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**The German Sustainable Building Certificate:  
A New Tool for Building Performance Evaluation**

**Abstract**

The Conceptual Framework for Building Performance Evaluation (BPE) is the basis for this paper. This framework was developed as an approach that results in better design decisions, more involvement by users, buildings of better quality and more cost-effective management.

This framework fits perfectly with the current European policy of stressing sustainability in community-planning and building construction in general, as well as developing common standards to evaluate the sustainability of buildings in particular, focusing on their ecological, economic, social-cultural, technical and functional quality.

In order to evaluate the quality of buildings from this comprehensive perspective, the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building, and Urban Affairs, together with the German Sustainable Building Council (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Nachhaltiges Bauen, DGNB), have developed the German Sustainable Building Certificate. This voluntary rating system places outstanding buildings in the three categories bronze, silver, or gold. In January 2009, the first 28 office and administration buildings were awarded one of these certificates.

The current paper will

- introduce the German policy, delineating its shift in emphasis from 'green' to 'sustainable' building,
- describe the development of the German certificate DGNB as a comprehensive, scientifically founded and practice-oriented rating system,
- explain the certification system: its structure, application and criteria,
- point out some of the tool's strengths and weaknesses, and
- summarize the certificate's relevance in the context of the BPE model.

**Keywords:**

Building Performance Evaluation; Sustainability; Rating System; Policy

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