



**ESF Exploratory Workshop on
Social Quality in Europe**

Vienna (Austria) 19-21 February 2014

Convened by:
Claire Wallace, University of Aberdeen

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

1. Executive summary

The workshop was held over a period of 3 days in Vienna, Austria, hosted by the Institute for Advanced Studies. The workshop brought together 16 experts from 10 countries including the UK, Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, Romania, Portugal, Greece, Germany, China and Ukraine. Papers were presented across the three days and there was ample time for general discussion at the end of each day and at the end of the workshop to ensure general outcomes. Accommodation was provided by the Hotel Anatol near to the Institute for Advanced Studies and lunch was brought in to the meeting room at the Institute. Dinners took place in two different locations in Vienna in order to provide a chance for general networking and conviviality. The atmosphere was one of friendly but often intense discussion as different approaches and data sources were compared.

The Workshop brought together experts in quality of life and social quality from across Europe. Each group formed a distinct network, which were not necessarily in communication with each other. The Social Quality group are a well organised set of researchers, which included Dr. Laurent van der Maesen as leader of the group, Helma Verkleij as secretary to the group, Dr. Tom Korver as advisor to the group and Dr. Marco Ricceri from EURISPES in Rome as leader of the European Foundation for social Quality. Professor Alan Walker, University of Sheffield was also part of the original European Social Indicators team as was Heloise Perista from Portugal. Representing the Asian network, Professor Ka Lin from the University of Zhejiang in China is the President of the International Observatory on Social Quality. Greece was represented by Dr. Konstantinos Kougias representing the Social Quality group there. Peter Herrmann, President of the European Foundation for Social Quality, was not able to attend but sent a paper to contribute to the meeting. Pamela Abbott and Claire Wallace represent a different approach to Social Quality, using empirical surveys to verify the concept. Katie Vincent from Aberdeen helped to organise the meeting and kept notes.

Other people represented the tradition of the Quality of Life Research, including Dr. Michaela Gstrein from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna, who has carried out a lot of the work on quality of life for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions as had Dr. Florian Pichler, also from Vienna. She was also the local organiser in Vienna. Professor Sergiu Baltescu from Romania is a well recognised quality of life researcher and journal editor, and Franz Eiffe represented Statistics Austria, which is applying a quality of life approach to the collection of statistics in Austria. From Germany, Georgi Dragolov, has been working with a team from the Jacobs University in Bremen to develop a social cohesion radar for Germany that could also be internationally comparative.

A perspective from Ukraine was provided by Dr. Svitlana Babenko, who reported on the problem of "informality" as a background for quality of social relationships in Ukraine.

The original aim of the workshop was to look at indicators of Social Quality and understand how it may be similar or different to other Quality of Life perspectives and to develop the basis for a questionnaire module for the European Social Survey. However, when the various questionnaires were compared, it was decided that the new proposal would be redundant, being too similar to the Individual and Social Wellbeing module which was already fielded in 2012 and to wait before developing a similar one on Social Quality. Instead, the meeting focused upon the basis for developing indicators and questionnaire items from different perspectives and discussed the list of indicators that could be used to measure Social Quality. An outcome was to produce a list of indicators that could be used to develop an international index of the Good Society, which could be launched in September 2014 and could form the basis of future research applications.

Outcomes of the workshop were as follows:

Studies of Social Quality would be carried out in the following cities: Hangzhou China, the Hague Netherlands, Rome Italy. A pilot study in the city of Laak in the Hague has already begun as a result of local funding and would be continued with comparisons elsewhere in terms of urban planning

A Social Quality framework for the Scottish Government would be explored in terms of local statistics. The Scottish Government are keen to measure life quality in Scottish communities as part of its National Performance Framework and is considering statistical indicators that could feed into this.

A Good Society Index would be produced to be launched in September 2014 in Glasgow, where a follow up meeting will be held. The index was discussed at the meeting and indicators would be sought out that could enable cross-national comparisons.

An application to the EC under the Horizon 2020 programme would be submitted to support social research in Ukraine, which has been severely undermined by uneven progress in scientific research and political uncertainty. The political disruptions taking place there whilst the workshop was being held suggested the need to for dispassionate social research to understand and interpret the situation.

2. Scientific content of the event

Papers and powerpoint presentations were circulated both before and after the conference.

Day 1 overview: stock taking and what has been done so far

The conference began with a round of introductions and then Laurent van der Maesen presented an overview of the Social Quality research to date, which included a presentation of the paper previously circulated by Peter Herrmann about theoretical and empirical developments in the model. It as pointed out that the advantage of the SQ approach was that it was theoretically grounded in social science research and therefore presented a rationale for choosing indicators which were otherwise randomly selected to represent different “domains”. They described instead the SQ approach which is constituted by the interaction of four conditional factors: socio-economic empowerment, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment. The importance of the “social” as a theoretical underpinning of this perspective was emphasised.

This was followed by a presentation by Ka Lin, who reported on the developments in South East Asia using the Social Quality model, including China, Thailand and Taiwan. Although originally developed as a model for European policy, the SQ model has generated a lot of interest in South East Asia, where a survey was carried out. This has now been transformed into the Asian Observatory on Social Quality and Ka Lin is also editor of the International Journal of Social Quality.

The next presentation was by Pamela Abbott and Claire Wallace, describing their empirical approach to SQ using a variety of surveys in countries ranging from East and West Europe (using the European Quality of Life Survey) to Rwanda and China (using the World Values Survey) and Eastern Europe using a survey they designed themselves through two EU projects: LLH and HITT.

There was then a general discussion about measuring the quality of society from which four big questions were abstracted:

1. Does SQ supercede quality of life approaches?
2. Can SQ be also applied in non-democratic societies?
3. What is the relationship between theories and indicators?
4. How can stakeholders be involved without stopping powerful stakeholders shifting the debate?

Day 2: New directions in social quality: where are we going?

On the second day the aim was to look in more detail at different elements of social quality. The first presentation was by Pamela Abbott, who outlined the idea of a Good Society Index based on social quality. There was some discussion about what could be included in this index and it was circulated for information and further comments.

In the second presentation Alan Walker outlined the conditions for socio-economic security as a foundation for social quality and there was some discussion around this. In the third presentation Georgi Dragolov outlined the approach used in Brest for developing measures of social cohesion which could be internationally comparative. A series of indicators were outlined, both subjective and objective, that were more fully represented in the Bertelsmann Stiftung report "Social Cohesion Radar". He presented further developments and work in progress on this model. After lunch, Pamela Abbott presented the perspective on social inclusion and which indicators had originally been used, which ones should be included in future. Finally, Ka Lin presented the idea of social empowerment and there was discussion about how this could be taken forward in Asia and elsewhere. Finally, Svitlana Babenko presented some information about Ukraine, showing how Ukrainian public institutions, such as Universities are undermined by the pervasive effects of "informality" or corrupt ways of getting access to resources which are not transparent, but based upon networks and bribes. There was some discussion of the current crisis in Ukraine and what we could contribute to it. In the end Svitlana Babenko was not able to return directly to Ukraine because the airport at Kiev had been closed and she had to stay some more days and was redirected through Budapest to another airport.

At the end of Day 2 Laurent van der Maesen summarised the discussion and started to outline a plan for the next stage of development of SQ theory.

Day 3: The way forward and future collaboration

The first presentation on Day 3 was by Laurent van der Maesen who described the City Study of sustainable urban development in Laak City, the Netherlands, as a model for undertaking local empirical studies of SQ. He outlined a framework whereby other city studies could be included as part of the analysis and systematically compared. Rome, Sheffield and Hangzhou were taken as other locations where this work could be carried out in future. He also outlined the importance of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in taking these developments forward.

The second presentation was about qualitative approaches to Social Quality and Claire Wallace presented a paper on behalf of Steve Corbett, University of Sheffield, who was unable to attend the workshop in person. The study focused upon social empowerment in different case studies in the North of England, including Participatory Budgeting and Worker Co-operatives. She then went on to present her own studies of two villages in North East Scotland where the SQ has been used to understand the role of ICT in promoting social cohesion.

There was then a general discussion about how these various perspectives could be integrated and plans for what would happen next. These have been further elaborated in a series of papers subsequently circulated by Pamela Abbott and Laurent van der Maesen in order to prepare for the next workshop to take place in Glasgow in September after the Scottish Referendum has taken place.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome

The outcomes of the workshop could be summarised as a fruitful discussion of the relationship between social quality and quality of life approaches, a discussion of ways in which social quality could be measured and of ways in which this could contribute to social policy discussions in places as far apart as China, Rwanda, the Netherlands and Scotland. The next steps are as follows:

Studies of Social Quality would be carried out in the following cities: Hangzhou China, the Hague Netherlands, Rome Italy. A pilot study in the city of Laak in the Hague has already begun as a result of local funding and would be continued with comparisons elsewhere in terms of urban planning

A Social Quality framework for the Scottish Government would be explored in terms of local statistics. The Scottish Government are keen to measure life quality in Scottish communities as part of its National Performance Framework and is considering statistical indicators that could feed into this.

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An application to the EC under the Horizon 2020 programme would be submitted to support social research in Ukraine, which has been severely undermined by uneven progress in scientific research and political uncertainty. The political disruptions taking place there whilst the workshop was being held suggested the need to for dispassionate social research to understand and interpret the situation.

There were also plans to publish papers in the International Journal of Social Quality edited by Ka Lin and the open access Journal for Social Research and Policy edited by Sergiu Baltescu.

4. Final programme



Exploratory Workshop Scheme

Scientific Review Group for the Social Sciences

ESF Exploratory Workshop on
Social Quality in Europe

Vienna (Austria), 19-21 February 2014

Convened by:
Claire Wallace

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The European Science Foundation (ESF) was established in 1974 to provide a common platform for its Member Organisations to advance European research collaboration and explore new directions for research. Currently it is an independent organisation, owned by 67 Member Organisations, which are research funding organisations, research performing organisations and academies from 29 countries.

ESF is in a period of transition; the ESF Member Organisations (MO's) have indicated that they would like to wind down certain ESF activities, such as EUROCORES, RNP's, ECRP's and Forward Looks by the end of 2015, but ESF will continue to honour its existing commitments until the projects are finalised.

In 2013 the only research instrument that will have a call for proposals is the Exploratory Workshops. The focus of the Exploratory Workshops scheme is on workshops aiming to explore an emerging and/or innovative field of research or research infrastructure, also of interdisciplinary character. Workshops are expected to open up new directions in research or new domains. It is expected that a workshop shall conclude with plans for follow-up research activities and/or collaborative actions or other specific outputs at international level.

ESF is also currently exploring new areas where we could serve the science community. Services we have identified that would leverage our expertise and experience and provide added-value to the science community are: peer review, evaluation, research conferences and career tracking.

Please check our website (www.esf.org) for regular updates regarding ESF and its future developments.

European Science Foundation

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Main Objectives of the Workshop:

Social Quality has been developed as a paradigm for understanding the quality of society and wellbeing. It is increasingly used by policy makers as an instrument for understanding the progress of society and emerges from current concerns with the quality of life. Yet there are no cross national comparative data fit for purpose. The workshop will consider ways to take forward research on the quality of society at a global level, building on the work that has been done to date.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

Day 1: Wednesday, 19 February 2014

12.00 Lunch

Introductions, purpose of the workshop and stocktaking of work carried out so far

Afternoon session chaired by Pamela Abbott

13.00-13.30 Introductions

13.30-14.30 Laurent van der Maesen and Peter Herrmann, Social Quality to date

14.30-15.30 Ka Lin: Social Quality in Asia

15.30-16.00 Coffee Break

16.00-17.00 Claire Wallace: Measuring Societal Quality

17.00-18.00 Discussion

19.00-21.00 Dinner Café Steman

Day 2: Thursday, 20 February 2014

New Directions in Quality of Society: where are we going

Morning session chaired by Claire Wallace

09.00-09.30 Pamela Abbott Introduction

09.30-10.00 Informality in Ukraine: Svitlana Babenko

10.00-11.00 Socio-Economic Security; 10 minute briefing from Alan Walker

11.00-11.30 Coffee Break

11.30-12.30 Social Cohesion; 10 minute briefing from Georgi Dragolov

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30-14.30 Social Integration: 10 minute briefing from Pamela Abbott

14.30-15.30 Social Empowerment: 10 minute briefing from Ka Lin

15.30-16.00 Coffee break

16.00-16.30 Sustainability: 10 minute introduction from Laurent van der Maesen

16.30-18.30 General Discussion

19.00 Break for Dinner

Day 3: Friday, 21 February 2014

The way forward and future collaboration

Morning session chaired by Claire Wallace

09.00-10.00 City Studies: The Hague, Hangzhou

10.00-11.00 Qualitative studies – Claire Wallace

10.00-11.00 Open discussion about how people can be involved in the project

11.00-11.30	Coffee break
11.30-12.30	Concluding discussion
Afternoon	Departure

European Science Foundation

**Objectives of the ESF Scientific Review Group
for the Social Sciences**

The mission of the **ESF Scientific Review Group for Social Sciences** is as follows:

- to promote high quality social science research at the European level;
- to help support innovative research ideas and approaches emanating from the scientific community, and
- to play a role in strengthening European social science research infrastructure.

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5. Final list of participants (name and affiliation is sufficient; the detailed list should be updated on-line directly)

Name	Affiliation
Dr Michaela Gstrein	Institute for Advanced Studies
Dr. Franz Eiffe	Statistic Austria
Dr. Florian Pichler	Unaffiliated
Professor Pamela Abbott	University of Aberdeen
Professor Claire Wallace	University of Aberdeen
Dr. Kathryn Vincent	University of Aberdeen
Professor Alan Walker	Sheffield University
Dr. Laurent van der Maesen	European Foundation for Social Quality
Prof. Tom Korver	European Foundation for Social Quality
Helma Verkleij	European Foundation for Social Quality
Dr. Heloisa Perista	CESIS Lisbon
Dr. Konstaninos Kougias	Democritus University
Georgi Dragolov	Jacobs University
Professor Ka Lin	Zhejiang University
Dr. Svitlana Babenko	Taras Shevchenko University
Prof. Sergiu Baltatescu	University of Oradea
Marco Ricci	EURISPES

6. Statistical information on participants (age bracket, countries of origin, M/F repartition, etc.) The statistics to be provided under section 6 can also include repartition by scientific specialty if relevant.

Country	Name	Expertise	Age	Gender
Austria	Dr Michaela Gstrein	Economist	46	F
	Dr. Franz Eiffe	Statician	33	M
	Dr. Florian Pichler	Sociologist	?	M
UK	Professor Pamela Abbott	Sociologist	66	F
	Professor Claire Wallace	Sociologist	58	F
	Dr. Kathryn Vincent	Sociologist	30	F
	Professor Alan Walker	Social Policy	64	M
The Netherlands	Dr. Laurent van der	Urban planner	70	M

	Maesen			
	Dr. Tom Korver	Business Studies	?	M
	Helma Verkleij	European Studies	48	F
Portugal	Dr. Heloisa Perista	Sociologist	51	F
Greece	Dr. Konstaninos Kougias	Political Science	40	M
Germany	Georgi Dragolov	Sociology	27	M
China	Professor Ka Lin	?	?	M
Ukraine	Dr. Svitlana Babenko	Sociologist	37	F
Romania	Prof. Sergiu Baltatescu	Sociologist	46	M
Italy	Marco Ricci	?	?	M