HOTEL

How to analyse life quality
An accompanying measure within the EU Fifth Framework Programme
Keyaction "Improving the Socio Economic Knowledge Base"
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Newsletter I

"State of the Art"

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HOTEL Partners

FACTUM • Ralf Risser, Karin Ausserer, Nicolas Bein • Austria

Lund University • Department Technology and Society • Agneta Ståhl • Sweden

Comenius University Bratislava • Department of Psychology • Jana Plichtová • Slovakia

Societá Italiana di Psicologia della Sicurezza Viaria (SIPSiVi) • Gian Marco Sardi • Italy
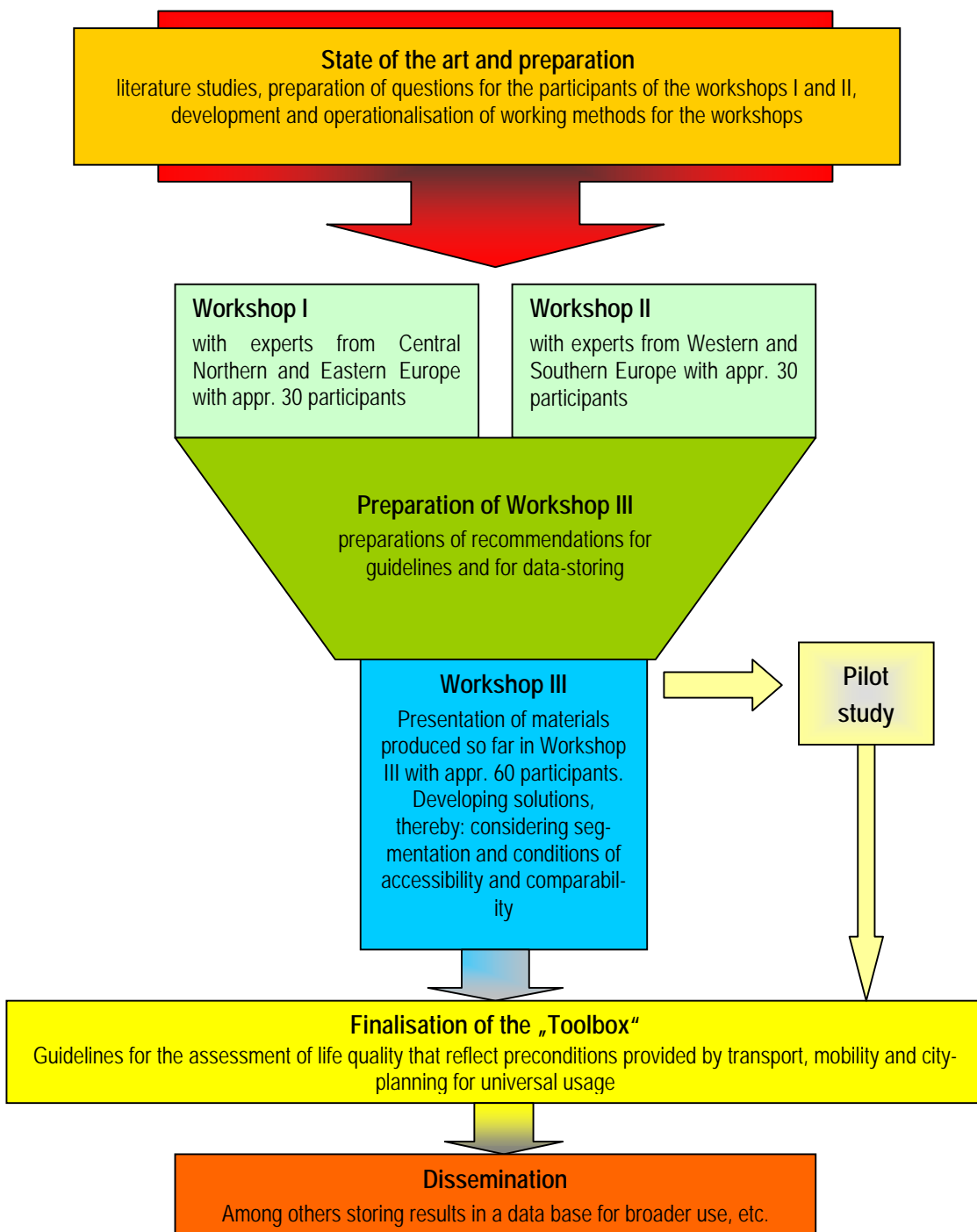
Institut National de Recherche sur les Transports et leur Sécurité (INRETS) • Department d´evaluation et recherche en accidentologie • Stefan Petica • France

Preface

HOTEL – How to analyse life quality– is an accompanying measure in the key Action "Improving the socio-economic knowledge base" of the EC Fifth Framework Programme.

The project HOTEL takes a starting point in a heuristic approach that focuses on different disciplines' practice in connection with the assessment and consideration of Quality of Life (QoL) and underlying mobility and transport preconditions. The core concept is to find out how aspects of QoL are taken care of in practice in the field of transport, mobility and city planning. With "practice" all kinds of activities are meant that set the scene for the living conditions of citizens. The responsible actors for these activities are politicians and decision makers, planners, implementers and administrators.

Fig I: **Graphical presentation of the project components**

State of the art and preparation
literature studies, preparation of questions for the participants of the workshops I and II, development and operationalisation of working methods for the workshops

Workshop I
with experts from Central Northern and Eastern Europe with appr. 30 participants

Workshop II
with experts from Western and Southern Europe with appr. 30 participants

Preparation of Workshop III
preparations of recommendations for guidelines and for data-storing

Workshop III
Presentation of materials produced so far in Workshop III with appr. 60 participants. Developing solutions, thereby: considering segmentation and conditions of accessibility and comparability

Pilot study

Finalisation of the „Toolbox"
Guidelines for the assessment of life quality that reflect preconditions provided by transport, mobility and city-planning for universal usage

Dissemination
Among others storing results in a data base for broader use, etc.

History

Quality of life is a term defined in many different ways. There is no single definition, which covers the widespread field. In this newsletter some QoL definitions and models are summarised. In addition the interrelation between sustainability and QoL and between traffic & mobility and QoL is considered.

Looking back into history at the beginning QoL mainly referred to material supply. The main indicator for QoL was the Gross National Product. At the end of the 1950s QoL was linked to non-material values, too. The idea of a "quality of life" with strong qualitative ingredient was spread out over the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when first doubts were raised in the highly developed western societies about economic growth as the major goal of societal process.

Two distinct traditions of applied QoL research emerged in different parts of the world: *The Scandinavian quality of life approach* and *the American quality of life approach*. The Scandinavian approach focuses on objective living conditions and their determinants. The American approach analyses the individuals' subjective experience of their lives. Nowadays, the QoL research is in most cases based on both objective and subjective indicators.

Assessment

The assessment of QoL differs not only from disciplines to disciplines, but also within the disciplines. Some scientists put the satisfaction of individual needs in the centre of their QoL reflection. Others concentrate on objective living conditions and the subjective well being. Some research dealing with QoL indicated that subjective well being is strongly connected to the degree to which a person has different choices and opportunities and is also able to make use of them.

The subjective well-being is in the centre of the psychological QoL approach. A strong sense of meaningful life, positive attitudes towards life, optimism, autonomy and experienced control of social environment support a high level of subjective well-being on the individual level. In addition a good social network (having many acquaintances, being appreciated, etc.) increases the level of subjective well-being.

All indicators defined in the different disciplines refer quite consistently to four dimensions:

→ ***Social dimension:*** The social dimension covers all aspects from health, social relations, mobility, social status, etc.

→ ***Political dimension:*** Under political dimension all aspects are summarised that belong to a political system e.g. political stability, possibility of participation, quality of social services, tax systems

→ ***Economical dimension:*** To the economical dimension belong for instance the use of resources, economic stability and competitiveness, employment.

→ ***Environmental dimension:*** The environmental dimension covers aspects like the prudent use of resources, sustainable transportation, waste minimisation, etc..

Subjective well-being

A high level of subjective well-being is a precondition for a high QoL. The subjective well-being is influenced by many factors like cultural aspects or the social position. In affluent individualistic countries, where human rights are respected and a form of social equity exists, people tend to have a higher level of subjective well being than in countries with collectivism. Concerning the social position the higher the person's position in a social structure, respectively the higher the possibility of self-determination the higher in general the level of subjective well being.

Sustainability

QoL is closely linked to sustainability. The term sustainability is generally defined as the effective use of natural, human and technological resources to meet today's community needs without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. A sustainable behaviour has to be achieved in the four dimensions mentioned above: Social dimension, political dimension, economical dimension, and environmental dimension. Above all the social dimension became of increasing importance in the last years. A policy where a continuous dialogue between government and public takes place, in which both parties continuously learn to see the issues from complementary perspectives. Without dialogue there is a risk of deepening misunderstanding between government and citizens, which has negative effect on a sustainable development and on the QoL of citizens.

Traffic, mobility, city planning

QoL is a frequently used keyword in the area of traffic, mobility and city planning., There is no doubt that these areas have a great impact on the QoL of citizens. However, QoL is often not operationalised in these fields. Especially, literature about the assessment of QoL in practice is hard to be found. But even in these areas it is important to combine objective and subjective perspectives. E.g., aspects of accessibility and the social communication seem to play a major role here. More or less seven quality dimensions are relevant for the subjective well-being of road users and for the choice of mode: social climate/equity, objective safety, security, mobility, comfort, aesthetic/environmental quality, cost aspects.

With regard to a sustainable mobility it is underlined that practitioners in the traffic, mobility and city planning area have to be aware that people will only accept measures, respectively will only behave in a way to allow a sustainable development, if the sustainable behaviour is linked to an increase of their own QoL. For that reason it is of great importance for practitioners to stay in permanent contact with the citizens, in order to know the preconditions for achieving the citizens co-operation.

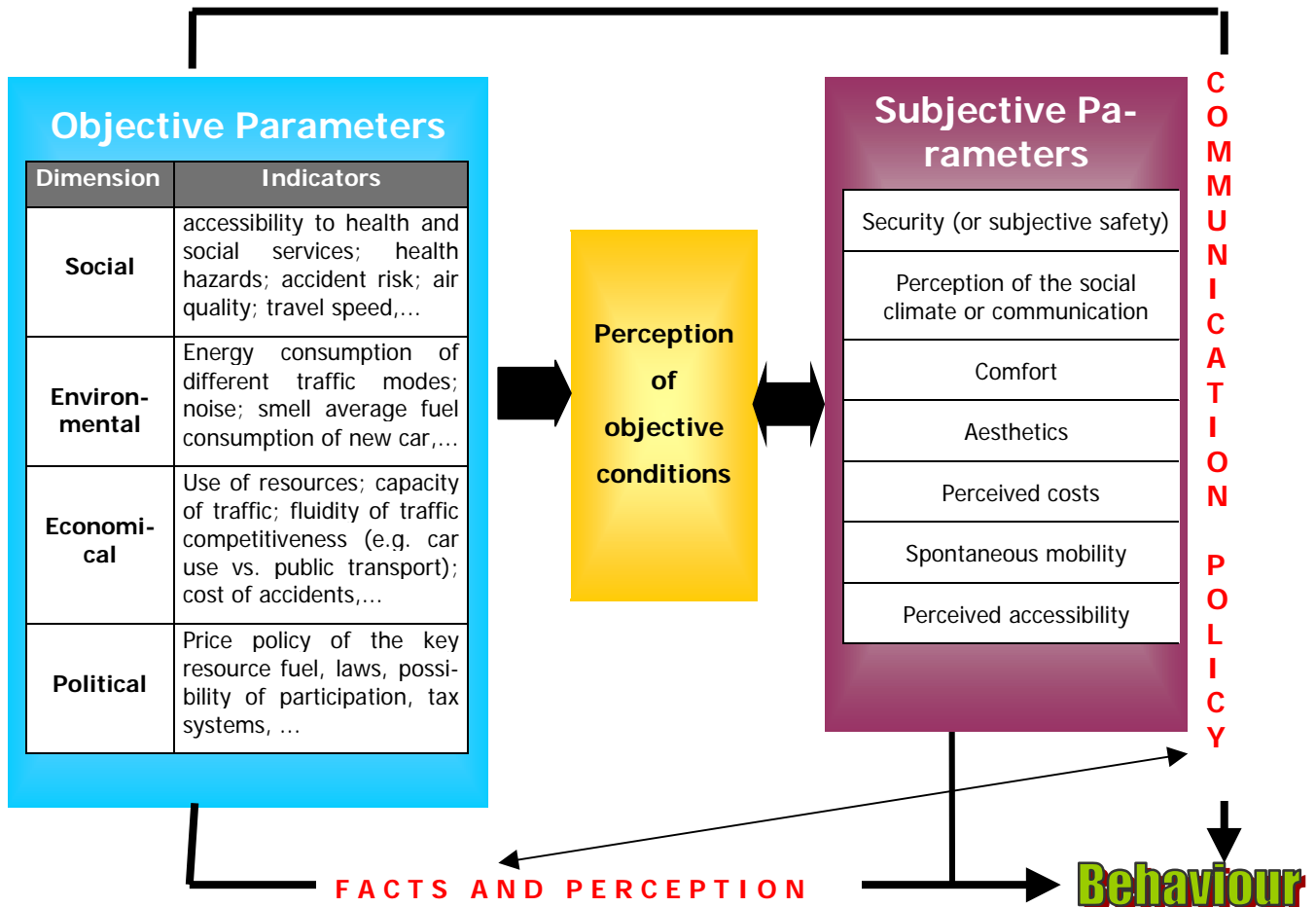## Conclusions and input for the ongoing work packages

The main aim for the ongoing work packages is to find a way to shorten the distance between theory and practice about "quality of life" and to reach an operationally valid definition that will allow the experts, decision makers and the users to have a common, practice-based starting point to work on, in order to efficiently improve the "QoL".

Especially in the field of transport, mobility and city planning a high QoL for a majority of people can only be achieved if citizens behave in a way that allows a sustainable development.

Mobility preconditions provided by politicians, decision makers, etc and the perception of the objective conditions by citizens against the subjective parameters lead to a certain behaviour of the citizens. In addition this behaviour can be influenced by communication policy.

As we have seen from the literature study the communicational aspect is of great importance in the assessment of QoL. Marketing research has for instance pointed out the importance of the following: Good communication policy can make bad preconditions look better – of course with the risk of a boomerang effect, if citizens find out that they have been manipulated with the help of communication; and bad communication policy can make good preconditions look worse than they really are, with all disadvantages that brings about.

The following figure illustrates and summarises the relation between objective and subjective parameters, communication policy and behaviour:

Objective Parameters	
Dimension	**Indicators**
Social	accessibility to health and social services; health hazards; accident risk; air quality; travel speed,…
Environ-mental	Energy consumption of different traffic modes; noise; smell average fuel consumption of new car,…
Economi-cal	Use of resources; capacity of traffic; fluidity of traffic competitiveness (e.g. car use vs. public transport); cost of accidents,…
Political	Price policy of the key resource fuel, laws, possibility of participation, tax systems, …

Perception of objective conditions

Subjective Parameters

Security (or subjective safety)

Perception of the social climate or communication

Comfort

Aesthetics

Perceived costs

Spontaneous mobility

Perceived accessibility

COMMUNICATION POLICY

FACTS AND PERCEPTION

Behaviour

Consortium of the EU-Project HOTEL

Name/Position	Organisation	Address/Phone/E-mail
Ms. Karin Ausserer **Mr. Nicolas Bein** *Researchers*	FACTUM Chaloupka & Risser OHG Traffic- and Social Analysis	Danhausergasse 6/4, A-1040 WIEN Tel: 0043 1 504 15 46/12 Fax: 0043 1 504 15 48 E-mail: karin.ausserer@factum.at E-mail: nicolas.bein@factum.at
Mr. Stefan Petica *Researcher*	INRETS Insitut National de Recherche sur les Transports et leur Sécurité	2, Avenue du Général Malleret-Loinville F-94114 Arcueil-Cedex Tel: 0033 1 47 407 056 Fax: 0033 1 45 475 606 E-mail: petica@inrets.fr
Mrs. Jana Plichtová *Researcher*	Comenius University Bratislava Dep. of Psychology	PO-Box 1 Gondova 2, SK-611 02 Bratislava Tel: 00421 2 593 393 16 Fax: 00421 2 529 621 29 E-mail: jana.plichtova@fphil.uniba.sk
Mr. Ralf Risser *Owner of FACTUM* *HOTEL Co-ordinator* *Researcher*	FACTUM Chaloupka & Risser OHG Traffic- and Social Analysis	Danhausergasse 6/4, A-1040 WIEN Tel: 0043 1 504 15 46/14 Fax: 0043 1 504 15 48 E-mail: ralf.risser@factum.at
Mr. Gian Marco Sardi *Researcher*	SIPSIVI Societá Italiana di psicologia della Sicurezza Viaria	PO Box 211 I-12100 Cuneo Tel: 0039 0171 74 093 Fax: 0039 0171 72 024 E-mail: gmsardi@sipsivi.org
Mrs. Agneta Ståhl *Researcher*	Lund University Dep. Technology and Society	PO Box 118 John Ericssons vaeg 1; S-22100 Lund Tel: 004646 222 91 32 Fax: 004646 123 272 E-mail: agneta.stahl@tft.lth.se