



## UCEM Institutional Research Repository

<b>Title</b>	It's not that simple: A strategy as practice journey toward net zero
<b>Author(s)</b>	Graeme D. Larsen, Philippa Boyd and Ankit Singh
<b>ORCID</b>	<a href="https://orcid.org/">https://orcid.org/</a> ; <a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8609-5386">https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8609-5386</a> ; <a href="https://orcid.org/">https://orcid.org/</a>
<b>Type</b>	Article
<b>Publication title</b>	Proceedings of 2025 SEEDS Conference, Loughborough
<b>Publisher</b>	
<b>ISSN/ ISBN</b>	
<b>Publication Date</b>	3 September 2025
<b>Version</b>	
<b>DOI</b>	
<b>Repository link</b>	<a href="https://ube.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/201/">https://ube.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/201/</a>
<b>Link to publication</b>	

### Copyright:

UCEM aims to make research outputs available to a broader audience via its digital [Repository](#). Where copyright permits, full text material held in the Repository is made freely available. URLs from GuildHE Research Repositories may be freely distributed and linked to. Please refer to each manuscript for any further copyright restrictions.

### Reuse:

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page, and the content is not changed in any way.

# It's not that simple: a strategy as practice journey toward net zero

Graeme D. Larsen<sup>1</sup>, Pippa Boyd<sup>1</sup>, Ankit Singh<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of the Built Environment

<sup>2</sup> Waterman Group

**Keywords:** net-zero, retrofit, investment, knowledge creation, conflicting narratives

## Abstract (Maximum 300 words)

*Stakeholders engaging with the built environment primarily for investment are challenged by the contested narratives of how best to transition toward Net Zero. The Net Zero discourse is becoming a core priority for such firms when seeking to futureproof their investments. The research explores how a consultant works with investor-side stakeholders to develop suitable retrofit strategies which target net zero. Attention focusses on both parties working together to strategically enact net zero through collaboration. The research mobilises the strategy literature, with a focus on strategy as practice. Methodologically, primary data is generated around two case projects through semi-structured interviews with key decision makers within a leading global built environment sustainability consultancy. As the empirical research unfolded, the focus became how a commercial six-stage process had emerged through strategic practice between the built environment sustainability consultant and their investor-side clients. Using open coding we explore key moments in the strategic co-creation of this six-stage process, to translate the language of engineering retrofit requirements into terms understood and adopted by investor-side stakeholders. Findings resonate with the strategy as practice themes of practitioners, practices and praxis and are thus tensioned against notions of objective rationale choices and acontextual solutions to meet often ill-conceived targets and KPIs. Tensions arise around the need for rolling cohesive programmes of retrofit and annual budgeting norms. The research illustrates further work is needed to understand the challenge organisations face in navigating the retrofit for net zero agenda and creating appropriate solutions*