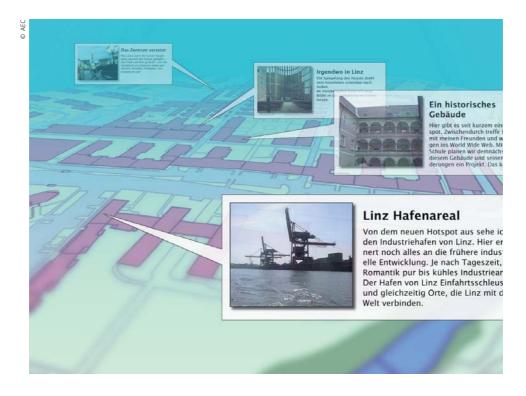# Hotspot Linz

**A City Engaged in Dialog**

By installing citywide Hotspots to provide wireless Internet access free of charge, Linz once again underscores its status as a leading-edge center of high-tech. By the end of 2008, the city will have set up as many as 200 Hotspots at selected locations around town. Plus, this initiative is being accompanied by a diversified program of events and activities, whereby the spotlight won't be on the Internet per se or the technology on which it's based but rather on various aspects of communication and (playful) collaboration. At the top of the city's agenda in getting actively involved in this project is nurturing a process of exchange among diverse target groups within individual Linz neighborhoods as well as between the periphery and the center.

The Hotspot Linz Web portal showcases these new service offerings in a way designed to create maximum public impact. As the lead associate on the technical side of this project, Ars Electronica is developing a variety of modules and features designed to stimulate public interest and involvement, preconditions for a web presence that takes advantage of the online medium's capacity to function as an effective information and communications platform. An accompanying program of events and activities such as workshops will get across the diverse possibilities of the applications. Joint initiatives with selected target groups (e.g. young people) will work out concepts that take a creative approach to communication and imagination in an urban setting.

The Hotspot Linz Web Portal offers direct access to the city's new communications domain that links up users with all Hotspots in Linz. A virtual guest book invites participants to engage in dialog, urban games encourage participation, and the creative presentation provides entry into a

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highly imaginative virtual cityscape. Anyone will be able to post pictures or comments via an on-site media station or through the Internet via laptop or mobile device (PDA), and do so in a direct, intuitive way that doesn't require a lot of background knowledge or technical experience. The portal features links to Hotspot news, a rundown of the latest events, activities and offerings, info sites detailing the ongoing expansion of the project, and service sites of the City of Linz. Users will be able to access specific information about all of these respective areas as well as general explanations—for instance, about local municipal facilities.

The Hotspot Linz Web Portal thus assembles and makes available a wealth of information, but its primary mission is to popularize new models of communication in an urban setting and to mediate user's encounters with diverse services custom-tailored to the needs of people inhabiting a specific geographical location. *WikiMap Linz, Gameboard Linz* and *Windows on the City* are action-oriented modules designed to get people involved.

*WikiMap Linz* is an interactive city map that enables users to customize the layout of visuals, texts and sound elements just like thumbtacking items to a bulletin board. *WikiMap Linz* features a format all its own as a medium perfectly suited to the intention of encouraging involvement and getting across the virtual cityscape's signature quality that arises from the on-demand retrievability of individual elements: soundscape, visualized urban imagery and text-based metropolitan impressions in which the interplay among real venues and forms of subjective, creative cartography of big-city life is made visible. *Gameboard Linz* is the competitive zone in which neighborhoods team up with or face off against one another. Game offerings ranging from tic-tac-toe matches to car races are designed to establish a loyal Hotspot constituency.

In order to be able to showcase the entire spectrum of possibilities of wireless communication in Linz right from the start, the initial installation phase will be setting up Hotspots at locations that are best suited to getting across the project's intentions. For the *Windows on the City* module, for example, the selected venues are a cultural institution, an elementary school, a youth center, a neighborhood recreational/cultural complex and a facility for seniors. Thus, what will be interlinked here are real spaces that fulfill their own social welfare missions and are normally completely separated from one another. Examples of planned initiatives are a kindergarten radio broadcast with a receiving station in a senior center, and youth projects in cooperation with municipal libraries and neighborhood cultural facilities that make it possible to view changes in the cityscape and visions of potential futures from a number of different perspectives. Thus, beyond encouraging users to take advantage of features spontaneously, the diversified formats of participation offer new opportunities to develop and present long-term projects. The launch will be staged in conjunction with the 2005 Ars Electronica Festival. A large-format virtual guest book will be set up on Linz's Main Square; linking it up with additional virtual guest books at the other Hotspot sites will create a centralized-decentralized action and presentation sphere in which all entries will be visible at the center and the periphery. Users will be able to upload digital photos and send text impressions of Linz ... the upshot being a multicolored urban mosaic featuring graphic accounts, short stories and commentary ... and thus a city engaged in dialog.