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

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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