

Assessment of Sustainability Indicators

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Project rationale (I)

- almost 10 years passed since implementation of CSD Workprogramme on Indicators (1995)
 - first session of the UN CSD-1 in New York (1993) and CSD-2 (1994)
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 - important milestone - SCOPE Volume 58 “Sustainability Indicators”, was published and distributed to all delegations at the UNGASS (UN General Assembly Special Session) in 1997.
- nowadays, number of organisations (of all kinds) develop and use SDIs of several formats:
 - Comprehensive sets for all pillars of SD (e.g. UNCSD, OECD, ...)
 - Headline indicators (governments – e.g. UK, cities – Common European Indicators,
 - Aggregated indicators (e.g. HDI of UNDP, ESI by Columbia University, Living Planet Index of WWF, Ecological Footprint,

Project rationale (II)

- SDIs are used ever more extensively and intensively by a wide range users and in many different contexts
- However, it does not necessarily follow that they are scientifically sound and/or used appropriately
- The scientific community now faces an urgent task: to analyse and evaluate the range of indicators presently used by a great number of institutions and decision makers at all levels, especially as regards the sets of questions or criteria against which indicators can be measured/evaluated

Project goal

- to generate an in-depth survey of existing indicators
- to provide a preliminary step for the development of a science-based assessment of existing sustainable development indicators, as well as a set of ASI criteria for testing indicators of sustainable development
- to show selected examples of the development and use of SDIs in different regions

Project organization

- ASI speaks to the SCOPE's mandate to analyse, synthesise and assess existing knowledge rather than to undertake new research. It will also address priority concerns defined by the Executive Board of ICSU as regards the role of science for sustainable development (ICSU 27th General Assembly)
- The ASI project is implemented jointly by SCOPE and the UNEP, together with the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) and the European Environment Agency (EEA), under the sponsorship of the International Council for Science (ICSU).

Project organization (II)

1. Planning meeting (Steering Committee)
2. Background papers
3. Workshop (45 participants, summer 2004, Prague)
4. Publication - Overview and Cross-cutting Chapters, selected Background Chapters
5. Editing, finalizing the manuscript
6. Review process (internal, external)
7. Publishing
8. Distribution

SCOPE Volume

„Sustainable Development: How to Measure Progress Through Indicators”

- edited by B. Moldan, T. Hak and A. Dahl
- the book focuses primarily on assessment of existing indicators (in addition, some new approaches are proposed)
- the review focuses on indicators broadly concerned with sustainable development including its economic, social and environmental dimensions (and other relevant perspectives)
- the successes and failures are analyzed – in 20 Chapters covering both methodological aspects and regional cases
- Chapters cover a wide geographical scope (Europe, Americas, Asia,
- the Volume can be read at different levels (it is not written at the highest scientific level): it is aimed not only at researchers, policy planners, and decision makers, but also at the informed public interested in using indicators
- this book will influence the development or modification of indicators in the future

Table of contents

- Introduction: Finding the right indicators for policy-making ()
- Overview: Challenges to sustainability indicators
- Part I: Crosscutting Issues (Meeting conceptual challenges, Meeting methodological frontiers, Ensuring policy relevance)
- Part II: General Approaches (3 Chapters)
- Part III: Methodical Aspects (4 Chapters)
- Part IV: System and Sectoral Approaches (6 Chapters)
- Part V: Regional Case studies (6 Chapters)

Main findings

- useful progress since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 adopted Agenda 21 and launched an international indicators process
- many indicator sets have been assembled, countries have started their own indicator programs at the national level as called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development
- many aspects of sustainability have been given a more precise definition or measure through indicators
- methodologies are gradually becoming standardized, and policy decisions increasingly provide clear directions and targets
- however, there are major conceptual challenges remaining (methodologies need further development)
- more needs to be learned about the most effective ways to influence policy

Thank you for your attention

- the review process (both within SCOPE and the Island Press) is underway
- more information on the project
<http://www.czp.cuni.cz/asi>

