Innovation in the Built Environment



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Sustainable Building Adaptation

Innovations in Decision-making

WILEY Blackwell

Sustainable Building Adaptation: Innovations in Decision-Making

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Dr Hilde Remøy is Assistant Professor of Real Estate Management at the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology, Delft, the Netherlands. She has experience with adaptive reuse from both practice and academia. The research described in Part II: Adaptive Reuse is the result of studies undertaken in the period 2005–2013. Hilde's research focus is adaptive reuse of existing buildings that have lost their original function, related to obsolescence and vacancy of existing buildings and locations. In research and education, she works on studies concerning the influence of physical property characteristics on obsolescence and adaptive reuse potential and studies to define the future value of reused buildings and cultural heritage. Hilde is the author of several books/book chapters.

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Optimisation is the result of three Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project grants comprising:

- 2009–2012 Langston, C., Smith, J., Herath, G., Datta, S., Doloi, H. and Crawford, R.H., Making Better Decisions about Built Assets: Learning by Doing, ARC Linkage Project \$180,000 LP0990261 (Industry partners: Williams Boag Architects and Assetic Australia).
- 2007–2010 Langston, C., Liu, C., Beynon, D. and de Jong, U., Strategic Assessment of Building Design Adaptive Reuse Opportunities, ARC Linkage Project \$210,000 LP0776579 (Industry partners: Williams Boag Architects and The Uniting Church in Australia).
- 2006–2009 Crawford, R.H., Datta, S. and Langston, C., Modelling Environmental and Financial Performance of Construction. Sustainability Innovation Feasibility Tool. ARC Linkage Project \$179,000 LP0667653 (Industry partner: Williams Boag Architects).

Craig is the author of five international books. In 2010, he won the Bond University Vice-Chancellor's Quality Award for Research Excellence. He was awarded the Emerald Literati Network Award for Excellence in 2013 for his paper 'Validation of the adaptive reuse potential (ARP) model using *iconCUR*', *Facilities*, 30(3–4), 105–123 (2012).

Preface: The Rise of Building Adaptation

A point has been reached in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world with a more prudent care for their environmental consequences. Through ignorance or indifference we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which our life and well-being depend. Conversely, through fuller knowledge and wiser action, we can achieve for ourselves and our posterity a better life in an environment more in keeping with human needs and hopes... To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind.¹

It is four decades since these words of forewarning were written, and we should reflect on whether we have heeded the statements. The declaration is a warning and a call to action. The proclamation asserts that humans need to be more prudent in respect of the environment; yet in those 40 years, greenhouse gas emissions have increased, pollution has worsened, and social inequity and injustice around the world has continued to attract global attention. If anything, the environmental legacy for future generations is less than it was in 1972.

The challenge of achieving sustainable development in the twenty-first century will be won or lost in the world's urban centres, and this is due to the contribution that the built environment makes to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. The challenge is immense and overwhelming, both in terms of its magnitude and potential consequences if humankind does not adapt its behaviours towards the environment. Climate change impacts are occurring, disproportionately affecting developing nations, and are projected to get much worse over time. It is expected that there will be increased variability in climate events, such as harder and more frequent storms, which will lead to changes in climatic averages such as increased water scarcity. Globally as humankind adapts and evolves its behaviours and government strategies and policies, we are transitioning from the 'industrial age' to the 'ecological age'.

The built environment, if upstream emissions from heat and electricity are included, is responsible for around 45% of total global greenhouse gas emissions (GGE). Also there are impacts from water and resources consumption within buildings. As commercial buildings have a life cycle measured in decades or even centuries, the existing stock is of particular interest and consequence. Significantly, our window of opportunity for pre-emptive action to avoid higher levels of climate change and temperature increase is to act decisively up to 2050; time is not on our side. When compared to other sectors, such as transport or waste, the contribution of sustainable building adaptation to climate change mitigation is abundantly clear.

With 1–2% of new buildings added to the total stock annually, humankind needs to adapt its existing buildings, and quickly. While all new construction should adopt sustainability features in design and operation, given typical rates of replacement much of the built environment that will exist in 2050 has already been built. Furthermore, the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that:

Over the whole building stock the largest portion of carbon savings by 2030 is in retrofitting existing buildings and replacing energy using equipment due to the slow turnover of the stock.²

The greatest challenge is the development of successful strategies for adapting existing buildings due to their slow turnover; in other words, effective decision-making for sustainable building adaptation is critical to deliver needed building-related GGE reductions globally. Many cities have acknowledged this need to act and have developed and adopted strategies aimed to deliver carbon neutrality within fixed periods. Local government authorities are encouraging sustainable building adaptation to lower building-related energy consumption and associated emissions.

Sustainable adaptation of existing stock is a universal concern that increasing numbers of local, state and national governments must endeavour to address within the short to medium term. In most developed countries, more is now spent on building adaptation (including maintenance, repair, retrofit and reuse) than new construction, and this represents a gradual but consistent change from decades of investment dominance in new-build projects. There is a need for greater knowledge and awareness of what happens to society's buildings over time and how we might adapt them sustainably. This action includes avoiding premature destruction through finding new uses for buildings that have become unwanted or obsolete. While new development must also be sustainable, there is insufficient time for us to act unless proactive intervention into the performance of existing building stock becomes a priority.

This research-based book contributes significantly to a more informed understanding and management of decisions relating to the sustainable adaptation of existing commercial buildings. This work collectively offers

guidance towards a balanced approach that incorporates sustainable and optimal approaches for effective management of sustainable adaptation of existing commercial buildings. It is divided into three discrete parts concerning building adaptation, adaptive reuse, and adaptation decision-making and optimisation.

Part I has been written by Dr Sara J. Wilkinson. She establishes the definition of adaptation in the context of this book. She reviews and synthesises the key literature, while progressively developing the research questions, hypotheses and a conceptual model towards a knowledge-based approach to sustainable office adaptation. She describes and substantiates her latest research demonstrating how to make a preliminary assessment of adaptation potential using the Melbourne CBD as an illustrative case study. A large focus for this part concerns the connection between sustainability and building adaptation.

Part II has been written by Dr Hilde Remøy. She presents her research conducted into Dutch office change of use adaptations. Adaptive reuse, defined as significant functional change applied to obsolete buildings as an alternative to premature destruction, is her focus. Many exemplars demonstrating application of this approach in the Netherlands are provided and augmented with a number of international case studies. In this part, the relationship of adaptation, retrofitting, alteration and inherent flexibility provided by the initial design solution is explored, including discussion of the practical lessons learned from the underpinning work (as case studies for the practitioner audience) and a clear statement of the theoretical contributions involved.

Part III has been written by Dr Craig Langston. He covers adaptation decision-making and optimisation using multiple criteria. He describes and substantiates his research into how to make a strategic assessment of whether and when to adapt. Cost planning is a key feature of the decision-making process and its integration into a broader financial-social-environmental frame is explored. He also introduces a model to assess new design to ensure that it will deliver adaptation benefits much later in life. Each presented decision/optimisation model is demonstrated via one or more actual case studies.

To sum up, the key issue and motivation for this book is that we need to adapt our existing building stock to reduce its environmental footprint, to aim for higher sustainability, better energy performance and more efficient use of natural resources. We are currently some way from this being standard practice in many urban settlements. Whilst there are an abundance of environmental rating tools to choose from across a range of countries, there is patchy take-up within the real estate markets, especially with lower quality or lower profile stock. Nevertheless, there is an increasing amount of legislation relating to sustainability and evidence that industry practices are improving – but whether the rate of uptake is sufficient to make a meaningful change only time will tell.

As is often quoted, 'the greenest buildings are the ones we already have'.3

Notes

- 1 Extract from the Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972), available online at http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default. Print.asp?documentid=97&articleid=1503&l=fr. Accessed 19 August 2013.
- 2 Extract from the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (2007), available online at http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg3/en/ch6-ens6-es.html. Accessed 19 August 2013.
- 3 Originally attributed to Jacobs, J. (1961) *The death and life of great American cities*, New York: Random House.

Contents

	Preface	
	t I Building Adaptation J. Wilkinson	1
Chap	oter 1 Defining Adaptation	3
1.1	Introduction	3
1.2	Terminology	4
1.3	The Significance of Building Adaptation	4
1.4	Decision-Making Issues in Building Adaptation	10
1.5	Decision Options and Levels of Adaptation	11
1.6	Adaptation and Different Land Uses	13
1.7	Conclusion	14
Refe	rences	15
Cha	oter 2 Drivers and Barriers for Adaptation	18
2.1	Introduction	18
2.2	Building Life Cycle Theory	18
2.3	Building Performance Theory	20
2.4	Building Adaptation Theory and Sustainability	21
	2.4.1 Social Factors	22
	2.4.2 Environmental Factors	27
	2.4.3 Cost and Economic Factors	30
2.5	Other Attributes Associated with Adaptation	34
	2.5.1 Physical Attributes	34
	2.5.2 Locational and Land Use Attributes	36
	2.5.3 Legal Attributes	37
2.6	Conclusion	38
Refe	erences	39
Cha	oter 3 Assessing Adaptation Using PAAM	42
3.1	Introduction	42
3.2	Preliminary Assessment	42
	Principal Component Analysis	47
3.4	Preliminary Adaptation Assessment Model	49

3.5	Illustra	tive Case Study	54
	3.5.1	Building Description	54
	3.5.2	Assessing a Building for 'Alterations' Adaptation	54
3.6	Conclu	sion	56
Refe	rences		58
Char	stor /	Suctainable Adaptation: A Case Study	
Ciiaj		Sustainable Adaptation: A Case Study of the Melbourne CBD	59
4.1	Introdu		59
4.2		ontext for Adaptation	59
4.3			
		g Adaptation	60
4.4		able Adaptation Case Studies	62
	4.4.1	131 Queen Street	62
	4.4.2	Alto Hotel (636 Bourke Street)	64
	4.4.3		66
	4.4.4	490 Spencer Street	68
	4.4.5	500 Collins Street	70
	4.4.6	406 Collins Street	73
		182 Capel Street	75
		115 Batman Street	77
	4.4.9	385 Bourke Street	79
	4.4.10	530 Collins Street	81
4.5		arative Analysis of Sustainable Adaptation Measures	82
1.0	4.5.1	Owners	83
	4.5.2	Age	83
	4.5.3	Location	84
	4.5.4	Aesthetics	85
	4.5.5	Location of Vertical Services	85
	4.5.6	Existing Land Use	85
	4.5.7	Floor Area	86
	4.5.8	Street Frontage	86
		Historic Listing	86
		Number of Storeys	87
		PCA Grade	87
		Attachment to Other Buildings	88
	4.5.13	Site Access	88
46	Conclu		89
	erences		90
D	all A	dantivo Pouco	93
	t II - A l le Remøg	daptive Reuse	73
Che	ntor E	Building Obsolescence and Reuse	95
	Introdi	_	95
		reion Recearch Worldwide	97

		Contents	vi
5 3	Building Lifespan and Obsolescence		100
J.J	5.3.1 Technical Lifespan		100
	5.3.2 Functional Lifespan		101
	5.3.3 Economic Lifespan		101
5.4	Obsolescence and Vacancy		102
	Quality and Obsolescence: User-Based Property Assessi	ment	104
5.6	The Physical Characteristics of Structurally	Hellt	107
	Vacant Office Buildings		106
	5.6.1 Structure and Floors		107
	5.6.2 Floor Layout, Building Length and Depth		107
	5.6.3 Façade		108
	5.6.4 Stairs and Elevators		108
	5.6.5 Location Characteristics		108
5.7	Selected Adaptive Reuse Projects		109
5.8	Conclusion		117
Refe	erences		118
Cha	pter 6 Reuse versus Demolition		121
	Introduction		121
	Decision-Making Criteria		122
	Tools, Scans and Instruments		123
	6.3.1 The Transformation Meter		124
	6.3.2 Programmatic Quick Scan		127
	6.3.3 Architectural Value		127
	6.3.4 The Architects' Method		128
	6.3.5 The ABT Method: An Instrument Developed		
	in Practice		128
	Decisions-Based on Financial Arguments		129
	Durability and Sustainability		131
	Conclusion		132
Refe	erences		133
Cha	pter 7 Examples of Successful Adaptive Reuse		135
7.1	Introduction		135
7.2	Dutch Conversion Projects (Office to Residential)		136
	7.2.1 'Stadhouder' in Alphen aan den Rijn		137
	7.2.2 'Lodewijk Staete' in Appingedam		137
	7.2.3 'Enka' in Arnhem		138
	7.2.4 'Schuttersveld' in Delft		139
	7.2.5 'Westplantsoen' in Delft		139
	7.2.6 'Wilhelminastaete' in Diemen		140
	7.2.7 'Granida' in Eindhoven		141
	7.2.8 'Residentie de Deel' in Emmeloord		141

7.2.9

7.2.10

'Twentec' in Enschede

7.2.11 'Billiton' in Den Haag

'Eendrachtskade' in Groningen

142

143

143

	7.2.12	'Hof ter Hage' in Den Haag	144
	7.2.13	'Churchill Towers' in Rijswijk	145
	7.2.14	'Puntegale' in Rotterdam	145
	7.2.15	Westerlaan Tower in Rotterdam	146
7.3	Discuss	ion	147
	7.3.1	Data Analysis	147
	7.3.2	Conversion Risks	147
	7.3.3	Conversion Opportunities	150
	7.3.4	Typology	152
	7.3.5	Structure and Floors	152
	7.3.6	Floor Layout, Building Length and Depth	153
	7.3.7	Façade	153
	7.3.8	Stairs and Elevators	154
	7.3.9	Location	154
	7.3.10	Building	155
7.4	Conclu	sion	157
Refe	rences		158
Chap	oter 8	Preserving Cultural and Heritage Value	159
8.1	Introdu	ction	159
8.2	Histori	c Heritage	159
8.3	The Va	lue of Heritage	160
	8.3.1	The Value of Place	160
	8.3.2	Cultural Capital	161
	8.3.3	Benefits of Heritage Conservation	162
8.4	Assessi	ng Economic Value of Heritage	163
	8.4.1	The Market Value of Heritage	163
	8.4.2	Direct Market Value	164
	8.4.3	Indirect Value	164
		Indirect Value of Heritage Tourism	165
		Heritage as a Source of Skills and Competencies	165
	8.4.6	Private/Public Value	166
8.5		ge Value and Adaptation	166
8.6		ctonic and Aesthetic Value	167
8.7	Experie	ence Value	170
		Familiar Ugliness	170
		Cultural–Historical Value	170
	8.7.3	Symbolic Value	171
	8.7.4	Traumatic Experience Value Value in Use	173
	8.7.5	Value in Use	174
	8.7.6	Intrinsic Value (Highest and Best Use)	174
	8.7.7	Heritage as a Source of Social Value	176
8.8	Conclu	sion	180
Refe	rences		181

Part		aptation Decision-Making d Optimisation	183
Craio	Langsto	-	100
Orang	Lungsto		
Chap	ter 9 Id	entifying Adaptive Reuse Potential	187
	Introdu		187
	ARP M		188
9.3		scence Rates	191
		Physical Obsolescence	191
		Economic Obsolescence	192
		Functional Obsolescence	193
	9.3.4	Technological Obsolescence	194
		Social Obsolescence	194
	9.3.6	Legal Obsolescence	195
		Political Obsolescence	196
9.4	Case St	rudy: GPO Building, Melbourne	197
	Discuss		201
9.6	Conclu	sion	205
Note			206
Refer	ences		206
Chap	ter 10	MCDA and Assessing Sustainability	208
	Introdu		208
10.2	Backgr	ound	209
10.3	A New	Approach	211
		Conceptual Framework	211
		Value for Money	213
		Quality of Life	214
		Sustainability Risk	215
10.4		ost Planning	215
10.5		tudy: Bond University Mirvac School of Sustainable	
		pment (MSSD) Building, Gold Coast	217
		Method	217
		Return on Investment	218
	10.5.3	Energy Usage	220
	10.5.4		220
	10.5.5		221
	10.5.6	Sustainability Index	221
10.6	Discuss		223
	Conclu	sion	227
Note			227
Refer	ences		228

Chapt	er 11 M	odelling Building Performance Using iconCUR	23 0	
11.1	Introduction			
11.2	Visual MCDA			
11.3	iconCUR Model			
11.4	Case Stu	dy: 88 George Street, Sydney	235	
	11.4.1	Overview	235	
	11.4.2	Before Intervention	237	
	11.4.3	After Intervention	239	
11.5	Discussion	on	241	
11.6				
Notes			247	
Refere	ences		248	
Chapt	er 12 D	esigning for Future Adaptive Reuse	250	
12.1	Introduc	etion	250	
12.2	Rational	e	251	
12.3 AdaptSTAR Framework			254	
12.4	Internati	ional Case Studies	259	
	12.4.1	1881 Heritage, Hong Kong SAR (PRC)	261	
	12.4.2	Peranakan Museum, City Hall (Singapore)	261	
	12.4.3	Corso Karlín, Prague (Czech Republic)	262	
	12.4.4	Arsenal de Metz, Metz (France)	262	
	12.4.5	The Candy Factory Lofts, Toronto (Canada)	263	
	12.4.6	Punta Della Dogana Contemporary Art Centre,		
		Venice (Italy)	263	
	12.4.7	Andel's Hotel, Lódz (Poland)	264	
	12.4.8	Sugar Warehouse Loft, Amsterdam		
		(The Netherlands)	264	
	12.4.9	The Powerhouse, Long Island City (USA)	263	
	12.4.10	John Knox Church, Melbourne (Australia)	263	
12.5	Discussi	on	266	
12.6	Conclus	ion	268	
Refer	ences		268	
Indov			27	