

Greening the South African economy: Scoping the issues, challenges and opportunities

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1. ACTUALITY OF BOOK TITLE

The title of the book deals with a very relevant focus, namely greening the South African economy. Practitioners, developers and related role players such as decision makers are aware of the need to integrate the greening debate in planning and implementation activities. The title is thus addressing an important focus in transforming planning and development thinking and approaches.

2. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT

The book represents the first comprehensive publication on the greening of the South African economy and can justifiably be considered a paradigm shift and watershed in mainstreaming greening as a central theme in economic growth, development and strategy formulation. It is globally recognised that the role of greening is key to planning and development in both developed and developing countries. It informs the greening research agenda that is fundamental to the role of planners in planning the development and growth of spatial systems.

The editors summarise the content in terms of three broad focuses: emergency policy frameworks; assessing these policy frameworks, and offering critical perspectives to realise structural transformation.

The publication thus deals with relevant themes and greening issues underpinning various disciplines involved in benchmarking and guiding economic planning and development within the national spatial system.

The content of the book is structured in five distinctive parts or themes:

- Part 1: Rationale for the green economy.
- Part 2: Resources, extractivism and production.
- Part 3: Infrastructure transitioning.
- Part 4: Investing in the green economy.
- Part 5: Changing futures.

This elaborate research output includes 24 chapters authored by renowned contributors in the context of the above themes. The contributors are experts in their respective fields of research and represent the full spectrum of the research fraternity and themes involved in the greening debate. The diversity of the research themes is indicative of the complexities underlying the width and depth of the debate.

The editors specifically do not claim to cover all the different aspects or dynamics in the debate on the greening of the economy. Notwithstanding this qualification, the content covers all themes (not necessarily in great depth) and is considered a standard research work for academics, researchers and practitioners to guide and direct more detailed research and contribution. Decision makers will also benefit from the content and focus dealt with competently and effectively by the editors and contributors.

The book may thus be classified as the most comprehensive and complete research output on greening the economy published in South Africa. It may be considered an important milestone in bringing the diversity of greening economic development into the mainstream of research in all related disciplines (environmental, social, economic, spatial, and developmental). It is not restricted to a specific narrow field of research, but it is also forging the way in which the green planning thinking, debate and supporting research should be developed and guided.

The content and context of the book is transdisciplinary in nature and covers a well-focused research output of significance to all disciplines, inclusive of a wide range of themes and fields of specialisation related to the green planning discourse.

3. VALUE AND CONTRIBUTION

In the greening economy debate, the value and contribution of the book lies in the diverse content, context and relationship provided by the various topics, thus indicating the complexities involved in such a debate. These topics are well packaged into the themes contained in the five parts, and support a central line of thinking and argument for the reader or researcher. It provides a sound context for further debate and research. The composition of the book is well designed to culminate in deepening the green economy discourse in South Africa, as is evident from the book's Introduction. It ensures new insight related to the issues, challenges and opportunities in mainstreaming the greening debate.

The book clearly demonstrates that the greening debate goes beyond existing theory and practice. Based on international approaches and linked to national reality, the book reinforces the way in which both private and public sector developers should think about and approach integrative planning and development in the greening.

This integrative greening debate should address the issues, challenges and opportunities through paradigm shifting, strategy formulation, and implementation planning. It should provide the context and structure to transform current thinking, approaches and debate on how to guide and redress the greening of the South African economy in all related sectors.

The editors explain the meaning of 'greening' the economy, by utilising Death's (2014) distinctive features of the green economy discourses, inclusive of the green revolution; the green transformation; green growth, and green resilience. The editors (through the research work of the contributors) maintain that the main features and characteristics of each of Death's distinctive features of the green economy discourses are evident in South Africa in terms of the Green Accord and, to some extent, the National Development Plan (NDP).

However, the NDP serves as the integrated focus of development in South Africa in terms of specific programmes and actions. The contribution of the book relates to the need to rethink the NDP and its central development focus in terms of the broader greening debate as reported on. In this regard, global and local realities are well articulated.

The editors agree with Death's (2014) statement that achieving the green orientation in South Africa will require large-scale structural changes. They also provide further insight into the debate and the present discourse:

- The emphasis should be on green structural transformation with growth in the context of the developing country.
- The green economy forms part of a wider sustainability-oriented just transition, which includes not only decarbonisation and resource efficiency, but also redistributive measures that reduce inequality and eradicate poverty.
- Green jobs should be part of the distinct discourse, as currently promoted by some government departments, labour groups and civil society organisations.
- The role of green resilience as transformative discourse

should be promoted, as illustrated by current discussions in the international resilience community and research literature.

In addition to the above, the editors' contribution is underpinned by their elaboration on, and understanding of an interpretation of 'greening the economy' with a well-focused clarification of the following concepts and principles: green economy; green growth; green jobs; sustainability-oriented just transitions; shifts in terminology and discourse; why greening is required; how green is the government's current development policy approach; how can transition be achieved, and what are the potential obstacles to greening.

The editors succeed in addressing, interpreting and overviewing the concepts by framing them in terms of applicable theory, policies, and practice. The output provided in the various chapters is cleverly integrated in terms of the reality and challenges to be addressed in greening the South African economy.

From a global perspective, the authors and contributors of the various chapters are instrumental in the international greening debate and agenda from a South African and developing economy perspective. The book is well positioned within the current transformative debate in South Africa in terms of present political realities such as land ownership, water, energy, and mineral resources issues.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

The book further provides an integrated framework for the development of new policies, supportive legislative framework, developmental and spatial planning as well as redistributive implementation. It serves as an integrated, coherent, wide-ranging research output guided by applicable theory, issues, challenges and opportunities to mainstream the greening debate.

The book enables stakeholders, governments, communities, policymakers, economic sectors, researchers, professions and

disciplines to understand the context within which greening, as the central focus, needs to be viewed, assessed, and planned for. It illustrates that greening is more than a way of thinking. It depends on a comprehensive reality that should inform management, development, planning and implementation actions. It illustrates that it is time for governments to create an enabling environment to conduct and implement the greening focus, responsibility and application within all sectors, governments, communities with a sense of urgency, responsibility and accountability.

An issue that needs to be addressed in promoting the concept of greening includes reviewing the existing policy and legislative framework to enhance green planning and development comprehensively in the context of the output, as contained in the book. It should incorporate applicable planning and development guidelines and instruments to measure progress, implementation and introduction of possible improved alignment measures.

5. CONCLUSION

The book will be of value to academics at both under- and postgraduate level, researchers, practitioners, government departments, stakeholders and the public, all professions and disciplines, communities and non-governmental organisations. The education, training and empowerment of these role players should be developed in the context of an integrated greening paradigm shift agenda, transforming current practices, promoting new ways of alternative thinking, planning, and implementation (development). The book is highly recommended to all stakeholders concerned in attaining sustainability and resilience in all spatial systems. It serves as a comprehensive reference work for all those locally and internationally involved in promoting the greening agenda and discourse.