

Measuring urban sustainability:

Meidad Kissinger



Abstract

Measuring urban sustainability – a review of approaches and instruments

The possibility of measuring and evaluating the level of sustainability is an important element in formulating steps to promote urban sustainability. The type of measurement has to take into account a number of aspects of urban sustainability, to measure the implications of urban activities at various scales, to evaluate the roles of various 'actors' within and outside the urban context and to be of assistance in evaluating steps taken to promote urban sustainability.

The document is composed of 3 sections:

1. The first section is a literature review covering the measurement of urban sustainability and various aspects of how to measure it , using examples of a wide variety of tools being developed around the world in recent years. The review presents experience in measuring sustainability in relation to the 3 pillars generally regarded as the basis for sustainability – environmental, social and economic – and advanced methods of looking at the bio-physical aspect of urban sustainability.
2. The second section reviews 25 sets of indicators and indexes for sustainability which have been used around the world. The review gathers together experience from cities and local organizations, systems developed through academic research and systems developed for national and international institutions. The review briefly presents each system and focuses on the different parameters used in each system to define sustainability.
3. The third section, in line with the emphasis of the project as a whole, focuses on behavioral aspects of urban sustainability as found in the sets of indicators and indexes reviewed.

A combination of the 3 sections of the document, together with overall insights derived from the review of approaches and instruments, provides the project team with the ability to select indicators relevant to the measurement of urban sustainability and of the kind of behavioral change which could promote it.