



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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"The Pilot Study"

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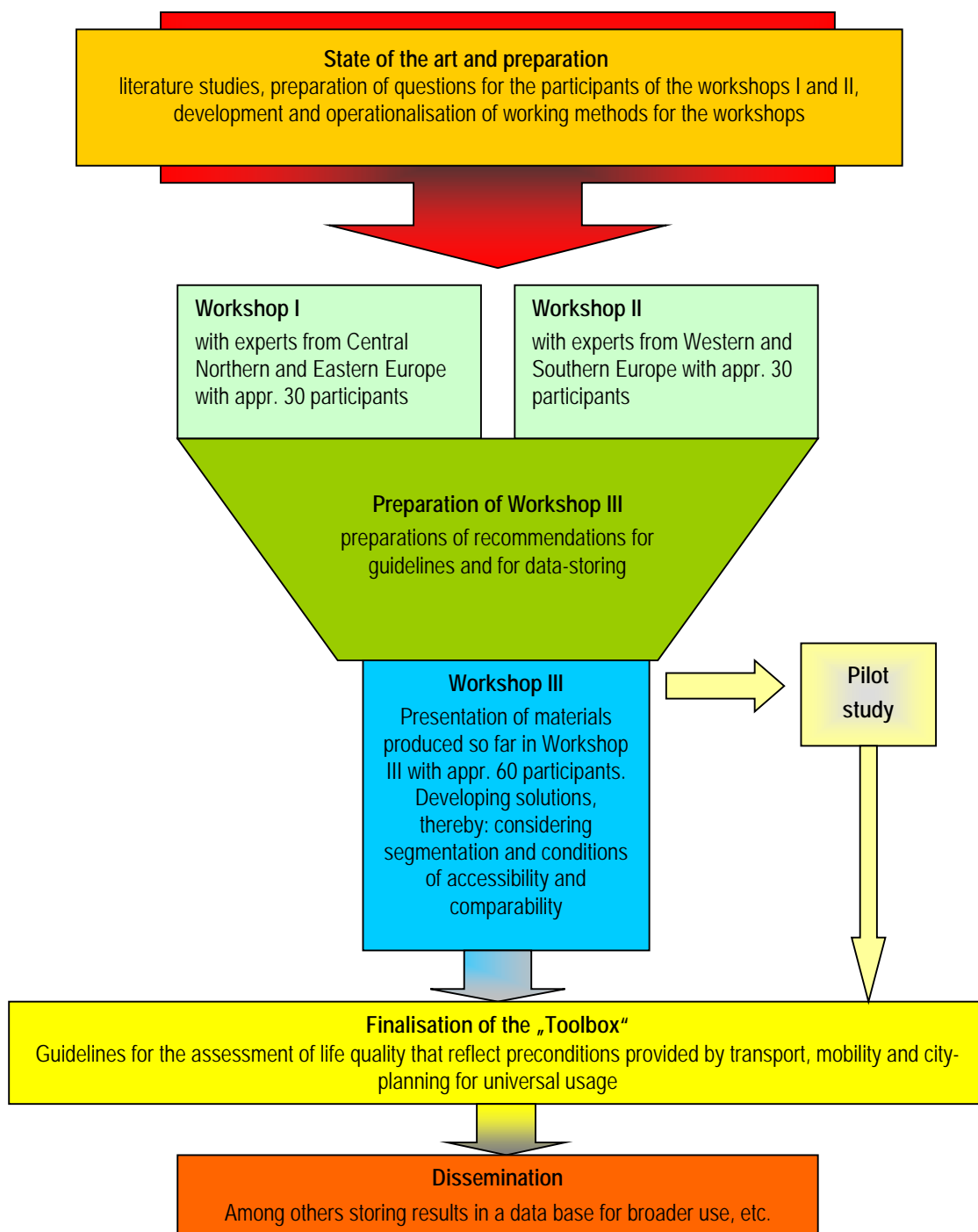
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Preface

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 1: Graphical presentation of the project components



Objectives of the Pilot study

Originally, the guidelines developed in the frame of the toolbox-work should be and their relevance was supposed to be demonstrated in the frame of a pilot study. In practice, this objective was transformed; the guidelines of HOTEL refer to key-areas and key-aspects that according to the assumptions of the HOTEL consortium should be influenced in a certain direction in order to provide (better) Quality of Life (QoL). Thus, at the site that was chosen for the pilot study – two places in the city centre of the city of Kristianstad in Southern Sweden – the mentioned key-areas and key-aspects should be tested with respect to their validity. Under consideration of these areas and aspects the satisfaction of citizens with some selected innovation at the selected site should be assessed. Thereby, it should be shown whether there are important qualitative differences in the assessments of the site by different groups. These groups should be compared in spite of the fact that differences may be expected to be of qualitative character.

The pilot study

Two Kernel instruments of the HOTEL toolbox should be tested in Kristianstad: The checklist and the questionnaire. Both of these instruments make explicitly use of the key-areas and key-aspects of HOTEL. The HOTEL **checklist** should allow to identify elements and plans in papers and documents related to planned modifications that probably would aim at improving QoL, even if this concept is not mentioned there in words. The application of the HOTEL **questionnaire** should allow to assess whether the envisaged changes according to persons who are interviewed with its help are in fact related to QoL and will bring about positive results in this respect. Saving these results according to the **database**-concept of HOTEL would allow to build on the experiences of the HOTEL-project and show, whether results like those to be gathered in the HOTEL pilot study can be generalised. At the same time, every new experience of this type contributes to the further elaboration on the HOTEL-**guidelines**.

The questionnaire applied in Kristianstad during the pilot study was administered by using a *vis-à-vis* technique in the frame of road-side interviews by trained interviewers. The strategy used to contact the interviewees was to address them at the road side, at random. In order to have a pertinent sample with respect to the studied topic, a selection criterion of *familiarity* with the place where the study was carried out was introduced. The final sample taken into consideration in the present study consists of 201 interviewed subjects, wherein 184 belong to the population and 17 were experts with knowledge concerning QoL, traffic and city planning, and familiar with the implementations in Kristianstad.

Conclusions

Before summarising the most important conclusions it has to be underlined that this study was of an explorative character, at a very special site, with rather small samples of groups and subgroups to be compared, without possibilities to go for representativeness, etc. But this was a pilot study and according to our plans it should allow to test some assumptions in order to give impulses for further research and for work in practice.

What was achieved according to the experts?

It was made clear from the beginning that a better urban environment was the goal, where different kinds of interest have to be combined. All traffic has to be organised according to the needs of weaker groups, which generally is the function of a calmed area: Following this principle the sites are now safer for both pedestrians and cyclists. Car traffic has been considerably reduced and slowed down almost to walking speed. This has been done with

the help of measures such as raising the road surface level for cars, while keeping the level for pedestrians and using small cobble stones to surface the road. This makes it rather difficult for cars to drive especially fast. These infrastructural measures as well as the reduction of the car traffic have made crossing the streets much easier for pedestrians. The fact that the surface of the street is continuously at the same level also improves the situation for impaired person. Accessibility questions have had an extra weight, not least because Kristianstad is a city that takes very much care of impaired persons – it is now easy to move with wheelchairs and rollators. Curbs - barriers and obstacles for all road users - have been eliminated. The busstops have been moved in such a way that busses do not take away the space of others. Busses stop in such a way that cars cannot overtake which leads to a more quiet traffic rhythm by reducing speeds – and this has also reduced accidents. Concerning the aesthetic aspects the whole street and its environment have improved: Board walks are now broad, surfaces are both convenient and pretty, flowers and decorations improve the whole picture. The seating facilities have been designed in co-operation between artists and environmental architects. All the work was done under consideration of the historically grown elements, which were integrated in the overall design – for example alley trees maintain the character of the boulevards with their longitudinal function. The modified sites has improved so much that nowadays the sites have become areas where people can meet. Places have become more "public", more people are out, areas are used much more and more intensively, also by gastronomy. There is high satisfaction of citizens with facilities and services. The sites have improved in all respects and have become more "human".

Some conclusions in more detail

A look through the presentation of results and their discussion in more detail leads to the following conclusions:

The achieved changes are maybe not optimum for the weaker road users, as they have to interact more than hitherto with car traffic. This affects in principle all aspects that are relevant for QoL according to our key-area list. At the same time, bus drivers and bus companies complain that they have to drive so slowly. Car drivers feel impaired. But for the vulnerable users and residents, there are still too many cars in the centre. This is not least due to the fact that the Grand Square still functions as a car-parking space and thus does not invite to urban activities. On the other hand, all changes in the public space have the potential to lead to some disadvantages for somebody. It is difficult to find a balance between different needs. Changes like those in Kristianstad should be carried out from a holistic perspective. However, it is not easy to find a balance between conflicting interests of different groups. Conflicts of interests arise when different types of road users have to share the same areas. This is often a difficult situation for weaker groups.

Both experts and the representatives of the public assess the aspects that have been listed in the frame of the HOTEL work and that were inserted in the questionnaire transformed to standardised questions quite similarly. All aspects that support pedestrian, cyclists, elderly, disabled, and safety or security are considered as very important by both, while good conditions for car drivers are considered as being less importance.

The changes achieved by the modifications at the two sites in Kristianstad are perceived as much more positive by the interviewed experts than by the representatives of the public. Correlations between QoL and other variables with respect to the question what is considered important, are generally low. Only between the importance of QoL and two other general variables - beauty & aesthetics and traffic safety – somewhat stronger relationships could be found.

On a more concrete level, namely when assessing the changes achieved by the modifications at the two analysed sites in Kristianstad, the results show that many correlations between perceived changes in QoL and perceived changes in other variables explain 20% of the

common variance and more: Ease and comfort for pedestrians, Usability for elderly and disabled, Perceived safety, Social interaction, Traffic safety in general. There are some more variables with correlations that explain between 15% and 20% of the common variance with perceived changes in QoL, like Children's safety, Smooth traffic flow for pedestrians, Beauty and aesthetics of the quarters after the modifications, the Perceived quality of "being there" after the changes, and the Safety for elderly and disabled. Finally, the following variables explain between 10 and 15% of the common variance with QoL: Equity between road users, Good environmental quality, Smooth flow for cyclists and Ease and comfort for cyclist. In the end, the only two variables that do not correlate to the improvements of QoL are Smooth car traffic flow and Ease and comfort for car drivers (see table 1 on the following page).

1. The list of indicators that have been developed in the frame of HOTEL and that have been transformed into checklist items (HOTEL checklist) and questions (HOTEL questionnaire) may not be complete, but they are related to the concept of QoL according to the persons interviewed in Kristianstad.
2. The preferred mode choice affects the perception of changes: Frequent car users state more strongly that QoL has improved after the interventions. This indicates that frequent car drivers identify improvements in QoL in spite of the fact that the situation for driving a car rather deteriorates when modifications like those in Kristianstad are implemented.
3. Gender does not seem to play a key role on influencing the perceived changes, nor are there any larger differences between other groups that are of relevance for the HOTEL research.
4. But some findings could be interesting for the municipality of Kristianstad, for instance that the safety situation after the restructuring is perceived as much better at Östra Boulevard than on Nya Boulevard. It would be interesting to look for the reason for this.

To conclude, it can be stated that those parts of the HOTEL toolbox to which the pilot study could contribute – the checklist and the questionnaire – appear to work successfully. The checklist allowed us to identify variables in the papers and documents related to the modifications in Kristianstad that aimed at improving QoL, even if this concept was not mentioned there in words. And the application of the HOTEL questionnaire showed that the interviewed persons in fact related these variables to QoL.

It can be recommended to use the two mentioned tools at other occasions. Saving these results according to the database-concept of HOTEL would allow to build on the experiences for Kristianstad and show, whether results like those in Kristianstad can be generalised. At the same time, every new experience of this type contributes to the further elaboration on the HOTEL-guidelines.

Table 10: Correlations between perceived changes

ITEM	Has improved:	Var1 Traffic safety	Var2 Childr. safety	Var3 Feeling safe	Var4 Usabil. Eld&dis	Var5 smooth flow pedestr	Var6 smooth flow cyclists	Var7 smooth flow car drivers.	Var8 Equity b.r.user s	Var9 eas/co mfort. pedestr.	Var10 eas/com fort car drivers.s	Var11 eas/co mfort. cyclists	Var12 Safety eld&dis	Var13 environ. air/nois e	Var14 soc.inte r action	Var15 QoL	Var16Di strict beautif.	Var17 Nice to be here
Var1	Traffic safety	1,00																
Var2	Children's safety	0,73	1,00															
Var3	Feeling safe	0,96	0,65	1,00														
Var4	Usability f elderly &disabled persons	0,69	0,75	0,62	1,00													
Var5	Smooth traffic flow pedestrians	0,52	0,44	0,42	0,52	1,00												
Var6	Smooth traffic flow for cyclists	0,41	0,44	0,32	0,44	0,48	1,00											
Var7	Smooth traffic flow car drivers	0,10	0,80	0,15	0,05	0,05	0,18	1,00										
Var8	Equity between traffic groups	0,45	0,48	0,39	0,45	0,40	0,37	0,25	1,00									
Var9	Ease and comfort for pedestrians	0,51	0,50	0,47	0,52	0,60	0,40	0,32	0,41	1,00								
Var10	Ease and comfort for car drivers	0,97	0,03	0,13	-0,01	0,00	0,13	0,76	0,25	-0,01	1,00							
Var11	Ease and comfort for cyclists	0,33	0,40	0,30	0,39	0,42	0,68	0,26	0,47	0,43	0,31	1,00						
Var12	Safety of elderly &disabled persons	0,47	0,46	0,41	0,61	0,48	0,45	0,06	0,35	0,59	0,06	0,50	1,00					
Var13	Environment (air, noise...)	0,31	0,35	0,28	0,40	0,28	0,29	0,30	0,32	0,38	-0,07	0,23	0,28	1,00				
Var14	Social interaction with other persons	0,35	0,31	0,28	0,26	0,30	0,26	-0,20	0,27	0,34	-0,11	0,23	0,22	0,36	1,00			
Var15	Quality of life	0,45	0,44	0,47	0,48	0,44	<i>0,36</i>	0,15	<i>0,38</i>	0,50	0,02	<i>0,34</i>	0,40	<i>0,38</i>	0,47	1,00		
Var16	District is more beautiful now	0,43	0,39	0,37	0,44	0,34	0,42	0,38	0,29	0,37	0,42	0,41	0,41	0,32	0,29	0,43	1,00	
Var17	It is nicer to be here now	0,41	0,35	0,38	0,4	0,47	0,36	0,6	0,37	0,41	0,05	0,41	0,44	0,34	0,29	0,42	0,7	1,00

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