

Unit 4/5_1 Building environmental assessment tools: Current assessment tools

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Perhaps, the SB05 Tokyo Conference has provided an ever-largest platform for the scholars and experts with interests in building environmental assessment tools (BEATs) to share their views and experience. As a performance indicator for sustainable building development, different BEATs have been developed. Since the development of Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, the climate of BEAT development sweep throughout the world through a number of processes – invention, adoption, assimilation and competition. Of course, the success of a BEAT is hinged on whether the tool can serve its purposes and fit the contexts. The tool depends not only on sound theoretical support, but also on a practical assessment framework. It must be customized to the local contexts, no matter social, cultural and architectural. Imagine how can a BEAT tailored for a high-rise high-density city such as New York, Chicago and Hong Kong apply to places dominated by low-rise buildings.

In this sense, the adoption of other BEATs for local implementation may pose challenges to the scheme administrators or designers. Brazil, Italy and other countries presented good examples for successful transfer of knowledge in BEAT. The imports of BEATs into these countries do not mean that there is only one scheme for each of these countries. It is not the end but a start. Experience can be built up in running the BEATs, providing the foundation for the development of more sophisticated and user-friendly assessment tools.

Equally important is that recognitions of the BEATs should be accorded in the forms of public enrollment in the schemes and also the shifting design practices. As mentioned, the BEAT should be customized to the local contexts. However, it is also true for the reverse. How to facilitate and incorporate the output of the assessment into the design practices has become an important issue. Furthermore, in order to serve as policy tools, the assessment schemes should be understandable by the general public. As for the marketing of the BEATs in different countries, further research is worthwhile and encouraged.