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ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS: NEW APPROACHES ON MEASURING
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPOMENT

Submitted by Belgium[1]

ABSTRACT

Sustainable development has become an overall policy objective in the European Union. This is
confirmed by the development of a variety of national sustainable development strategies.
Making the concept of Sustainable Development (SD) operational for public policies raises
important challenges in terms of measurement and evaluation. The growing interferences
between a wide range of global, regional and local developments are increasing the necessity
for new forms of knowledge in order to underpin policies in general, and sustainable
development strategies in particular. Developments like globalisation are resulting into
increased flows of goods, resources, people, information and ideas over larger distances with
interactions operating at various scales. Without indicators, sustainable development policies
have a risk to lack a solid foundation.

Measuring sustainable development helps to manage a government or organisation by providing
regular information on its key elements, and facilitates interaction with the public and/or their
stakeholders through their communication capability. Although measuring sustainable
development is legitimate on a conceptual basis, measuring practice has taught us that
developing and using Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) is far from being
straightforward. First of all, there is no single recipe, and yet the field of SDI is currently
saturated by different but comparable sets of indicators. Secondly, key issues like stakeholder
commitment and complexity in decision-making, reflected in the synergies and trade-offs of the
different dimensions within SD, remain difficult to manage. Thirdly, techniques like
benchmarking are not always appropriately used at the right moment in the right way. Whereas
efforts in the development of local indicator schemes seem to be paying off in initialising or at
least strengthening SD processes, the usability of more complex SDI schemes has to be judged
with some precaution.

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[1] Prepared by Peter De Smedt, SVR – Research Centre of the Flemish Government.

New ongoing approaches on measuring SD are presented in this paper. Key principles are a. cooperation between different governments/organisations, and b. the knowledge creation through a process of argumentation. Some preliminary outcomes are suggested. The particular focus of the paper is on measuring SD based on a process of dialogue and argumentation but within a classic SDI scheme. It is not assumed that these approaches are 'different' or 'preferable'. Rather, we suggest that it is a developing and complementary process that practitioners can adapt and change to meet the specific needs of the circumstances that confront them.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Indicators, Knowledge Creation, Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

1.   The term "sustainable development" is used widely in society, but do we really know what it means? The concept of sustainable development is the result of the growing awareness of the global links between increased environmental problems, of concerns about quality of life now and in the future and of complex socio-economic issues related with poverty and inequality. In previous times, sustainability of humankind was taken for granted and did not appear as an explicit goal. It certainly was an implicit goal: no human society has ever consciously promoted its own unsustainability. Global developments now focus attention on sustainability as an explicit goal. But the concept has to be translated into the practical dimensions of the real world to make it operational (Bossel, 1999).

2.   Since the introduction of the sustainability notion into the realm of political and environmental thought some thirty years ago (Goldsmith et al., 1972), the concept's meaning has evolved considerably. While the environmentalists of the 1970s blamed industry, economic growth and technological development for environmental degradation, representatives of a second wave in environmentalism came to hold the idea that environmental protection is not necessarily opposed to economic development (Grin et al., 2003). The first important use of the term was in 1980 in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN et al., 1980). This process of bringing together environmental and socio-economic questions was most famously expressed in the Brundtland Report's definition of sustainable development as meeting 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs' (WCED, 1987). This defines needs from a human standpoint; i.e. sustainable development is an anthropocentric concept (Hopwood et al., 2005).

3.   Sustainable development (SD) is a dynamic concept. Societies and their environments change, technologies and cultures change, values and aspirations change, and a sustainable society must allow and sustain such change, i.e. it must allow continuous, viable and vigorous development, which is what we mean by sustainable development. Even though the factors constraining the development process and the processes driving it are known, the path of sustainable development is still the unpredictable result of an evolutionary process. The shape and form of a sustainable society must allow perpetual change in order to be sustainable; it can neither be planned nor predicted (Bossel, 1999). Clearly SD is recognised as being a normative and value-laden concept. So instead of being defined in objective terms, SD is characterized by process-oriented logics. We are not able to gain any knowledge on what should be considered as a sustainable situation – i.e. our ultimate, slightly utopian, goal. As a consequence policy makers, experts and stakeholders have to rely on information that allows them to judge on a regular basis whether or not the current evolution is to be considered as a contribution to stay or to get on a sustainable path. As such, SD requires constant feedback for evaluation. Thus

feedback tools rendering information that enables to establish connection between past evolutions and future expectations, while integrating the underlying learning-by-doing dynamic, are called upon (Bauler & Hecq, 2000).

4.   The aim of this working paper is related with the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development. This paper reflects on measuring SD and explores the core problems concerning the SDI practice to support SD strategies and policies Europe. The hypothesis is that the community of researchers and practitioners has expanded during the last decade, but critical methodological issues like stakeholder participation and communication are still difficult to manage. This is supported by the key findings of the Working Group's first meeting in April of this year. Yet, literature on Policy Analysis reveals a broad spectrum on knowledge and instruments to support methodological innovation.
The paper begins in the next section: "Knowledge for policy making: concepts" with a brief overview of concepts related to the interactions between policy making and measuring SD such as dimensions of evidence, indicators and participatory approaches that are important for dealing with some of the critical methodological issues like stakeholder participation. In the section: "New approaches for measuring sustainable development", measurement issues are explored based on some monitoring approaches for SD in Belgium. The content in this section was driven by the key questions (i.) How can the process of measuring SD enhance global cooperation? (ii.) How can the process of measuring SD reinforce the communication and dissemination for SD policies? Finally conclusions related with the dynamic characteristics of sustainable development and the presented approaches for measuring are summarized in the lat section: "Conclusions".

5.   This paper aims to be a working document for discussion. More information can and should be incorporated. There are different potential routes we can take: (i) we could potentially learn from the situation in Belgium (submitter of this article), and describe the different approaches on the national, federal and regional levels. This is only partly described in the paper to date; (ii.) we could potentially complete this article with some more theoretical considerations so that it can become part of the theoretical chapter of the Working Group publication. We recommend further discussing each of these potential routes at the second meeting in Oslo.

KNOWLEDGE FOR POLICY MAKING: CONCEPTS

6.   The growing interferences and pace of changes are increasing the necessity for new forms of knowledge in order to underpin policies in general, and sustainable development in particular. Societies worldwide can be characterized by the problems and solutions on the political agenda. Most challenges today are complex and dynamic in nature. External and internal developments change continuously, causing shifts in problem perception and priority setting. Often it is not clear what the real causes are and different competing policy options are on the table. Issues such as demographic change, competitiveness, energy, environmental problems, social inclusiveness and equity all have long-term implications. Coherent and co-ordinated thinking is essential in this increasingly complex global environment. However, the certainties about society are dissolving and there is little guidance on how to act. Developments in science and technology, for example, have a strong potential to influence social change. There are, however, many reasons why the practical use of technology and scientific knowledge varies widely between countries. Societies differ, economies differ, and governments deal with international scientific developments in different ways through the policies they pursue (Timmermans, 2001).

Dimensions of Evidence

7.   Policies are social constructions - they are not simply objective givens but are the result of social processes (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). In this context, a policy is defined as a formal statement giving the relationship between information input and resulting decision flows. A policy becomes important once effectively used as a scorecard to support decision making processes (Mead, 2005). The purpose is not simply to provide a basis for making efficient decisions, but also to provide knowledge needed to improve the practice of democracy. The overall idea is to promote human development by reasoning how to achieve an improved society. This concept of policy analysis can be traced back to the earliest thinking by Harold Lasswell who understood it as a form of reasoning about how to reach public goals (Dunn, 2004). Policy analysis is a problem-solving discipline and is distinct from purely academic research, mostly seeking theoretical knowledge. It is also distinct from a policy-orientated inquiry, with a limited scope and mostly done to inform a specific decision. Policy analysis supports decision making by identifying ways of thinking about society and policy change.

8.   Policy analysis tools can be used to structure policy problems and to provide evidence to underpin decision making. This recognition relates to Lasswell's belief in the importance of acquiring maximum rational judgment of the elements involved in policymaking and Hoppe's view that, in producing viable policy recommendations, the policy analysis process should mobilize the best available evidence in the desire to tackle problems on the political agenda successfully (Geva-May, 2002). But decision-making occurs within a web of interacting forces and evidence comes from a variety of sources at different timings (see also table 1).

- Understand the policy environment and how it is changing.
- Appraise the likely effects of policy changes to underpin choices between different options.
- Demonstrate the links between strategic direction, intended outcomes and policy objectives to show that there are clear lines of arguments and evidence between them.
- Determine in a participatory process what kind of action is needed to meet the strategic goals or intermediate objectives.
- Develop a shared awareness of the problems at stake and work out a joined action plan.
- Communicate the quality in breadth and depth of the evidence base to meet the open political agenda.

Table 1. Dimensions of evidence for policies (after Shaxson, 2005).

Indicators

9.   Despite the uncertainty of the direction of sustainable development, it is necessary to define indicators that can provide essential and reliable information. Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) are a well recognised source of evidence and can be used to illustrate to policy makers and the public the linkages and trade-offs between economic, environmental and social values; to evaluate the longer term implications of current decisions and behaviours; and to monitor progress towards sustainable development goals by establishing baseline conditions and trends (Stevens, 2005). The development of indicators can be seen as an inquiry designed to discover insights to complex problems. The context and the way measuring approaches are

implemented in a real case are equally important than the objectives. Measuring approaches are more than a well described toolkit. They are a kind of puzzle solving devices and they require us to make assumptions of how we see the world and what evidence we have or need to have to understand. Bossel (1999) summarises a number of requirements for developing sustainable development indicators (table 2).

• Indicators of sustainable development are needed to guide policies and decisions at all levels of society.
• These indicators must represent all important concerns: An ad hoc collection of indicators that just seem relevant is not adequate. A more systematic approach must look at the interaction of systems and their environment.
• The number of indicators should be as small as possible, but not smaller than necessary. I.e. indicator sets must be comprehensive and compact, covering all relevant aspects.
• The process of finding an indicator set must be participatory to ensure that the set encompasses the visions and values of the community or region for which it is developed.
• Indicators must be clearly defined, reproducible, unambiguous, understandable and practical. They must reflect the interests and views of different stakeholders.
• From looking at these indicators, it must be possible to deduce the viability and sustainability of current developments, and to compare with alternative development paths.
• A framework, a process and criteria are needed for finding an adequate set of indicators of sustainable development.

Table 2. Requirements for developing sustainable development indicators (Bossel,1999).

10.   Although measuring sustainable development is legitimate on a conceptual basis, measuring practice has taught us that developing and using Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) is far from being straightforward. Despite the persistent definitional ambiguities associated with sustainable development, much work, i.e. over 500 efforts, has been devoted to developing quantitative indicators of sustainable development (Parris & Kates, 2003). Whereas efforts in the development of local indicator schemes seem to be paying off in initialising or at least strengthening SD processes, the usability of more complex SDI schemes has to be judged with some precaution (Bauler & Hecq, 2000). The process of condensing large amounts of information to a recognizable pattern of a few indicators facilitates orientation in a complex world. But it is essential to bring in a wide spectrum of knowledge, experience, mental models, and social and environmental concerns to ensure that a comprehensive indicator set is found for a given application (Bossel, 1999). Parris & Kates (2003) conclude that there are no indicator sets that are universally accepted. This is due to the ambiguity of sustainable development, the plurality of purpose, and the confusion of terminology, data, and methods of measurement.

11.   Net, we need proper indicators to tell us where we stand today and where we are heading to with respect to the goal of sustainable development. SDI should provide comprehensive and well accepted information about the key elements shaping sustainable development.

Participatory approaches

12.   Evidence is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for any decision-making process. People's understanding and interpretation change, new research results come in and new ways of using and interpreting information are used. It is clear that the ways policies are developed,

implemented, monitored and revised are always shaped by the broader social and political context. The rational and principles of measuring SD are to a certain extent based on these dynamics; for instance, participation of multiple stake-holders in decision-making is not only asked for to deal with the representation of multiple interests as it would be the case in traditional stakeholder assemblies, but also to overcome scientific uncertainty and impossible evaluation (Funtowicz & Ravetz 1993).

13.   So, participation is not only recognised to be a key element of SD, participation should also have an important role for developing SDI. Measuring SD has become an institutionalised activity as more emphasis has been given to active participation to anticipate collectively the important influences that may shape the future of society. Participation of stakeholders improves the quality of SDI through engagement of both scientific and non-scientific knowledge, and their values and preferences. Participation also increases the legitimacy of SDI and facilitates mutual learning among participants.

14.   Participatory approaches foster dialogue among stakeholders towards understanding each other's roles and responsibilities. In adopting a participatory approach there is the expectation that different stakeholders will share and be enriched by that sharing. Depending on the activity and the purpose of participation, stakeholders can be expected to share their perspectives, interests, values, information, knowledge, or ultimately grant their acceptance to a research or management process. Through sharing, the interaction of stakeholders is expected to achieve some synergy whereby the outcome or results is greater than the sum of the individual elements being shared (Currie-Alder, 2003).

NEW APPROACHES FOR MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

International cooperation: think global, act local

15.   How can the process of measuring SD enhance global cooperation? There are several ways how organisations or governments can learn from other countries. One is to seek countries that are similar and assess their recent experience. The problem with this approach is that a set of 'similar' countries only captures a small and perhaps inadequate sample of potentially relevant experience. Another approach would be to identify the substantive issues highest on its domestic agenda and then scan the world for examples of institutional responses to those. This would run the risk of only focusing on issues of the moment, of not being open to cross-issue relevance of particular institutional strategies. On the other hand it may produce some immediately applicable lessons for current problems (Conner & Dovers, 2002). A third option would be a 'learning-by-doing' approach. This approach would imply that organisations or governments set up an international cooperation with common objectives.

16.   An ongoing example of international cooperation between governments for sustainable development is the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD). This network was formed at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 by a group of regions committed to policies of sustainable development to be a voice for, and to represent regional governments at the global level, promoting sustainable development and partnerships at the regional level around the world. The mission of the Network is a commitment to Sustainable Development world-wide, following the criteria established in the Gauteng Declaration[2]. The objectives of the network are summarised in table 3.

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[2] Gauteng Declaration : 31st of August 2002

- ▪ To represent Regional Governments at a global level
- ▪ To promote Sustainable Development at the regional government level throughout the world.
- ▪ To share information and experience concerning Sustainable Development policies with Regional Governments throughout the world.
- ▪ To promote understanding, collaboration and association between its members.
- ▪ To seek international recognition of the contribution to Sustainable Development made by Regional Governments.
- ▪ To obtain representation at International Organisations and National Governments.

Table 3. Basic objectives of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD)

17. The interactions between the global scale and regional scale, reflected by the members: regional governments from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, provide some interesting opportunities for sustainable development. The often strong cultural and social identity of regions makes them suited to promote behavioural change in combination with public awareness and legislative action. The cooperation within the network offers learning possibilities and knowledge creation to strengthen SD processes worldwide. It is also believed that industrialised regions can afford special attention towards supporting the regions of least developed countries through decentralised cooperation and knowledge transfer with the aim of achieving a relationship of genuine partnership for sustainable development (nrg4SD, 2003). An example is described in box 1.

18. Within the network there are also initiatives, like indicator workshops and reports, organised for measuring sustainable development by SDI schemes. The fact that the methodology used is shared by several organisations and/or regions worldwide enables them to make comparisons in order to learn from one another and exchange experiences. One of the comments at the workshop was that: "Having a list of indicators will not in itself solve challenges such as poverty, social justice and equality or attain environmental objectives" but "it does allow measurement, comparison, benchmarking and cooperation between regions". More information on the nrg4SD indicators can be found on the website http://www.nrg4sd.net. Belgium is represented in this network by Flanders and Wallonia.

Box 1. News: The Basque Government will plant 232.000 trees in Kenya because of its CO2 emissions (10/17/2006).
The Basque Government will plant 232,000 trees in Kenya over the next three years through the Green Belt Movement Foundation, to compensate for CO2 emissions for airplane and automobile trips resulting from its governmental activities. Today, the President of the Basque Autonomous Government, Juan José Ibarretxe, and the Environment Minister, Esther Larrañaga, signed an agreement with the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Winner from Africa, Wangari Muta Maathai, to carry out reforestation projects in her country, Kenya. The trees will be planted by the African country's rural women, so as to achieve the two-part objective of propelling the role of women in the poorer rural community's development. It is a "symbolic" gesture that is equivalent to the 23,400 tons of CO2 that the Basque Government estimates it will emit in what remains of its legislature, as a consequence of its trips by car and plane. It is not the first time that the Autonomous Executive has collaborated with the Green Belt

Movement Foundation in the reforestation of Africa, in this way; it is partly mitigating global warming. The Department of the Environment signed the first agreement in April of this year with the above mentioned foundation to compensate the emissions corresponding to this Department, planting 37,000 trees. Now, the initiative has extended to the Basque Executive body that, for the last few months, has a Climate Change Office, where the Departments of Education, Housing, Industry, Transport and Agriculture have participated. After signing the agreement, the President of the Basque Autonomous Government expressed the Basque Government's compromise with sustainable human development, a concept which he said is directly related with peace and in the fight against poverty and corruption. On her part, the president of the Green Belt Movement Foundation, Wangari Muta Maathai, emphasized the value of the initiative because it will contribute to the solution of the problem of global warming. We are taking action not only shooting from the lip, she declared. After meeting with the President of the Basque Autonomous Government and the Environment Minister, the Nobel Peace Prize winner had a second meeting with the departments that make up the Basque Climatic Change Office to exchange points of view about the environment. During her stay in the Basque Country, Maathai has visited the Tree of Gernika and the Assembly House has offered a conference on the environment as a human right and has met with NGO's and environmentalist movements. The Ekopass association, in charge of measuring the Basque Government's CO_2 emissions, also participated in the agreement signed today. (Source www.nrg4sd.net, download at 27/10/2006)

Measuring SD via a process of argumentation.

19.   How can the process of measuring SD reinforce the communication and dissemination for SD policies? Indicators have a strong analytical strength by providing factual information on complex issues, yet, therefore, their reporting is also less suitable as communication to policymakers and a broader audience. As potential answer to this conflict, one could explore a different approach that is rather based on argumentation incorporating strong analytical but also participatory strengths. This approach is based on the effective construction of a shared context enabling problem-specific knowledge creation through a process of argumentation. This process may be seen as an inquiry designed to discover insights and solutions to complex problems. In process terms we can define this approach as a **C**yclical, **P**articipatory and **I**terative process. This approach will be referred to as the CPI approach.

A cyclical process

20.   The approach can be described as a series of sequential steps: i.e. the scanning, the integration and the dissemination step. Each step is treated as temporally and functionally distinctive.

Scanning	▪ Stakeholders selection ▪ SDI selection	In an initial phase the main participants are contacted and invited to a kick-off meeting to understand the objectives and structure of the process. Also a background paper with international SD indicators is prepared.
Integration	▪ Process of argumentation ▪ Underpinned by the SDI report ▪ Stimulated by the 'five questions' approach	The second phase will combine the information of the background paper on SDI with the information coming from the participants. To enhance the process of argumentation the participations are invited to a second workshop. The SDI should be used to underpin their argumentations. During the workshop all argumentations are recorded. They will be used in the synthesis report.
Dissemination	▪ Synopsis	After having been reviewed by all the participants the synthesis report (synopsis) is disseminated to a broader audience.

A participatory process

21. As explained in section 2 the benefits of an interactive or participatory approach are not only in the representation of multiple interests as it would be the case in traditional stakeholder assemblies, but also increases the legitimacy of SDI and facilitates social learning among the participants. Using international validated indicators provide some opportunities, such as benchmarking, but there is always a risk of decontextualising. If knowledge is disconnected from its context, as sometimes happens by using secondary data, then knowledge becomes inert. Participants may learn new concepts but might have difficulties implementing them in the absence of a real context for its use. May (1992) proposes that policy related social learning must involve increased understanding, not just mimicry – the direct transfer of a policy from one situation to another.

An Iterative process

22. This process can and should be repeated on an annual basis opening up social learning possibilities. When this approach is implemented for the first time, it can be fruitful to have an introduction workshop that will include all three steps as a learning experience. After this full workshop the participants will have a better understanding of the objectives and procedure. This will enhance the interactive process for the next steps.

Box 2. The 'five questions' approach
A possible way to translate the concept of Sustainable Development in function of a SDI scheme is to look at the important questions that are within our notion of SD. In analogy with the Swiss monitoring process on sustainable development (SFSO et al., 2004), an SDI scheme can be developed based on the following questions.
1. How well do we live?
2. How well are resources distributed and how efficiently are we using our resources?
3. What are we leaving behind for our children?
4. To what extent does the capital appreciate or increase or depreciate or diminish?

5. How have the socio-political systems reacted in their efforts to influence development? The 'five questions' approach has a very strong communication function. It can be used to stimulate a process of argumentation during stakeholder workshops. First experience in an interactive workshop provided positive feedback on the use of the five questions approach. The Swiss experience also indicated the benefits of these questions as a template for dissemination on SDI. There is no evidence that these questions can be used in the selection process of the indicators. Still, the use of these questions within a CPI approach provides some preliminary but interesting thoughts. If during this process extra attention is given to an even distribution of SDI among the five questions, this could probably enhance the balance within the SDI. More experimenting and reflection is needed but the first experiences are promising.

23.   The CPI approach in combination with the five questions is being implemented in an ongoing project connected with the Flemish Strategy for SD[3]. The prime objective is to set up an operational process of sustainable development indicators. This process will facilitate the measurement, evaluation and dissemination of the state of progress in Flanders, as well as its position in relation to other countries, from the point of view of the social, economic and ecological aspects of sustainable development. The process is designed to provide information for the stakeholders and policy makers and to create awareness among the population.
In order to achieve the mentioned objectives the project should fulfil the following requirements: (i.) an analytic process underpinned by an international validated set of existing indicators (UN-CSD, Eurosat, nrg4SD) in order to meet the criteria of quality and independence and allowing bench marking between governments; (ii.) an interactive process that provides a space for stakeholders to be engaged in processes of measurement providing the necessary context and an optimal fit between different sources of knowledge. Although the project is still ongoing, it became evident that many of the participants had never had an opportunity to really consider the task they had been asked to undertake, at least, not in a systemic manner. Participants seemed keen to grasp the opportunity to think about SD from the widest angle. As a learning exercise it can be fairly claimed that succeeded.

24.   To summarise, the CPI approach can be described as a shared interpretation of sustainable development among policymakers, experts and stakeholders. This interpretation is applied in an integrated manner, in order to explore solutions to persistent problems of unsustainable development and to improve decision-making today.

CONCLUSIONS

24.   **Sustainable development is used widely in society, but the concept has to be translated into the practical dimensions of the real world to make it operational.** Societies and their environments change, technologies and cultures change, values and aspirations change, and a sustainable society must allow and sustain such change, i.e., it must allow continuous, viable and vigorous development, which is what we mean by sustainable development. So in stead of being defined in objective terms, SD is characterized by process-oriented logics. As a consequence policy makers, experts and stakeholders have to rely on information that allows them to judge on a regular basis whether or not the current evolution is to be considered as a contribution to stay or to get on a sustainable path. As such, SD requires constant measurement and feedback for evaluation.

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[3] The Flemish Strategy for SD (Vlaamse Strategie Duurzame Ontwikkeling) was launched on June 20the of 2006 (For more information see also http://www3.vlaanderen.be/duurzameontwikkeling).

25.   **Sustainable development indicators should provide comprehensive information about the key elements shaping sustainable development**. New ongoing approaches on measuring SD are presented in this paper. Key principles are (i.) the cooperation between different governments/organisations; and (ii.) the knowledge creation through a process of argumentation. **A first ongoing approach, as an example of international cooperation, is the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD).** Within the network there are initiatives such as indicator workshops and reports, organised for measuring sustainable development. The fact that the methodology used is shared by several organisations and/or regions worldwide enables them to make comparisons in order to learn from one another and share experiences.

26.   **A second approach is related with the process of argumentation, the CPI approach.** CPI stands for a cyclical, participatory and iterative process, in which learning, interaction and feedback are crucial elements. The CPI approach is being implemented in an ongoing project connected with the Flemish Strategy for SD. The prime objective is to set up an operational process of monitoring of sustainable development indicators. This process will facilitate the measurement, evaluation and dissemination of the state of progress in Flanders, as well as its position in relation to other countries. CPI is an approach based on argumentation that incorporates strong analytical and participatory strengths.

27.   This paper wishes to contribute to the international debate on measuring Sustainable Development. One way to tackle this is to **create a dialogue** among researchers, experts and practitioners. Often new insights have their origin in an effective sharing and debating of multi expert know-how. Working papers on methodology issues and new approaches for measuring sustainable development are needed to underpin this dialogue and to better link theoretical insights of with practice.

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