Workshop 11E32: Quality of life in European cities: facts and Perceptions (1)

Chairman: Mr Marco Orani (Head of ‘Urban Actions’ Unit, DG Regional Policy, European Commission)
Rapporteur: Mr Klaus Trutzel, KOSIS association of German Urban Audit cities (kum.trutzel@t-online.de)

Mr. Marco Orani opened the workshop, welcomed the participants and introduced the speakers
- Mrs. Corinne Hermant, Urban Unit, DG Regional Policy, European Commission: “Survey on perceptions of quality of life in 75 European Cities”;
- Klaus Trutzel, representative of the German city network KOSIS: “comparisons across cities – the example of German co-operation”;
- Robert Manchin, Gallup Europe: “The emotional capital and desirability of European cities”.

Mrs. Corinne Hermant-de Callataë presented the main results of DG REGIO’s perception survey conducted by Gallup in the framework of ‘Eurobarometre Flash’. She referred to the 1st perception survey in 2004 related to the collection of statistical Urban Audit data for 2001. This survey had covered 31 cities of the old Member States with 300 telephone interviews each. In the 2nd survey, published in 2006 the sample was enlarged to incorporate 75 cities, including the New Member States and Turkey with now 500 telephone interviews per city.

Mrs. Hermant stressed the importance of such perceptions surveys for policymakers. Comparing results from the two surveys on the 31 cities – where interviews have been conducted twice – shows that global results for these cities are stable. This reflects the quality of the methodology. Such surveys have two strong assets. They provide data for comparative analysis of European cities and they provide each city with data which they can further analyse. Cities may aggregate and confront surveys’ data with other quantitative or qualitative data, based on their specific context.

Some drawbacks of such surveys cannot be avoided: giving a negative image of cities where people’s dissatisfaction is expressed on many items. However, cultural factors or some events, which happen when the survey is conducted, may bias some data. The translations of the 23 questions into all concerned languages may also raise difficulties.

The graphs ranking the cities according to percentages of respondents that had strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed with statements like “it is easy to find a job in the city” or “it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price in the city” revealed great differences among the cities. In many cases, negative correlations existed between the two answers. A strong positive correlation could be shown between the answers regarding air pollution and noise. Radar graphs showed characteristic profiles of selected aspects of the quality of life as felt by the citizens.

Mr Klaus Trutzel reported on “comparisons across cities – the example of German co-operation”. This cooperation of the German municipal offices for urban statistics and research had become necessary when the introduction of computers in all
spheres of public administration and in the municipal registers created a need for computer programmes capable of dealing with the data, as well as for the standardisation of the data now available and for other specific tasks of these offices. Examples are the management of statistical databases, territorial references, population projections, as well as capturing data from surveys and for statistical analyses. This cooperation of cities started at the beginning of the 1980s and was based on the cooperation of municipal statisticians going back to the end of the 19th century. Their aim had always been to assure comparability of methods and results of municipal statistics. Cooperation in the KOSIS association was later extended to the provision of comparable data on cities and sub-city districts and finally also to the Urban Audit. In the federal structure of the German state, the Federal Statistical Office as well as the State Statistical Offices had seen now way to take over responsibility for the Urban Audit data collection and therefore agreed to support the KOSIS group of Urban Audit cities in this project, in which about half the data are provided or estimated by the cities.

In order to help the cities to make their own analyses, the KOSIS group had composed a handbook that refers to the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies of urban development and offers the tool “Dashboard” for intercity comparisons.

In addition to the collection and analysis of the statistical data in this project, a subgroup of 15 German cities decided to also collect perception data in parallel to DG Regio’s perception survey, applying the same questionnaire, the same method (telephone interviews with at least 500 respondents) and conducting the survey at the same time as DG Regio. The German cities group reached an agreement with DG Regio to exchange the individual data, thus enlarging the sample to 7+15 cities for inner-German comparisons and to 75+15 cities for European comparisons.

In some first analyses, the KOSIS-group combined the data of the perception survey with the secondary statistical data in order to see how citizens’ perception reflected the statistically described reality. They also tested the relevance of the typology of competitiveness developed in DG Regio’s “State of the European Cities Report” if contrasted with citizens’ agreement and disagreement with the statement “it is easy to find a new job in the city”. This revealed a considerable proportion of negative answers in part of the cities that ranked highest as “knowledge hubs” in the typology.

K. Trutzel concluded that he hoped that cities from other countries would also conduct comparable perception surveys in the next round and that this recommendation in the Eurocities Urban Research Group would lead to a more positive reaction next time.

Mr Robert Manchin (GALLUP) presented his report on “The emotional capital and desirability of European cities” that he based on the results of Flash Eurobarometre 194 and the Gallup ‘Soul of the City’ programme. This programme measures and tracks the political, economic and social well-being of cities globally, based on how residents view their city’s performance in providing healthy living and working conditions.

His central question was, “how European cities are shaping up on the needed emotional capital to keep and attract”.

As a result of his study, he grouped the cities as “fully engaged”, “good but disintegrating”, “striving” and “disengaged”.
Cities ranked high on emotional attachment if they received very positive assessments
- in “fully engaged” cities for primary healthcare, feeling of safety in the city, good place to live for immigrants or minorities as well as people with disabilities, noise and integration of foreigners;
- in “good, but disintegrating” cities for 5-year optimism, cleanliness, donated money, cultural facilities and public transport,
- in “striving” cities for their attractiveness for talented young people..., volunteerism, easiness to find good housing, spending resources responsibly, green spaces and donated money;
- in “disengaged” cities for “5-year optimism, the feeling of safety in the neighbourhood, attractiveness for talented young people, public transport, cinemas, volunteerism, good place to live for people with disabilities, the beauty of the city and hospitals.

In a special evaluation distinguishing young creative people from the general population, the differences could be shown in peoples' satisfaction to live in their city. Comparing the European Capitals of the old Member States, Dublin, Helsinki and Madrid belong to those cities where the general population is considerably more satisfied than the young and creative population, whereas Rome, Berlin and London are cities that appear to be somewhat more attractive to the young and creative than for the general population. While Dublin received the most positive ratings regarding easiness to find a good job by both groups, London and Barcelona showed the greatest positive deviation in the ratings by the young and creative population. London receives the most positive ratings as to its attractiveness as a creative destination abroad as well as for people already living there, whereas all other capitals are favoured most by people already living there. Some interesting results were also shown regarding the cities' attractiveness as visiting destinations.

R. Manchin concluded by drawing attention to Gallup’s “Interactive Data Exploration Interface “www.gallup-europe.be/soulofthecity”.

Workshop 11E36: Quality of life in European cities: facts and perceptions (2)

This workshop was devoted to the Urban Audit data collection with the following presentations:
- Jan Marten De Vet and Simon Roy (ECOTEC): Life and Governance in European Cities
- Judith Borsboom (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency): Urbanisation and its impact on Quality of Place in Europe
- Teodora Brandmüller (Eurostat): Aiming at high-quality statistical information on Urban Europe – Achievements and challenges.

J. M. De Vet and S. Roy reported on results of the “State of the European Cities Report” that ECOTEC – in a consortium with NordRegio and Eurofutures - had completed early in 2007 and that DG Regio published in June of this year. After a general overview they focused on two chapters of this report
- Living in the Cities (J. M. De Vet) and
- City Governance (S. Roy).
Mr Jan Marten De Vet (ECOTEC) expressed his expectation that the report would be taken as a base line for further analyses after the new round of data collection in 2006/2007. He described the demographic change as one of the driving forces of urban development trends. Although there were great differences between countries and cities, low birth rates and an ageing population could be found everywhere. Economic prosperity and growth has considerable impact on migration flows. Cities differ greatly if, on the one hand, investigated within their administrative boundaries and, on the other hand, taken as part of their Larger Urban Zones. In some cases, both, the city and the LUZ, lose population, in other cases both grow; quite frequently, the city centres lose inhabitants who move to the surrounding municipalities. It is one of the problems of cities that cheaper rents and lower prices of property outside the cities make families move to the outskirts, thus producing additional commuting flows and traffic congestion in the rush hours.

Similarly, the differences in the strength of the ageing process, in birth rates and migration are also found in the amount of living space and home ownership. As a rule, there is more home ownership in the outer parts of the cities than in the inner cities. The proportion of one-person households is growing almost everywhere, and this is also linked to the ageing process.

Great differences were discovered in the education level. Although cities in general are magnets for talent, the differences between cities are striking, and this is highly correlated to their GDP.

But there are also differences within the cities. The disparities correlate, among other things, with the tendency of highly educated people to live in the city centre or on the outskirts.

Mr Simon Roy (ECOTEC) analysed the governance of the Urban Audit cities, trying to find out, how much influence cities have regarding development strategies. The Urban Audit data were not sufficient to answer this question. He therefore had to collect additional information from other sources.

Combining external information on the cities’ responsibilities with data on budget revenue sources and budget spending he managed to quantify the results in an index of city power. This revealed differences not only between countries but also within countries, especially the UK.

S. Roy concluded that a lot more local knowledge is required to really understand the situation.

In her presentation “Urbanisation and its impact on Quality of Place in Europe”, Mrs. Judith Borsboom (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency) reported on her research on questions such as: what are the morphological characteristics of urbanisation in terms of densities and land use? What are the main driving forces behind the urban patterns in Europe? Applying land use maps of urban regions and tabular data on demography and economy, she investigated the increase of urban land use in relation to population, she pointed out that growing “urbanisation” does not automatically lead to greater “urbanity”.

Several types of urban growth could be distinguished by a cluster analysis. The main data sources were the ESPON studies and CORINE land cover. In addition, 7 case studies were carried out in 7 typical clusters: (1) Stagnation, Reims; (2) Compact, Aarhus; (3) Leisure, Südburgenland; (4) Shrinking, Vilnius; (5) Sprawling, Erfurt; (6) Average, Rotterdam and Bologna; (7) Booming: Madrid
For each case study city, Urban Audit data were used to describe Quality of Place and its dynamics. A lesson learnt was, that there are lots of comparable problems in Europe regarding the quality of life (UA) and the quality of space:

- These comparable problems were, among other aspects, transport, air, pollution, segregation and the lack of urban green.
- The driving forces behind, however, could only be understood through the case studies conducted.
- The approach of Shafer and Pacione to work out the interrelated aspects of liveability, quality of life and quality of space proved most appropriate to relate patterns of urbanisation to changes in Quality of Place.

The lack of harmonised data was one of the main obstacles. A clear and practical framework of urbanisation is still needed. It might be provided by the Liveable Cities Project.

In the discussion, Mrs. Hermant stressed the importance of case studies. Inter alia, it may highlight social polarisation within the cities, for which further research is needed.

Ms. Teodora Brandmüller (Eurostat) then gave an overview on Eurostat's aim to provide “high quality statistical information on urban Europe”.

After some background information on the Urban Audit and its main stake holders she turned to the central challenges and aims of the project, to avoid an excessive burden on the respondents and to create, nevertheless, statistics based on sound methodology, statistics that is relevant, coherent and comparable.

Important objectives are good accessibility of the data, clarity in disseminating the Urban Audit data, goals that have already been, to a certain degree, achieved by the UA website at Eurostat and by www.urbanaudit.org. The new Table-Graph-Map-Interface will considerably improve the usability of the collected data. Some examples of interactive evaluations with the new tool underlined the impressive progress achieved already.

Main future challenges are to further increase comparability and improve dissemination.

In her conclusion, Mrs. Hermant-de Callataý (DG Regional Policy) expressed the importance of qualitative research, both for giving directions for quantitative data to be investigated and for providing the background and contextual analysis to quantitative research.

She thanked the speakers for bringing together different perspectives.

The first workshop had shown that perceptions may be as important as hard facts. Cities design and planning increasingly build on people's emotions, taking into account people's fears, hopes and expectations.

In the second workshop, more attention was given to urban statistics and to case studies. These highlight the multiple facets of quality of life in the cities as well as the risks which are impairing this quality of life. Power of cities is an essential element in this context.
With more than 300 indicators on 322 EU cities and 40 other cities, the Urban Audit brings together a considerable amount of data, which will be available on the web site around February 2008.