

Book Review

Leadership and Sustainability in the Built Environment

Opoku, A. and Ahmed, V. (ed.), 2015. Leadership and Sustainability in the Built Environment. Routledge, London. ISBN (hbk): 978-1-13-877842-9, Hardback: \$155.00.

Anthropogenic climate change and energy security have obligated various national governments across the globe to enact strict targets for CO₂ emissions reduction. While the debate is intense in international arenas, it seems the global construction industry and the built environment as a whole is taking the threats posed by climate change seriously. The debate has been raging for the past three decades. Unfortunately energy consumption and the consequential carbon dioxide emissions are on the rise. The built environment and its supply chain has much to do with it all. The past five years or so, the debate took a step backward due to the Global Financial Crisis. Research in the early 90s articulated concerns for the lack of leadership, within the built environment, to drive the sustainability agenda. Is change taking shape in the 21st century, and for the future of our human civilisation on this planet?

I was fortunate to be able to read and review the book, titled “*Leadership and Sustainability in the Built Environment*”, edited by Opoku and Ahmed. The book is presented succinctly in four parts. Part 1 deals with organisational leadership. It is presented in three chapters; leadership theory and practice (Opoku and Ahmed); behaviourism versus leadership (Emuze); and leadership as negation of agency (McAleenan and McAleenan). Part 2 discusses the concept of sustainable built environment in three chapters (Opoku; Opoku and Ahmed; Sertyesilisik and Sertyesilisik). Part 3 (Opoku and Fortune), covered in a single chapter, critiques current organisational leadership in the UK construction and calls for the needed research work to enable the connection of organisational leadership and the uptake of sustainable construction projects practices. Part 4 provides two case studies from an international perspective; one from the UK focusing on social housing (Kaluarachchi) and the other is from the West Andes providing an educational perspective in restructuring a civil engineering program (Ellis, Lewis and Petersen).

The book provides an interesting discussion around leadership theory and proposes 26 characteristics of sustainability leadership in the built environment. This makes one consider, would it be possible to have all these traits in one individual human being? In a reflective moment one name came to mind, the late South African President, Mr Mandela. He was in it for others and not for himself, as he has been described endlessly. The section about behaviourism and sustainability is thought provoking. It draws from social psychology to engender behavioural change in the built environment. The discussion in the book further instigates the need for inter and transdisciplinary approaches to research to drive the needed change, in both academia and practice, towards a sustainable built environment. This in turn adds other issues into the already complicated mix. This is in addition to concerns about corruption, cultural challenges and lack of trust, in an ever increasing globalised construction/built environment, within a global context.

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Citation: Elmualim, A. 2015. Book Review – Leadership and Sustainability in the Built Environment, *Construction Economics and Building*, 15(2), 102-103. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/AJCEB.v15i2.4466>

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Publisher: University of Technology Sydney (UTS) ePress

The book will be a good reference source for students and researchers in the built environment. It provides an interesting read for academics and practitioners alike and is highly recommended for students and young academics to further challenge their thinking and research approach to sustainability and leadership in the built environment.

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