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## The Systematic Selection of Headline Sustainable Indicators for the development of Future Neighbourhood Sustainability Assessment Tools for Africa

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### Highlights

- Selection of sustainability indicators should be governed by motivation of study and a type or form of sustainability ideology (three pillar concept, four pillar concepts etc.)
- Transparency of methodology in the selection or development of any type or category of indicators is key to replicate indicator success in other societies
- It is essential to consider and utilize the institutional dimension as the fourth pillar of sustainability when sustainability indicators for Africa are under investigation
- Universal sustainability indicators are not impossible to achieve but they are highly improbable

### ABSTRACT

The Neighbourhood Sustainability Assessment Tool (NSAT) is part of a growing number of strategic tools used in the bid to achieve a sustainable society. Unfortunately, the development of this tool in several countries has been plagued with pitfalls, such as a lack of transparency in the developmental process and selection of Headline Sustainability Indicators (HSI), debatable adoption of sustainability pathways; and difficulties in determining a common set and standard number of urban HSI for assessment tools. It should be highlighted that HSI is the grouping of a specific urban issue and/or sustainable indicator(s) under a broad category that best describes the focus of that issue. This study aims to develop a coherent and transparent methodology, useful for determining a common set of HSI for NSATs. The motivation behind this study stems from the fact that there are currently no NSATs developed for the African region and developing new sets of HSI would be both expensive and time consuming. Thus, by investigating the properties of already developed tools, the effectiveness of the HSI selection process for African cities are optimized. The result, which is the methodological process, emphasises four steps in the selection of HSI: (1) Consider as many NSATs as possible (2) Identify the motivation for the study and select a

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