

Review

If, as an engineer, you aspire to have a positive impact on the lives of those around you, this book has plenty to offer, concludes **Sinéad Conneely**.

Building inclusion: a practical guide to equity, diversity and inclusion in architecture and the built environment

Author: Marsha Ramroop

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NECESSARY READING for the leaders of all forward-thinking consultancies in the built environment, Marsha Ramroop's book, *Building inclusion*, will make you reconsider what you think you know about yourself as a person and as an engineer.

Structured as a guide to creating an inclusive practice, it is written largely with architects in mind, but the principles are transferrable and

relevant to an engineering practice. Over the first four chapters, the author explains and backs up with case studies the importance of developing an inclusive culture within a business. The idea that diverse teams outperform homogenous teams has been gaining traction in recent times in organisational psychology, but Ramroop highlights the need for an inclusive culture to harness the power of diverse teams.

The author emphasises the importance of leadership's role in creating inclusive environments, as well as a willingness to be held accountable and to be OK with feeling uncomfortable doing so. For engineers already in leadership roles, this book can serve as a tool for supporting your ongoing growth as someone in a position of power and influence over the culture that develops in your team or practice.

For engineers at any level who may believe you have no biases, you'll be surprised to find that you are, without a shadow of a doubt, wrong. Chapter 3 is about taking personal responsibility for your own behaviour and is relevant for an engineer at any stage in their career. The most interesting takeaway for me was the author's approach to unconscious bias training – seemingly it doesn't work. Instead, she outlines the benefits of creating a culture of feedback and, again, emphasises the need for leadership to be willing to get uncomfortable when doing so.

Another concept she discusses is that of psychological safety. She explains the performance benefits of teams that feel comfortable saying 'no' to each other and to leadership. The author's explanation of psychology and organisational concepts and frameworks that aren't common language in the engineering or architecture world is easy to follow and understand and well backed up with real-life examples. Anyone interested in being involved in creating a more equitable workplace will take something useful from this book.

There are lots of references to external resources, including QR codes

to gain instant access to relevant blogs, podcasts and tools that can be used to further one's learning on the topics discussed. It was refreshing to metaphorically step away from the book and listen to a real-life conversation between the author and an expert in cultural intelligence before diving back in.

The later chapters are more externally focused from a practice perspective, looking at procurement and the supply chain, inclusive design and community engagement. These might be most relevant for those already running a practice, but for junior engineers wondering how they can add the most social value with their day-to-day work, they do hold some benefit. When a structural engineer understands the social value that could be delivered on a project, they might slightly adjust the way they approach potentially contentious issues, such as column locations and materiality. The balance between sustainability and social value is something we weigh carefully in our practice, and having an involvement in the community engagement process really strengthens this for our engineers.

In short, this is an engaging and worthwhile read for any engineer who wants to have a positive impact on the lives of those around them.



Sinéad Conneely

Sinéad is a co-founder and director of Simple Works, a London-based structural engineering practice known for its innovative and community-centric approach. With a robust analytical background, Sinéad specialises in computational design, workflow scripting, and project delivery, all underscored by a commitment to social sustainability.

