

Assessing the Built Environment's Contribution to Sustainable Development: the Sustainable Building Assessment Tool

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Summary:

This paper discusses how the built environment can support sustainable development. It identifies the key characteristics of built environment that can be used to support sustainable development and shows how this can be developed into a set of built environment objectives. These in turn are translated into a set of more specific criteria which can be used to assess the extent to which buildings support sustainable development. This approach was used to develop the Sustainable Building Assessment Tool or SBAT, which will also be described. The paper reviews the SBAT in relation to the sustainability context of Africa and South Africa. It finds that biocapacity is not well addressed by the SBAT and draws on the Convention on Biodiversity to develop proposed additional assessment criteria. It also suggests that the linked indicators used in the Convention may be useful in sustainability assessment tools for buildings by providing measures that not only chart reduced environmental impacts but also assess social and economic benefits as well determining the contribution of buildings to a broader shift towards sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sustainable Building Assessment Tool, SBAT, Developing Countries, Biodiversity