"Objective Urban Audit indicators and citizens’ subjective perceptions: Match or clash? - Learning for an urban monitoring"

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The object of the Urban Audit Data collection - a yearly collection of statistical data from all kinds of “secondary” data sources” is to gather comparable and reliable statistical data to assess the quality of life in European cities. The concept of quality of life cannot be assessed based merely on “objective” indicators but has strong subjective components. To take this into account was the motivation for the urban audit perception survey, which started 2006 in a selection of 75 European cities. Repeated in 2009 and 2012, this survey focuses on citizens’ perceptions of public services and infrastructure as well as on some selected social aspects like labor market or poverty on the local level.

In Germany, many cities by now have years of experience with conducting surveys for assessing different aspects of urban development. However, there are few examples of surveys that have been conducted in a methodically comparable way (in regard to sampling design, collection method, questionnaire wording, or time reference) and of systematically matching ‘subjective’ survey data to “objective” structural indicators (in terms of comparing different cites). The Urban Audit data collection and the perceptions survey / the paralleling coordinated survey for 20 German cities are such a rare source for cities comparing structural and subjective indicators. In this contribution some attempts to combine the two components are demonstrated.