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<b>Title</b>	<b>The application of sustainability criteria at the built environment. Starting or finishing point?</b>
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<b>Abstract</b>	<p><i>In the last years, a different number of public and private organizations have given increased attention to the problems of excessive natural resource consumption and depletion; waste generation and accumulation; and environmental impact and degradation. Since the construction industry is a major contributor to these problems, it now faces increasingly restrictive environmental conservation and protection laws and regulations, the emergence of international standards to address environmental quality and performance. In this context, quality represents a key factor for the efficiency and competitiveness of economy and welfare of whole community. It can be acknowledged as a set of characteristics and attributes of a product or a service able to confer it the capability to satisfy a number of needs connected with manufacturing processes and use of same product or service.</i></p> <p><i>As a result, private and public sector face new, complex, and rapidly changing challenges imposed by these laws, regulations, standards, and pressures at all life cycle stages of a capital project, from initial planning, design, construction, and operation/maintenance, to ultimate rehabilitation, decommissioning and/or disposal. Moreover, traditional approaches to capital projects of mere environmental regulatory conformity or reactive corrective actions such as mitigation or remediation have proven to be consistently costly, inefficient, and many times ineffective.</i></p> <p><i>There are strong incentives for the development of a sustainable approach to capital projects. Such an approach goes beyond the traditional focus on cost, time, and quality performance to include the goals of minimal natural resource use, depletion and degradation, waste generation and accumulation, and environmental impact and degradation, all within the contextual satisfaction of human needs and aspirations. These goals are clearly and systematically integrated within the decision-making process at all stages of the life cycle of a capital project, particularly the early funding allocation. In this context, most stakeholders have to face a complex task when attempting to implement a sustainable approach. First of all to face challenges imposed by increasingly limited resources on the effective and efficient delivery of capital projects and</i></p>

*then taking in account a lack of awareness and understanding of the actual or potential impact and/or implications of environmental regulations and standards on capital projects; a lack of awareness and understanding of the opportunities and potential benefits to an organization created by a sustainable approach to its capital projects; and finally, a lack of credible and reliable quantitative indicators, metrics, and/or data on the actual benefits and associated costs.*

*A sustainable approach to capital projects would allow the construction industry to take a more aggressive role in finding both short-term and long-term solutions for a more effective and efficient use of its increasingly limited and fixed capital resources.*

**Keywords**  
**J.E.L. Classification**

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