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Integrated Review of Two Top Books That Mesh Well,

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UPDATE 24 March 2014: This update applies only to Sun, Wind & Light: Architectural Design Strategies 3rd Edition

HUGE update. Focus is on zero-net energy and carbon neutral design, augmented by energy-plus building design. New material takes it up to over 800 pages. Nine new “bundles” of design strategies are added including topics such as “neighborhood of light,” “passively cooled buildings” and “responsive envelope.” The book is now in PDF and also in print as a flat spiral bound volume for desktop ease of use. Navigation within this book — which was already superb in the original editions — has been augmented, to include graphic “Navigation by Design Strategy Maps” showing relationships among design strategies in six nested levels of complexity. HUGH SQUARED: The book is now accompanied by a 62-page spreadsheet and separately, on the publisher’s companion web site, 1400 pages of climate data and analytics on each US climate zone including five in Alaska, all downloadable [this is part of the purchase, download needs access card printed on inside of back cover of the book]. I continue to regard this book as one of the most exciting around and would not be at all surprised if the next edition includes urban farming that also cleans water and removes waste (sort of kidding, but not really).

Although I normally read books in twos and threes on the same topic to gain varied perspectives, this is the first time I am writing a single review encompassing two books. They mesh together so well that I cannot imagine studying this subject without having BOTH in hand.

The two books are Sun, Wind & Light: Architectural Design Strategies, 2nd Edition and The HOK Guidebook to Sustainable Design.

Start with the introduction in the Guidebook, which is blessed with a Foreword from Paul Hawken and see especially page 13 where the cost benefits are shown, with 48% energy savings for Gold, 30% for Silver, and 28% for Certified. See also the illustration on page 15 that I have reproduced in the image I am loading for both books: the old decision model was Cost at the top, with Schedule and Quality anchoring the triangle. the new decision model still has cost at the top, but Schedule and Human Health, Safety, & Comfort are on corners of this new pentagon, and the bottom is anchored by Quality and Ecology, or what Paul Hawken would call in his books, “true cost” to the Earth and Humanitas.

NOW shift to the Contents and the Detailed Contents of Sun, Wind, & Light. As one reviewer notes, this is a course book. I did not recognize it as such, I saw it as one of the most gifted complete collection of factors to learn and apply that I have ever seen for ANY topic of study. The content and organization of this book is nothing short of Nobel-level “wow.” Finish going through this book.

NOW go back to the first 218 pages of the Handbook, and study the checklists and varied helpful boxes and explanations. The rest of the book (217-459) is case studies of specific buildings, each a few pages, that can be left for last.

At this point, I went into the Glossaries and Bibliographies of both books. Each is distinct, neither supplants the other. They must be taken together. I read Glossaries, and Indices, as content, and use them as a form of “second look” (in extremely complex books, this is actually where I start).

NOW go back to the Case Studies in the Handbook, and read each from the point of view of what “take away” lessons are there for your own building.

Reading these two books was a real treat. Outside my office kitchen is a deck with an 11 point system for attracting birds from bluebirds and bluejays to cardinals, gold finches, two kinds of woodpecker, and a flicker as well as the more common birds. I believe in diversity, and I believe that if we don’t get our act together and start living up to the ideals of Natural Capitalism (see other recommended books below), our world will go sterile and dark before our great-grandchildren can share in the beauty of this planet. These two books are part of the solution, and I am in serious awe of those who made them available to all of us, and at reasonable prices to boot. Well done!!!

Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming
Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution
The Ecology of Commerce
Ecological Economics: Principles And Applications
For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future
The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to a Moral Economy
Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons (Bk Currents)
The Philosophy of Sustainable Design