Today there exist a lot of ideas, concepts and visions about how should the regions develop, but nobody can exactly predict how the regions will look like in 20, 30 or 40 years. But the task of planners is to make decisions *now for tomorrow* which have a longterm effect on regions, agglomerations, communities, their infrastructures, their economic, cultural, social structures and their ecological environment .

How can we plan for a future which will certainly be uncertain ? The only answer to this question is Scenario-Techniques. This planning and prospective tool enables you to develop alternative futures - scenarios e.g. for regions and their environments like technology, infrastructure, society, economy, ecology and politics, etc. These scenarios describe how the different futures might be and help you to identify *future based* opportunities and risks for regional planners, investors and citizens. The next important step is to develop action items on how to benefit most of the opportunities and how to turn risks into opportunities. These action items will then be fused into a master guideline which enables you to plot a successfull path into the future of your region and its actors.

In the following you find a summary of scenarios 2020 about the future of the European regions.



SCENARIO X 2020: The performance society in the dynamic United States of Europe

The United States of Europe have integrated most of the Eastern European countries who have become the favorite production sites of the global players: a cheap, but highly skilled and motivated labor force is available and has created, of course with a strong subsidy support from the USE government, a new boom in the East. New economic centers in Eastern Europe challenge the large agglomerations in Western Europe. The attractiveness of the Eastern centers has significantly increased with the construction of new airports and high speed ground transportation; the French TGV links now Paris-Warsaw-Moscow in a few hours.

The IT technicians' dreams have come true: we live in a totally connected, smart, self-sufficient world. The blockbuster innovations in multimedia come now from a merger between IT and biosciences. Citizens participate via direct IT polls in community decision making, but the basic directions of USE politics are decided by a strong Federal USE government.

The most successful global players have turned themselves into so-called project organizations, an organizational form without hierarchy, with change management as business principle consisting of projects, and part of powerful networks.

Another very successful business form is represented by small, smart and flexible companies, like freelancers or life entrepreneurs (= someone who manages all aspects of his/her life including social security etc.) They too are integrated in powerful networks embracing the whole world. Their main business focus is the service sector with permanent innovation as key success factor.

This new business world is highly competitive: those who succeed in perfectionizing their skills, knowledge and in adjusting their capabilities to the speed of change and to accept life long learning are the winners; those who are not willing or unable to match these demanding criteria of performance are the losers of this new world. On the other hand all these hardworking people enjoy what the creativity of the leisure industry offers: all kind of wellness, relaxation, mind machines etc are highly welcomed.



What about ecology and the quality of life ? As more and more value creation is done in the virtual business, the impact on ecology is positive. On the other hand the new performance driven entrepreneurs and job nomads are travelling around the globe in order to overcome cultural gaps and to succeed difficult missions. Therefore increased traffic volume - despite less polluting engines - and the industrialization of threshold countries reinforce the greenhouse effect. The world is still far from agreeing to global climate contracts as the ecological catastrophe did not yet happen and leading world powers are still too much concerned with their interior problems.

What about the people, and social security ? One paradigm shift is evident: This scenario requires utmost performance and leads to an ego-based performance society which has no room for the less performing or weaker members. We are confronted with a polarized society of a knowledge elite and a large part of „IT illiterate“ and „victims of speed and change“ living just above the subsistence level. Social security is no more affordable. The social security systems in Europe disappeared after their financial collapse. Either you have a private insurance or nothing. This new knowledge elite – where does it come from? As the original European population is overaged and decreases due to the baby bust, targeted immigration is the panacea. The European companies are looking for well-educated people from Eastern Europe and the third world who fill the labor gap which balances the age structure in the long run.

What are the effects of this situation for an agglomeration and a region ? The knowledge elite lives in well protected „ghettos“ with their own infrastructure, education, shopping and entertainment facilities and the rest moves to the cheaper outskirts of the large agglomerations and even to the slums.

As this is a scenario and not a prediction, we have to look at the other side of the future coin, Scenario Y.



SCENARIO Y 2020: The sustainable society in its regional nutshell

After a lot of ecological disasters all over the world which destroyed partly the basis of life (e.g. arable land and drinking water) people understood that they need nature but that nature does not need them. Therefore sustainable principles are integrated in legislation, in corporate auditing - having the same significance as profit, and in people's behavior patterns. Violating or polluting the natural environment is regarded as major crime and becomes a new social taboo.

Incorporating sustainable principles has created many dramatic changes in economy, society, politics, infrastructure and technology not in all, but in some regions. As the Europeans can not agree on the same high sustainability standards some regions disconnect and make their own regional politics. It is not any more the USE federal government, but the region who takes the responsibility about their future. Politicians are no more elected decision makers but facilitators and mediators with project assignments. They facilitate interest groups who plan, decide and implement regional politics with the people concerned.

The ecological paradigm shift has created new business types like the so-called „green consulting, green auditing“ focussing on ecologically compatible products, services, transportation, infrastructures, political decision making etc.

Transportation has been reduced to a minimum due to new community structures and industrial structures. Communities in the sustainable society provide everything the citizens need in 10 to max. 15 minutes walking distance: working-, education-, sports-, leisure-, shopping facilities, public services etc. Shopping is extremely rationalized: households order their goods on-line after downloading the most recent offerings from the shopping server. Instead of traffic congestion due to intensive individual car traffic we see just a few trucks delivering the ordered goods at home.

The industrial structures are turned into so-called closed loop systems, reorganized along the value chain which means that suppliers, producers, assemblers, etc. are located in the same industrial area and not scattered all over the globe in order to benefit from the lowest labor and production site costs.



As a result of this paradigm shift in many European regions, transportation prices have to integrate costs which compensate for all possible damage done to the environment in terms of pollution, or even better: to prove that this means of transportation shows a significantly better „green audit“. Every new product registration (from cars to computers, from food to detergents) has to undergo a profound sustainability check in terms of immediate, shortterm, midterm and longterm impacts on human and environmental health.

Local and regional aspects - or tribalism - become more important: people support what the local region has to offer; this limits their choice but in return they gain in the long run quality of life for themselves and the future generations. Conscious evolution, spirituality and taking care for other people, other species and nature become major values. What we learn in this environment is to go back to the basics and to be more happy with less –lessness becomes the new megatrend. People get closer: old and young, small and large families, singles and monoparental families live together and help each other.

Performance is also a value in this society, but not at all costs. We don't exclude the weaker or less performing individuals; they can still fulfill duties in less high-pressured jobs such as childcare, elderly care, or any kind of personal care, in restoration programs of the environment, etc. As the most attractive regions have no problem in getting a competent labor force, others suffer from strict tribal legislation which reduces the immigration of skilled people.

What about technology in this world ? Of course we have IT equipment in each household and the more we live and work in our region the greater is the desire to communicate via networks with the rest of the world. All the new „green service businesses“ are small companies or freelancers working at home. New sustainable biosciences become the motor of the economy.

Now comes the most exciting part for each planner - the consequences.

Each of the various groups like regional and community planners, infrastructure planners, investors etc. has to derive opportunities and risks and to develop action items in order to take advantage of opportunities and to convert risks into opportunities. Therefore just a few examples which should outline the procedure:



Some Consequences for regional and community planning under Scenario X:

- *Plan the new economic centers in a balanced way aiming at sustainability: no monoculture, but economic diversity: different sectors, sizes, old and young companies*
- *Make the region attractive for investors and top labor force:*
 - *Always balancing the mix of industries*
 - *Incentives for clean industries and discouraging taxation for polluting industries*
 - *Create and maintain an innovative atmosphere: incentives for good ideas, support of start ups, innovation contests, knowledge exchange with other areas, stimulate cross-fertilization*
- *Involve citizens in shaping their region, community etc:*
 - *Install and manage citizens' expert circles where people from all professions contribute their specific know-how to regional problems; let the citizens decide and implement regional projects*
 - *Create a network for community projects and polls*
 - *Create self-help, inter-business, inter-community and inter-regional networks for mutual support, knowledge exchange etc.*
- *Adapt transport infrastructure to economic, ecological and social needs – today and tomorrow; let the regional actors run the implementation*
- *Develop information systems for investors, tourists, utilities, citizens providing different layers of information.*
- *Create new jobs in the service sector for the losers of the performance society like homesitting, gardening and all kind of caretaking jobs*
- *Test new regional concepts in Eastern Europe (starting from scratch, no hampering old structures, make use of Easterners' creativity and shrewdness)- turn Eastern European regions into role models*
- *etc.*



Some consequences for regional and community planning under Scenario Y:

- *Apply strictly all sustainability criteria for urbanization and infrastructure development:*
 - *the max. 15 minutes walking distance for everything the citizens need*
 - *location of companies along the value chain – closed-loop systems*
 - *incentives for clean industries*
 - *fiscal advantages for home offices and other commuting avoiding activities*
- *Develop some regions into role models for sustainable societies and economies:*
 - *install knowledge centers for sustainable region development*
 - *sell the know how*
 - *create training centers for sustainable regional development*
- *Install and manage sharing concepts with cost-per-use-models for vehicles, machines, production facilities*
- *Give each region a distinctive identity, culture and a vision: turn the difference into a strength*
- *Provide new flexible housing /apartment structures for larger families and their change in household size*
- *Involve citizens in idea generation and implementation for the new sustainable society: giving up traditional, comfortable habits in favor of sustainable behavior*
- *Become a role model for the synthesis of ecology and economic success*
- *Support new ventures in the field of ecology*
- *Create a business and technology park for „green R&D“*
- *Install venture capital funds for new « green ventures »*
- *Create an ecology innovation award for regions*
- *Develop a “green tourism“ (low impact on ecology), for the sustainable regions*
- *etc.*

This is just an abstract of action items. Before you start the implementation there is one important synthesis step to accomplish: the so-called master guideline which incorporates not only the common denominator between scenario X and Y, but also the most innovative aspects of the consequence analysis. A summarized example is given below.



An example of a Master Guideline based on some of the previous ideas

SCENARIO X	SYNTHESIS	SCENARIO Y
- Make the region strong and competitive	- Develop diversified economic structures in regions	- Support self-sufficiency of the regions and make them sustainable
- Large agglomerations need sustainable politics to remain attractive: investment of future-proof industries, quality of life for top human resources...	- Encourage sustainable structures in all economic sectors from agriculture to industry, from household to transportation	- Ecology is a major economic and social factor in many regions: only sustainable companies and systems are accepted
- Adaptable to fast changing business and to changing lifestyles of the life entrepreneurs / job nomads	- Initiate flexible, modular structures for industry, services and homes incl. combination of home and work	Adaptable to new patchwork families, care taking and small business structures
- Booming economies have high requirements for top quality transport + com. infrastructure	- Develop inter- + intra-regional transport + com. networks (fast, efficient, time saving, sustainable)	- Personal encounters in the region + intra-regional knowledge exchange
- Be part of decision makers and players keeps the top companies in the region	- Integrate regional players from economy, society and politics in any regional planning, development or change concept	- Support of the local decision makers is vital for any development and change in the region
- Top KM and HR are the only way to succeed in a competitive world	- Invest in infrastructure for Knowledge Management and Human Resources	- Regional success is strongly depending from top KM and HR



How to run and implement a regional foresight process?

When you intend to undertake such an exercise for your region, you have to involve well selected decision makers coming from all driving forces of the region (politics, economy, society, infrastructure etc.) The process has to be a mix of expert analysis and research, workshops with people involved and concerned for developing ideas and for decision making, organised in open space rounds.

Whether a region has a bright or a gloomy future, is not only depending from governmental or political planning. *Shaping the future of a region is a task of all responsible forces and people concerned in a region.* The resources are already there: the creativity, brightness, motivation and willingness of all human resources concerned.

In this sense, keep Mahatma Gandhi's phrase in mind:

„You must be the change you want to see in the world.“