

Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering

Mahdi Kioumarsi
Behrouz Shafei *Editors*

The 1st International Conference on Net-Zero Built Environment

Innovations in Materials, Structures, and
Management Practices

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Mahdi Kioumarsi • Behrouz Shafei
Editors

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Innovations in Materials, Structures,
and Management Practices

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Preface

The *1st International Conference on Net-Zero Built Environment: Innovations in Materials, Structures, and Management Practices* was successfully held on June 19–21, 2024, in Oslo, Norway. This conference was part of the *Net-Zero Future* project sponsored by the Research Council of Norway and the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills. Through the referenced project, a unique international alliance was formed among Norway, the United States, Germany, South Africa, and India to conduct collaborative research and educational activities toward achieving a net-zero built environment, capitalizing on mutual interests and the diversity of practices. This alliance is in line with sustainable development goals, such as quality education, industry and innovation, sustainable cities, climate action, and partnerships.

The pressing global challenges associated with the degradation of the built environment due to mounting stressors and, on the other hand, the environmental footprint of growth in the built environment serving communities have necessitated a profound transformation in how we design and develop our infrastructure. Civil engineering is the primary field responsible for infrastructural development and is at the forefront of this transformation. The conference series on Net-Zero Built Environment: Innovations in Materials, Structures, and Management Practices has been dedicated to exploring the concept of net-zero within the realm of civil engineering and a variety of relevant domains, emphasizing the critical importance of achieving a net-zero carbon footprint in our built environment.

Net-zero in the built environment refers to the knowledge and practice of delivering, maintaining, and managing civil infrastructures that produce zero net carbon emissions throughout their lifecycle. This ambitious goal requires a holistic effort, encompassing methodological approaches to design, construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning. This motivated us to establish three main themes for this conference series, capturing innovations in materials, structures, and management practices. The first conference of this conference series attracted a large group of participants from the academic, industry, and public sectors, presenting the latest developments in each of the identified main themes.

After a rigorous peer-review process performed by the conference's international scientific committee members and other expert reviewers, 158 full-text papers have been selected to be included in this book. The selected papers represent a diverse group of authors and research groups from around the globe, providing original perspectives and insights into how we can pave the way toward a net-zero built environment. Converging on this ultimate goal, the selected papers offer the latest advances in (i) new materials and manufacturing processes for zero carbon footprint, (ii) robotic construction technologies for minimum formwork and on-site activities, (iii) novel structural designs and details for optimal performance with the least materials, (iv) advanced condition assessment and health monitoring strategies, and (v) innovative life-cycle analyses and civil infrastructure management strategies.

We recognize that achieving net zero is not merely a development goal but a moral imperative to ensure a sustainable future for all. Reducing carbon emissions can help stabilize temperature patterns, decrease the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and protect vulnerable ecosystems. All who contributed to this book share the same passion to positively impact the communities around the world. Through the dissemination of the latest findings and innovations, this book's main themes and individual chapters directly contribute to the net-zero domain. By equipping scientists, engineers, policymakers, and the general public with relevant knowledge and expertise, we hope to collectively drive a global transition toward a net-zero future.

Oslo, Norway
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Mahdi Kioumarsi
Behrouz Shafei

Contents of Volume I

An Experimental Study of Consistency and Strength Variation of 3D-Printed Concrete Mixes	1
Dmitry Vysochinskiy, Gunnar Madsen, and Ingrid Lande	
Three-Dimensional Printing of Fly Ash-Based Geopolymer Materials	13
Shaurav Alam, Stephen Gordon, Blake Bassett, Kevin Cobb, Brandon Jefferson, Nnamdi Nwoha, Tanvir Manzur, Kelly Crittenden, and John Matthews	
Material Stories: Assessing Sustainability of Digital Fabrication with Bio-Based Materials Through LCA	25
Giuliano Galluccio, Martin Tamke, Paul Nicholas, Tom Svilans, Nadja Gaudillière-Jami, and Mette Ramsgaard Thomsen	
Increasing the Incorporation of CO₂-Sequestering Materials in Concrete	39
Alexander Mezhov, Bright Asante, and Wolfram Schmidt	
Developing Eco-friendly Ultra-High-Performance Concrete by Utilizing Recycled Alternatives	49
Jennifer Wivast, Anette Nyland, Saeed Bozorgmehr Nia, Mahdi Kioumars, and Behrouz Shafei	
Reducing the CO₂ Footprint of UHPC Through Portland Cement Substitution	59
Ingrid Lande, Andrej A. Sørensen, Martin Hagen, and Rein Terje Thorstensen	
Investigation of Lightweight Ultra-High-Performance Concrete for Net-Zero Solutions	71
Amir Ramezani and Behrouz Shafei	

Carbonation of Hydrated Blast Furnace Slag Cement Powder: Characterization and Application as a Cement Substitute	81
Hamideh Mehdizadeh, Mohammad Hajmohammadian Baghban, and Tung-Chai Ling	
Performance of Metakaolin-Based Alkali-Activated Mortar for Underwater Placement	93
Joud Hwalla, Mariane Saba, Joseph Assaad, and Hilal El-Hassan	
Production of CSA Clinker Using Municipal Solid Waste Incineration Fly Ash as a Main Raw Material	105
Carlos Andrés Bedoya-Henao, Oscar Jaime Restrepo-Baena, and Jorge Iván Tobón	
Feasibility Study of Precoated Binder-Type Electric Arc Furnace Oxidizing Slags as Aggregates for Cement Mortar	117
Wei-Ting Lin, Andīna Sprince, Marek Hebda, Gábor Mucsi, An Cheng, and Huang-Hsing Pan	
Early-Day Effects of Graphene on NA_2CO_3: Activated GGBS Concrete	131
Yongcong Zhao, Meini Su, and Yong Wang	
Numerical Modeling of the pH Effect on the Calcium Carbonate Precipitation by <i>Sporosarcina pasteurii</i>	141
Shiva Khoshtinat and Claudia Marano	
Exploring the Potential Utilization of Silicon Manganese Slag as a Supplementary Cementitious Material for Cement Replacement in Developing Low-Carbon Composite Binders	155
Dileepa Hettiarachchi, S. M. Samindi M. K. Samarakoon, Kjell Tore Fosså, Kidane F. Gebremariam, and Mahmoud Khalifeh	
Understanding Carbon-Negative Potential of Hempcrete Using a Life Cycle Assessment Approach	169
Sejal Sanjay Shanbhag and Manish Kumar Dixit	
Use of the Fine Fraction from High-Quality Concrete Recycling as an Alternative Cement Substitute	183
Laurena De Brabandere, Vadim Grigorjev, Philip Van den Heede, Hannah Nachtergaele, Krist Degezelle, and Nele De Belie	
Discussion of Physical Performance of Hydraulic Lime and Oyster Shell-Based Mortars	195
Poliana Bellei, Inês Flores-Colen, Isabel Torres, and Manuel F. C. Pereira	

CO₂ Capturing of Aggregates Extracted from Alkali-Activated GGBS Concrete	205
Syamak Tavasoli and Wolfgang Breit	
Application of Iron Mine Waste Rock as an Innovative Cement Replacement Material in Mortar	219
Bruna Figueiredo Cezar, Margareth da Silva Magalhães, and André Rocha Pimenta	
Feasibility of Utilizing Treated Domestic Wastewater (TDW) for the Production of Concrete	231
Hans Beushausen, Zaid Manuel, Joanitta Ndawula, and Dyllon Randall	
Compressive Characteristics of Perforated Re-entrant Auxetic Steel Honeycomb–Mortar Composite	245
Emmanuel Owoichoechi Momoh, Mohammad Hajsadeghi, Amila Jayasinghe, Raffaele Vinai, Prakash Kripakaran, John Orr, and Ken E. Evans	
An Experimental Investigation on Using Seawater in Sustainable Mortar Mixtures	259
Shekhar Saxena, Harald Justnes, and Mohammad Hajmohammadian Baghban	
Effect of Recycled Aggregate Utilization on Strength Properties of Lightweight Concrete Facade Having a Self-Cleaning Characteristic	269
Hatice Gizem Şahin, Hatice Elif Beytekin, and Ali Mardani	
The Use of Recycled Construction and Demolition Waste in Low-Strength Concrete Brick and Block Production: A South African Perspective	279
Jaziitha Simon, Hans Beushausen, and Mark Alexander	
Scaling Effect on Mechanical Property of Calcium Silicate Hydrate in Cement Using Reactive Molecular Dynamics	293
Jie Cao, Chao Wang, Jaime Gonzalez-Libreros, Yongming Tu, Lennart Elfgren, and Gabriel Sas	
Exploring the Impact of Silica-Rich Calcined Clay as Portland Cement Additive to Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions	303
Mohammed Seddik Meddah and Ola Najjar	
Enhancing Strength and CO₂ Uptake into Mortar Through Supercritical CO₂ Treatment	315
Gregor Kravanja and Željko Knez	

Effects of Superabsorbent Polymers and Natural Zeolite in the Properties and Pore Structure of Ultra-High-Performance Concretes	327
Yuxiang Tan, Weizhuo Shi, Bo Li, and Yung-Tsang Chen	
Performance Evaluation of the Quantification of Cement Microphases Using Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy Imaging	341
Anuradha Silva, Shanaka Baduge, and Priyan Mendis	
Effect of Discarded Rubber Tire Crumbs and Tile Ceramic Waste Powder on Workability and Strength Properties of Geopolymer Concrete	353
Iman Faridmehr, Ghasan Fahim Huseien, Mohammad Hajmohammadian Baghban, and Håvard Lund	
Advancing Toward Net Zero: The Role of Fibers in Sustainable Concrete Construction	367
Raymond Pepera and Behrouz Shafei	
Environmental Assessment of Fiber-Reinforced Self-Compacting Concrete Containing Class-F Fly Ash	377
Behnoosh Khataei, Masoud Ahmadi, and Mahdi Kioumarsi	
Strengthening Brick Masonry Structures with Natural Fiber Elements for Enhancing Earthquake Resistance	389
Manisha Kushwaha, Kusum Saini, and Vasant Matsagar	
Mechanical Reinforcement of Building Materials with Microfibers Produced by Electrospinning	403
Habtom Daniel, Omar Mohamed Omar, Mahdi Kioumarsi, Shima Pilehvar, and Rafael Borrajo-Pelaez	
Affordable Phase Change Materials in Lightweight Concrete Walls for Superior Hygrothermal Performance	415
Saeed B. Nia, Raymond Pepera, and Behrouz Shafei	
Effects of Low-Carbon Binders on the Mechanical and Thermal Properties of Biobased Insulation Materials	425
Houssam Affan, Badreddine El Haddaji, and Fouzia Khadraoui	
The Effect of Phase Change Materials (PCM) on the Thermophysical Properties of Cement Mortar	437
Iman Asadi, Guomin Ji, Gerald Steiner, and Mohammad Hajmohammadian Baghban	
Thermal Performance Characterization of Recycled Textile-Based Materials for Building Insulation	449
Alessandro Dama, Esra Abdelhalim Mohamed Khalfallaand, Andrea Alongi, and Adriana Angelotti	

Temperature-Dependent Dual-Operation Mode for Energy Tunnel Integrated with Phase-Change Materials in Geothermal Environment	461
Qiling Wang, Jiaolong Zhang, Peng Xiao, Xi Chen, Eddie Koenders, and Yong Yuan	
Effect of LightweightMasonry on Life Cycle Energy: A Case Study of Residential Buildings in India	475
Pradip Sarkar and Nikhil P. Zade	
Seasonal Waste Heat Storage in Energy-Efficient Finnish Apartment Buildings	489
Janne Hirvonen, Santeri Sirén, and Piia Sormunen	
Optimization of Native Wood Fibre Insulation Board Through LCA Analysis	499
Angela Daniela La Rosa, Gaute Thomassen, and Petter Erlandsen	
Dynamic Characterization of Indian Pond Ash Through Cyclic Simple Shear Tests	511
Ghanta Naga Sireesha and Prishati Raychowdhury	
Analysis of the Mechanical Behavior of Rammed Earth Mixes Using Soft Computing Methods with an Emphasis on Sustainability	525
Aryan Baibordy, Mohammad Yekrangnia, and Fatemeh Khodabakhshian	
Towards Circular and Sustainable Insulation Solutions: Resolving Uncertainty in the Thermal Conductivity of Mycelium-Based Composites (MBCs)	539
Joni Wildman, Andrew Shea, Daniel Henk, Martin Naido, and Pete Walker	
A Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Ordinary Portland Cement, Limestone Calcined Clay Cement and Mining Waste Marl Cement	551
Yasmine Rhaouti, Yassine Taha, and Mostafa Benzaazoua	
R³ Reactivity Test on Biochar from Pyrolyzed Green Waste, Wood Waste, and Screen Overflow	563
Maximilian Mayer, Neven Ukrainczyk, and Eduardus Koenders	
Low Carbon-Oriented Concrete Mix Optimization Using Ensemble Learning and NSGA-II	575
Lin DENG and Xueqing Zhang	

Preliminary Environmental Assessment of Ultra-High-Performance Concrete Mixtures	589
Leila Farahzadi, Saeed Bozorgmehr Nia, Behrouz Shafei, and Mahdi Kioumars	
Compressive Strength Gain of Glass Powder–Portlandite: An Investigation Toward Maximizing the Use of Waste Glass as Cement Replacement in Concrete	599
Gaurav Chand, Mithila Achintha, and Yong Wang	
Impact of High-Strength Low-Alloy Steel in Reducing the Embodied Water of Buildings: A Case Study	611
Manish Dixit, Pranav Pradeep Kumar, and Sarbajit Banerjee	
Environmental Impact of Timber Concrete Composites: An Overview	623
Alemayehu Darge Dalbiso and Mohammad Haj Mohammadian Baghban	
Influence of Spatial Coarsening of Pore Space in Porous Asphalt on Simulated Infiltration for Enhanced Stormwater Management	635
Rebecca Allen	
Controllable Generation of Porous Microstructures Through Generative Adversarial Networks	647
Jakob Torben and Kai Bao	
Marine-Based Photocatalytic Protection of Building Envelopes on Behalf of Climate Change	659
Jéssica Deise Bersch, Ana Paula Soares Dias, Denise Dal Molin, Angela Borges Masuero, and Inês Flores-Colen	
Importance of Optimally Combining Binder Types and Rebar Cover in Reducing Lifetime CO₂ Emissions in RC Structures	673
Sakib Hasnat and Tanvir Manzur	
Corrosion Risk Assessment of Bridges in Oslo, Norway, Based on Visual Inspection	687
Amirhosein Shabani, Wahid Amin, and Sven Kirschhausen	
Reducing the Carbon Footprint of New Reinforced Concrete Structures in Aggressive Environments: From Real Experience to Future Applications	697
Juan Daniel Cassiani Hernandez and Sylvia Keßler	
Misconceptions Around Strength Requirements for Concrete Repair Materials and Related Sustainability Issues	707
Nicholas Jarratt and Hans Beushausen	

The Use of Electrodeposition Technology to Promote Self-Repairing of Cracks in Concrete: A Mini Review	719
Mohammed H. Alzard and Hilal El-Hassan	
Predicting Dry Shrinkage Using Machine Learning Methods	731
Peyman Khodabandeh, Fazel Azarhomayun, Mohammad Shekarchi, and Mahdi Kioumars	
Reducing Carbon Footprint of RC Structure in Saline Exposure: Bangladesh Perspective	739
Nazmus Sakib Pallab, Mahin Sultana, Saadman Sakib, Amrita Barua,, and Tanvir Manzur	
Upcycling of Single-Use Pallet Wood to Cross-Laminated Timber	751
Niels H. Vonk, Jan Niederwestberg, Ron W. A. Oorschot, and Jan de Jong	
Designing Eco-Friendly Materials Intended for Repairing Reinforced Concrete Structures	765
Karim Belmokretar, Kada Ayed, Nordine Leklou, Djamel El Ddine Kerdal, Mohammed Mouli, and Meftah Allal	
Multicriteria Performance Index Analysis of Geopolymeric and Cementitious Screed Flooring Materials	779
Joud Hwalla, Hilal El-Hassan, Joseph Assaad, and Tamer El-Maaddawy	
CO₂ Reductions Utilising Self-Stressing Steel Fibre Reinforced Concrete	791
Martins Suta, Liga Gaile, and Rolands Cepuritis	
Evaluation of the Compressive Strength of Fly Ash- Based Geopolymer Concrete Using Machine Learning	801
Maryam Bypour, Mohammad Yekrangnia, and Mahdi Kioumars	
Sustainable Enhancement of Lightweight Concrete: A Comprehensive Investigation into GGBS and Waste Steel Fiber Incorporation for Improved Strength and Durability	813
Babak Behforouz, Davoud Tavakoli, Behrouz Naderi, and Mohammad Hajmohammadian Baghban	
Life Cycle Assessment of Geopolymer Concrete Made with Tailings from Ilmenite Mining	821
Simon Brekke and Reyn O’Born	
Performance Evaluation of Recycled Concrete Aggregates as Drainage Material in Combination with Geosynthetics for Landfill Cover Systems	831
Sayeeda Syed and Anumita Mishra	

Bio-Based Polymer Composites Used in the Building Industry: A Review	843
Chinyere O. Nwankwo and Jeffrey Mahachi	
Decarbonizing Conventional Building Materials for Net-Zero Emissions: A Feasibility Study in Canada	855
Chi Dara	
Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Service Life of Concrete Infrastructures	867
Gro Markeset	
Review of South African Waste Management Practices and Their Integration into the Construction Industry	879
Areej Gamiieldien, Hans Beushausen, and Mark Alexander	
Advancing Sustainable Construction Materials: Wood and Rubber Geopolymer Masonry Mix Development	889
Firesenay Zerabruk Gigar, Amar Khennane, Jong-leng Liow, Safat Al-Deen, Biruk Hailu Tekle, Cooper J. Fitzgerald, Anthony Basaglia, and Charlie Webster	
Optimizing the Embodied Carbon of Concrete, Timber, and Steel Piles with a Case Study	899
Kareem Abushama, Will Hawkins, Loizos Pelecanos, and Tim Ibell	
Suitability of Excavation Clay Wastes for Sustainable Earthen Construction	913
India Harding, Sripriya Rengaraju, and Abir Al-Tabbaa	
Machine Learning Integration in LCA: Addressing Data Deficiencies in Embodied Carbon Assessment	927
Ming Hu, Chaoli Wang, Siavash Ghorbany, Siyuan Yao, and Ali Nouri	
A Case Study of Sustainable Resource Management Through Reuse of Building Materials	941
Sunniva Baarnes and Emma Zheng Liang	

Contents of Volume II

Circularity Index and Benchmarks for Buildings: A Novel and Transferable Approach to Evaluating the Circularity Performance Tested in a Norwegian Context	955
Marianne Kjendseth Wiik, Freja Nygaard Rasmussen, Shabnam Homaei, Kristin Fjellheim, Anne Sigrid Nordby, and Reidun Aasen Vadseth	
Smart Technologies: New Perspectives for the Heritage Environment	967
Marta Calzolari, Pietromaria Davoli, and Valentina Frighi	
Energy Efficiency Through Building Renovation: A Study of Challenges and Solutions	981
Sina Moradi, Janne Hirvonen, Natalia Lastovets, and Piia Sormunen	
Enhancing Climate Resilience in Mixed-Mode Buildings: A Study of Hybrid Ventilation Strategies in a Cold Climate	991
Mehrddad Rabani, Guilherme B. A. Coelho, and Arnkell Jonas Petersen	
Recent Progress in Net-Zero-Energy Buildings in Tropical Climates: A Review of the Challenges and Opportunities	1003
Mengesha Asefie Mengaw, Wubishet Jekale Mengesha, and Habtamu Bayera Madessa	
BREEAM Excellent and Zero-Emission Educational Building: A Case Study on Energy Performance and Indoor Climate Evaluation	1015
Emma Zheng Liang, Bente Hellum, Carl Fredrik Melle, Adrian Spoletini, and Hermann Sliper Langeteig	
Sustainable Metamodules. Disseminating Sustainable Practices in Design Workflow Via BIM-Based Approaches	1027
Fabio Conato, Ilaria Spasari, and Habtamu Bayera Madessa	

REVERT Framework: Stakeholder Perspective to Enable Circular Transformation of Construction Industry 1039
Hafize Büşra Bostancı, Ali Murat Tanyer, and Guillaume Habert

Integrated Technical Building Installations for Zero-Emission Building 1051
Emma Zheng Liang and Habtamu Bayera Madessa

Urban Heat Islands in the Urban Built Environment: Quantifying the Spatial Patterns of UHIs Intensity in Oslo, Norway, Using High-Resolution Crowdsourced Weather Observations 1063
Joanna Badach, Guilherme B. A. Coelho, Dimitrios Kraniotis, and Peter Schild

Achieving a Net Zero Built Environment: The Need to Focus on Urban Green Footprint 1075
Wahidul K. Biswas, Gordon D. Ingram, and Michele John

The Effect of Student Active Learning on Awareness of Students on Environmental Impacts of Material Selection for Building Application: A Case Study 1089
Mohammad Hajmohammadian Baghban

Urban Waste Recycling: A Multi-objective Approach for Sustainable Construction in European Regions 1097
Anastasija Komkova, Sophie Krog Agergaard, Birgitte Holt Andersen, and Guillaume Habert

Sustainability and Uncertainty in Collaborative Project Delivery 1111
Kristoffer Brattegard Narum, Per Morten Kals, and Ola Lædre

Future-Proofing Energy Infrastructure: Power Grid Risk Assessment 1125
Muneer Qudaisat, Dela Houssou, William Gallus, and Alice Alipour

Energy Communities for the Decarbonization of Historical Villages: A Case Study in Italy 1137
Silvia Brunoro and Emanuele Piaia

Reducing Energy Consumption Through Energy Monitoring Systems: A Case Study in Norway 1149
Emma Zheng Liang, Sergey Paramonov, and Habtamu Bayera Madessa

Sustainable Service Ecosystems in Positive Energy Districts: A Conceptual Framework to Steer Long-Term Impacts 1159
Anna Viljakainen, Katri Valkokari, Mari Hukkalainen, and Tytti Nikunen

Evaluation of Train Travel Inside Submerged Floating Tunnel Under Wave Loads	1173
Jian Dai and Paban Acharya	
Exploring Multilevel Governance Networks in Deployment of Positive Energy Districts: Case of Salzburg	1185
Caroline Cheng and Savis Gohari	
Risk Management and Fault Detection Methods in Building Energy Renovation	1199
Natalia Lastovets, Janne Hirvonen, Mohamed Elsayed, and Piia Sormunen	
Measurement and Verification Framework for Clusters of Buildings: A Comprehensive Approach to Validating and Quantifying Savings in Large-Scale Building Interventions	1207
Georgios Siokas, Athanasios Balomenos, Evangelos Fekas, Georgios Triantafyllis, and Yannis Kopsinis	
An Unmanned Aerial Vehicle-Based Digital Twin Framework for Inspection and Assessment of Bridge Structures	1221
Ibrahim Odeh and Behrouz Shafei	
Circular Bio-based Walls: Applications and Challenges	1231
Valeria Cascione, Barrie Dams, Matt Roberts, Andrew Shea, Dan Maskell, Stephen Allen, Pete Walker, and Stephen Emmitt	
Assessing the Global Warming Potential of a Novel Hybrid Timber-Based Façade System Through Life Cycle and Considering Future Climate Conditions	1243
Guilherme B. A. Coelho, Elsa Buvik, Haidar Hosamo, and Dimitrios Kraniotis	
Optimal Use of UHPC in Wall Systems to Mitigate Windborne Debris Hazard	1257
Abhijit Kulkarni and Behrouz Shafei	
Assessment of the Structural Potential of Nonconventional Material Alternatives in Shear Walls	1265
Mohammad Haseeb Qureshi, Sarosh Raja Nawaz, Amirhosein Vakili, Mahdi Kioumars, and Behrouz Shafei	
Non-Destructive Assessment of Reclaimed Timber Elements Using CT Scanning: Methods and Computational Modelling Framework	1275
Martin Tamke, Tom Svilans, Johannes A. J. Huber, Wendy Wuyts, and Mette Ramsgaard Thomsen	

Sustainable Preservation and Evaluation of Burnt Brick Masonry Structures Through Condition Assessment and Retrofitting Techniques	1289
Lakshmi Latha and Samit Ray-Chaudhuri	
Framework for Quality Documentation for Reusing Structural Timber Components	1301
Hussna Satar Janjua, Amne Haura Al-Shorayer, Erik Løhre Grimsmo, Dimitrios Kraniotis, and Allen Tadayon	
Structural Response of CLT Bridge Decks to Heavy Vehicle Loads: A Serviceability Evaluation	1313
Emil Lindersson, Mohammed Askari, Amirhosein Vakili, Justin Dahlberg, Mahdi Kioumars, and Behrouz Shafei	
Composite Facade with Timber and Concrete Connected by Bonding	1323
Roufaida Assal, Laurent Michel, and Emanuel Ferrier	
Operational Modal Analysis and Finite Element Model Updating of the Naillac Tower in Rhodes, Greece	1335
Amirhosein Shabani and Amir Hossein Karimi	
Structural Analysis of Glulam Frame of a Modular Timber–Aluminium Hybrid Façade System in Nordic Climate	1347
Katarzyna Ostapska, Johannes Brozovsky, Domas Valiukas, and Eimantas Tinginys	
Performance Evaluation of Glass Fiber-Reinforced Polymer (GFRP) Bars in Bridge Decks	1361
Shadi Azad and Behrouz Shafei	
Numerical Study of a Hybrid Timber–Concrete Floor System	1371
Themistoklis Tsalkatidis and Mohand Morchid Alhussain	
Influence of Openings on Seismic Failure Mechanism of URM Infilled RC Hill Buildings	1381
Z. Naorem and P. Haldar	
Seismic Collapse Risk of Stone Masonry Buildings in the Indian Himalayas	1395
Ravi Shastri, Samit Ray-Chaudhuri, and Yogendra Singh	
Machine Learning-Aided Prediction of Seismic Response of RC Bridge Piers Exposed to Chloride-Induced Corrosion	1409
Pooria Poorahad Anzabi, Mahmoud R. Shiravand, and Shima Mahboubi	
Analytical and Numerical Approaches in Predicting the Flexural Behaviour of Reinforced Concrete Beams	1423
Chinyere O. Nwankwo and Jeffrey Mahachi	

Sustainable Method for Determining Shear Strength Parameters by Machine Learning	1437
Jnanendra Vijay Kumar Chorapalli and Soukat Kumar Das	
Transforming Asphalt Quality Evaluation: A Digital Twin Exploration Using Microcomputer Tomography and MATLAB Analysis	1451
Aya Kassem and Berthe Dongmo-Engeland	
Sustainable Vibration Screening with Dual Trenches Infilled with Geofoam and Aggregate: Full-Scale Field Experiments	1463
Pradipta Chakraborty, Nitish Jauhari, Raja Kumar, and Diego Maria Barbieri	
Exploring the Predictive Performance of Simple Regression Models and ANN in 2D Truss Analysis	1473
Vagelis Plevris, Alejandro Jiménez Rios, and Usama A. Ebead	
Resource-Efficient and Climate-Friendly Design of Concrete Structures Through Advanced Structural Safety Concepts	1487
Ramon Hingorani and Jochen Köhler	
Optimizing Corbel Reinforcement Through Nonlinear Analysis: Determining Superiority of Steel Bars or CFRP	1501
Ali Kheyroddin, Shakiba Raygan, and Mahdi Kioumars	
Dynamic Behavior of Imperfect FGM Beams with Various Porosity Distribution Rates: Analysis and Modeling	1515
Lazreg Hadji, Vagelis Plevris, and Royal Madan	
Design Optimization to Minimize Material Usage in Steel Buildings Subjected to Lateral Loads	1529
Bahareh Dokhaei, Dikshant Saini, Behrouz Shafei, and Alice Alipour	
Intensity Measures for Flood Hazards in Fragility Assessments of Bridges	1539
Tahereh Torabi, Behrouz Shafei, and Alice Alipour	
Life Cycle Carbon Assessment Methods for Structural Materials in Bridges	1549
Alessandro Sterpellone, Randi Christensen, Arne Frederiksen Bæksted, and Julie Rønholt Lange	
Data-Driven Decision-Making for Road Maintenance in Norway	1563
Henri Giudici	
Bridging the Shift from Linear to Circular Economy in Road Infrastructure: The Norwegian Stakeholders' Perspectives on Challenges and Opportunities	1573
Alexander Grødum Vetnes and Reyn O'Born	

A Transition to Sustainable Built Environment: A Framework for Modular Building Construction Designed for Disassembly 1585
Bilkisu Ali-Gombe, Serik Tokbolat, and Jon Mckechnie

Towards Net-Zero Construction Projects by Applying BIM-Enabled Circular Economy 1597
Ana Julie Foseid Bjerke and Omar Amoudi

Advancing Sustainability Through Structural Optimization: Innovations in Material Efficiency and Environmental Impact Reduction 1611
Vagelis Plevris, Abdulaziz Almutairi, and Alejandro Jiménez Rios

Unleashing the Potential of AI in Sustainable Urban Planning and Design 1625
Arefeh Mortzavi Rad, Elsa Haagenzen Karlsen, and Mohammed Nazar

Tactical Urbanism: A Means of Enacting Mobility Transition? A Literature Review of International Practice 1635
Jarvis Suslowicz and Helge Hillnhütter

Emergy Framework, from Building Stock Model to Retrofit Model: A Study in Mexico’s City Public Office Buildings 1649
Ivett Flores

Exploring Urban Mobility Trends Using Cellular Network Data 1661
Oluwaleke Yusuf, Adil Rasheed, and Frank Lindseth

Evaluating Digital Citizen Participation in Smart Cities 1675
Aashish Adhikari, Mahgol Afshari, Dave Collins, Alenka Temeljotov Salaj, and Agnar Johansen

Emission-Based Relocation Strategies for Mobile Prefabrication Factories 1687
Jianxiang Ma, Andrea Revolti, Lorenzo Benedetti, Edwin Zea Escamilla, and Guillaume Habert

Sustainability Potentials of the Precast Industry in Kenya 1699
Joseph Mwiti Marangu, Andrew Onderi Nyabuto, Thomas Pfeiffer, Sabine Kruschwitz, Christoph Völker, and Wolfram Schmidt

Prefabricated Vertical Drain-Supported Railway Embankment on Thick Marshy Deposit: A Case Study of Udaipur Railway Station Project, Tripura, India 1711
Samrat Ghose and Arindam Dey

Citizen Engagement and Co-creation in a Net-Zero Built Environment Transitions: Challenges and Best Practices 1725
Christian Wolfgang Kunze, Alemu Moges Belay, Ahmed Samir Hedar, and Aaditya Dandwate

Life Cycle Analysis of Floating Offshore Wind Turbine Concepts	1739
Ramin Shakori and Arnab Chaudhuri	
Life Cycle Management and Probabilistic Levelized Cost of Energy Analysis of Floating Offshore Wind Farms	1749
Hadi Amlashi and Omid Lotfizadeh	
Sustainable and Carbon Neutral Built Environment Through ECBC Compliance	1761
Anil Kumar and Rohit Thakur	
Nyhavna: A Harbour Area on Its Way to Climate Neutrality: Empirical Insights and Learnings for Different Stakeholders	1773
Marianne Skaar, Lars Arne Bø, and Judith Thomsen	
Leadership and Orchestration of PED Projects: An Organizational Perspective	1787
Micol Pezzotta and Anders Riel Müller	
Navigating Sustainability: Engineers' Views Within the Norwegian Construction Industry	1801
Izma Ahmad, Kristine Lilleløyken, Zdravka Savcheva, Makarena Saavedra, and Allen Tadayon	
Post-Project Evaluation: A Perspective on Effective and Sustainable Healthcare Design	1815
Laura Sacchetti and Roberto Di Giulio	
Framework for Combined Life Cycle Environmental, Economic, and Social Assessment of Reclaimed Construction Products	1829
Camille Vandervaeren, Selamawit Mamo Fufa, and Nilay Elginöz	
The Renaissance of Reuse in Norway: The Future Is Back	1841
James Kallaios and Camille Vandervaeren	
Applying Value Engineering Function Analysis to the Process for Building Disassembly and the Recovery of Wood and Timber for Construction	1855
Raymond L. Sheen	
Carbon Trading for the Construction Industry: A Systems Theory Approach	1869
Augustine Senanu Komla Kukah, Xiaohua Jin, Robert Osei-Kyei, and Srinath Perera	

SirkTRE's Evolution or Circulation?: Diverse Pathways of Circular Systemic Solutions for a Net-Zero Timber-Built Environment	1881
Wendy Wuyts, Nhat Strøm-Andersen, Shumaila Khatri, Arild Eriksen, Per F. Jørgensen, Arild Øvergaard, Emil Rygh, Angelica Kveen, Alexander Mertens, Jannicke Stadaas, Inger Gamme, Veronique Vasseur, Anders Q. Nyrud, and Kristine Nore	
Design Science Research for Digital Information Management System (DIMS) in Construction and Demolition Waste Management	1897
Ali Nader Saad, Jason Underwood, and Juan Ferriz-Papi	
Construction Industry and the Circular Economy: A Systems Analysis	1907
Raymond L. Sheen	
Assessing the Environmental Benefit of Circular Economy Decisions for Managing Waste in Road Construction: The Norwegian GoGreen Case Study	1921
Reyn O'Born and Alexander Vetnes	
Index	1933

Towards Net-Zero Construction Projects by Applying BIM-Enabled Circular Economy



Ana Julie Foseid Bjerke and Omar Amoudi

Contents

1	Background	1597
2	Concept of Circular Economy	1598
3	Research Methodology	1600
4	Data Analysis and Findings	1601
5	Discussion	1603
6	Conceptual Framework	1605
7	Conclusion	1606
	References	1607

1 Background

The built environment is currently in a dire moment of change to achieve further sustainable solutions and to reduce the carbon footprint [1–3]. The Linear economic model has been predominantly adopted in the construction industry, in addition to the introduction of recycling of construction waste. In alignment with the findings in UNEP [4] where the built environment was found to account for 39% of the global carbon emissions. Giorgi et al. [5] stated that linear economic models and recycling are no longer a solution due to limited resources available. The concept of the CE is relatively new and generating further recognition across many respective fields, including the construction industry [6]. Some existing challenges interluding the further adoption of CE principles within the AEC industry include but not limited to;

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the traditional construction and design strategies, construction and demolition waste management, poor supply chain management, Ignorance of End-of-Life (EOL) principles, lack of regulations and strategies to encourage the adoption of the CE principles, lack of collaboration, and lack of information exchange of CE practices (AI [7, 8]).

Building Information Modelling has been a vital element in the construction industry allowing for improved communication, collaboration, and interoperability in construction projects. Digitalisation, especially BIM as a promising tool, facilitates the collaboration between project teams to incorporate and manage information of building processes that may lead towards more sustainable construction projects, and reinvents contemporary design [9]. This paper aims to assess the potential utilisation of BIM as an enabler to achieve further implementation of CE principles within the built environment. BIM's role, when aiming to achieve CE-related goals within construction projects, is to be clarified, showing the emerging challenges and barriers, recommendations, and key findings.

2 Concept of Circular Economy

Ellen MacArthur Foundation [10] founded the 3Rs principles that describe circular economy processes to facilitate the transition towards more circularity: reduce, recycle, and reuse. Stated in the works of Ellen MacArthur Foundation [11], CE is a regenerative economy where the target is to retain the highest values for products and materials in a permanent circular system for their optimal reuse, recycling, remanufacturing, and refurbishment. In general, CE illustrates the impact on the economy that natural resources sustain, and give further insight into waste, production, economic systems, and waste within the construction industry [12]. Xue et al. [13] proposed the alignment of CE principles and the technical requirements within the construction industry in terms of resource mass consumption. Similarly, Suárez-Eiroa et al. [14] found supporting evidence that the adoption of CE concept maintains the economic growth, creates further job opportunities, and reduces CO₂-emissions. Conclusively, CE maintains and retains added high value in materials, products, and components in a restorative and regenerative design system until their EOL [15, 16].

2.1 Digitalisation and Enabling CE Adoption

Digitalisation is considered as one of the key enablers of CE as it offers improved intelligence, information management, design and construction process visibility, and condition of assets and products. This in turn assists in managing resources and the facility information and reduces the uses of resources [17, 18]. Another key enabler is the 3DR index coined by O'Grady et al. [19]: Disassembly,

Deconstruction, Resilience. Enabling the principles of 3DR generates increased knowledge on implementation of CE in the context of transforming waste into new suitable resources. Furthermore, O'Grady et al. [19] found emerging benefits in all stages within a project's lifecycle when 3DR is applied. Digitalisation could hold a significant role in empowering the 3DRs, because these principles require strong information management which could be missed or mis-coordinated if the traditional tools/practices used for managing the information is required. Depending on the traditional tool of storing and managing information could lead to more errors in the 3DRs processes, that results in extra cost and more waste.

2.2 Challenges Facing CE

The biggest challenges facing the adoption of CE in the construction industry, is the lack of knowledge and awareness among project parties, lack of clear design incentives for reuse of assets and materials' EOL, and lack of the concept of design for disassembly [20–22]. Purchase et al. [23] found other challenges prohibiting the further adoption of CE principles that include poor governance, high cost, lack of awareness and poor information management, and lack of clear specifications on recycled assets and materials.

The existing structure and characteristics of the construction industry were mentioned by Adams et al. [20] as leading to the fragmentation within the supply chain, which is again one of the key barriers facing the CE implementation [24]. Fulford and Standing [25] found that the efficiency and productivity are severely impacted by the supply chain fragmentation within the construction industry and the lack of standardisation. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of standardisation and apply it properly into projects, BIM emerges as a tool to meet the continuous improvement that standardisation acquires. Bradley et al. [26] found BIM use is commonly applied for any standards in projects where the BIM model is utilised for design purposes, rather than using 4D and 5D BIM model for cost and programme management. It is a requirement in the construction industry for standardisation regarding BIM, which is found within the exchange information between used software applications [27]. BIM's flexibility could provide the tools to monitor and manage the required sustainability measures in terms of waste reduction during the building's entire lifespan [28].

2.3 Synergies Between BIM and CE

The current use of BIM during an asset's life cycle could enhance the possibility of recovering the asset's history in the events of partial or whole destruction in an asset refurbishment, which is one of the current existing synergies between BIM and CE [29]. It is argued by Göswein et al. [30] that dependent factors already in use within

the built environment, such as facility and design management, resource management, and waste management, altogether sustain the synergy currently between BIM and CE. BIM utilisation for waste management is already enabling some of these factors such as quantity take-off, site utilisation planning, 3D coordination and planning, digital fabrication, phase planning, and design review [31]. Performing a BIM-Deconstructability Assessment Score allows for the further enabling of BIM as a tool for Circularity to prolong the EOL of materials, additionally with the use of as-built BIM models for building operations and maintenance using laser scanners [32, 33]. Previous research could identify the as-built BIM models as tools for cost analysis for demolitions plans in selected waste systems including design for disassembly, assets, and waste management [34, 35].

2.4 Barriers and Opportunities of Current BIM-Enabled CE Principles

To help the Built Environment shift from the linear economic model to the circular economic model, Hai et al. [36] suggested assessing benefits such as increased CE awareness and improved recycling rates to aid this shift. Enhancing the building's performance by encouraging further usage of BIM to match EOL assessments of projects, will reduce waste and help preserve the embodied energy in construction projects [37]. Xue et al. [13] found in general that the widespread use of BIM and LCA within the construction industry to not being fully applied. Existing concerns regarding BIM-enabled CE revolve around the whether industry professionals obtain sufficient BIM knowledge, BIM competency, and BIM software training, and the BIM documentation and models in cloud-share collaboration [6]. However, Göswein et al. [30] purport that the main challenges facing BIM-enabled CE are lack of data, poor procedures, and interoperability issues. It is clear that several studies referred to the potential relations between BIM features and the principles of the CE. This will be further explored in this paper.

3 Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study was a simple mixed methodology consisting of a quantitative and qualitative approach to obtain the primary data through two stages: (1) A questionnaire survey and (2) An interview. A pilot study was carried out to validate both the questionnaire survey questions and interview questions. The questionnaire survey was employed to obtain professionals opinion on the current use of BIM in the industry, its use with link to sustainability practices, and its potential use to enhance CE principles. Thirty-seven questionnaire responses were received where the 3 biggest positions at 20% each were identified as working as BIM Modeller or Coordinator, Architects, and Engineers as shown in Fig. 1.

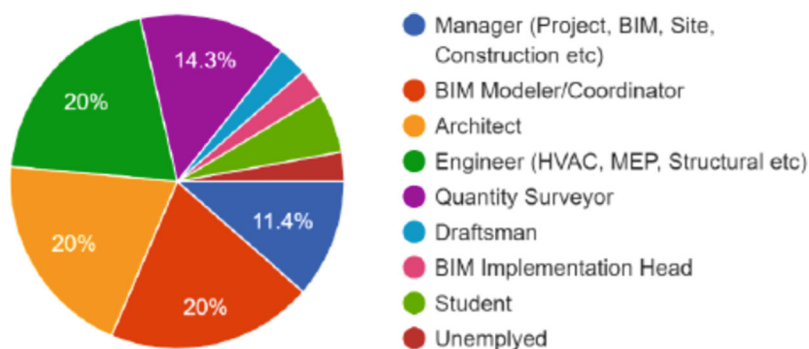


Fig. 1 Participants' current role within their organisations

Then, five interviews were carried out with experts (i.e. 2 BIM Managers, 2 BIM Coordinators, and 1 Asset Manager) to explore in depth the potential utilisation of BIM in facilitating the adoption of CE in the AEC industry. The collected data from the questionnaire survey was statistically analysed to demonstrate the significance of various variables in each theme. Then, thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data collected from interviews. Then, a conceptual framework is produced to show the potentials of BIM in facilitating the CE in the AEC industry.

4 Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Current BIM Practices

Invaluable BIM insights were provided by the participants as a total of 62% of the participants were revealed to be directly involved in the daily utilisation of BIM, and they could reveal the main utilisation of BIM is for design purposes as shown in Fig. 2. However, the use of BIM for waste recycling, reuse of building components, and deconstruction receives less importance and understanding on how to use BIM for these practices.

4.2 Awareness of CE

In general, the participants' perception of the CE was for recycling and reuse of construction elements and materials. It can be seen from Fig. 3 that there is significant awareness of the participants with a score of 77% on the utilisation of the 3Rs (recycle, repurpose, reuse) which is already applied in construction projects, with the other common CE principles such as design for lessened energy consumption and prefabrication of elements.

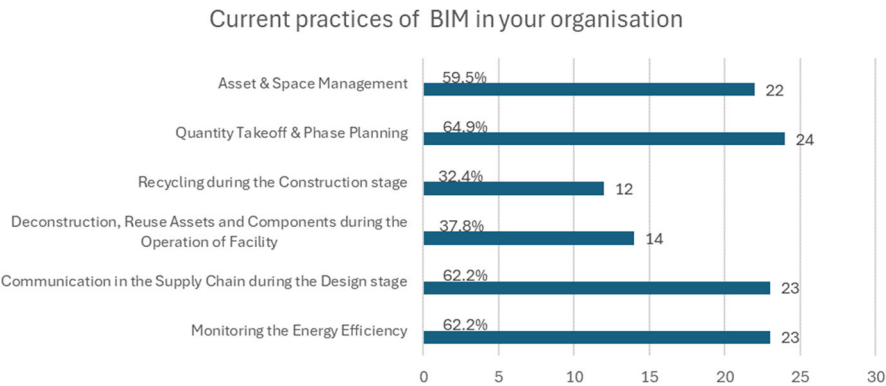


Fig. 2 Current practices of BIM in your organisation

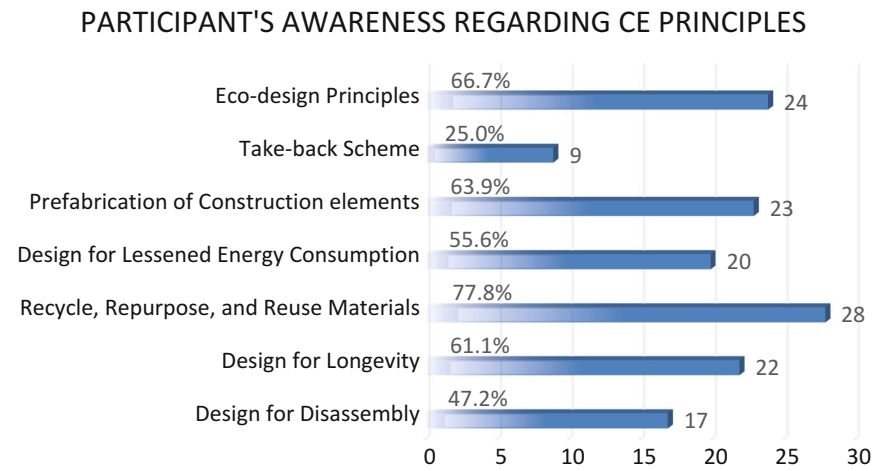


Fig. 3 Participant’s awareness regarding CE principles

4.3 Perceived Benefits from Utilising BIM as a Tool for Circularity

Figure 4 demonstrates the participants’ perceived benefits for construction projects adopting BIM for facilitating the CE principles include; improved interoperability and communication within the supply chain, improved life cycle cost estimation of assets, and standardisation using BIM in projects. The general recommendation is the need for a general shift in the paradigm in addition to complete EOL review when BIM is used. This is aligned with 3 out of 5 interviewees who stated that BIM has high potential in facilitation circularity as quoted by one professional: ‘We’ve had success applying principles such as Design for Disassembly, mainly due to the

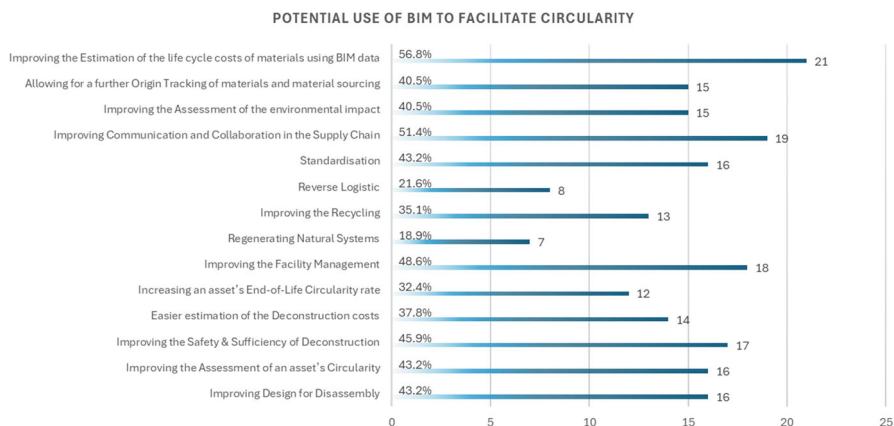


Fig. 4 Potential use of BIM to facilitate circularity

central origin of data and information BIM provides'. And another quoted: 'We used BIM in a recent project to develop digital twin to optimise and stimulate the building energy performance. Due to the creation of that digital twin. It allowed us to alter the design swiftly and assess the sustainability metrics. This resulted in the achievement of a LEED Platinum certification for our organisation'.

The results reveal there is a reasonable awareness on the potential use of BIM to facilitate circularity within the AEC industry. However, there are some barriers such as the absence of demands to apply the CE principles from clients, professional bodies, and the government. This is aligned with Charef's [6] finding. Additionally, the client was identified as holding the main responsibility for the encouragement and development for adopting CE within built environment projects. It was suggested that stakeholders might not comprehend the desired awareness and knowledge of the CE principles to enable it.

5 Discussion

BIM utilisation was identified by all interviewees to foster stakeholders' communication and collaboration that yields a sustainable work environment for improved, sustainable construction projects, which aligns with Kuzina's [38] suggestion of enabling BIM for life cycle management. 4 out of 5 of the interviewees reported on BIM generated benefits includes material and energy efficiency, energy simulation, risk analysis, cost savings, improved design and decision making. Sustainability efforts emerging from their organisations BIM use was energy analysis, data integration, resource management, and design optimisation.

In terms of stakeholder engagement and perception of BIM's sustainability potential, 80% of the interviewees could acknowledge that the perception among

stakeholders varies due to differences in knowledge, willingness, and adjustment to adopt BIM completely for sustainable procedures. Among the identified barriers were legal concerns, change resistance, high cost, and complete knowledge of BIM. Designers, engineers, and architects demonstrate a high interest in enabling the complete sustainable potentials that BIM offers. One of the interviewees suggested that to combat stakeholders' reservations, BIM specialists could display the benefits to gain further support from stakeholders. One of the interviewees suggests the identified barriers could be solved by organisations introducing proper data integration and BIM training.

Sixty per cent of the interviewees agreed to the existing alignment between the CE principles and the BIM features in the construction industry that can be found in procedures such as resource efficiency, and material consumption, selection and tracking. BIM was particularly identified as an enabler for practices of Design for Disassembly (DFD), with an interviewee describing the emerging success within a project with DFD was solely due to the central origin of project information data provided by BIM. Although, another interviewee stated that BIM in 4D which is very useful for resource utilisation in various locations in construction projects, is a level of BIM maturity yet to be seen. Eighty per cent of the participants stated that increased building performance and waste reduction are the two commonly witnessed BIM enabling the CE principles. Interviewee 4 particularly stated that their use of digital twin allowed for quick design alterations and assessment of sustainability metrics yielding their organisation's a LEED Platinum certification.

A total of 60% of the interviewees identified security, management, quality, and data interoperability to be the most common areas to causes challenges when BIM was promoted for sustainability efforts and CE procedures. One interviewee stated the main issue was still resistance and sceptics among stakeholders. Interviewee 4 provided valuable insight of the further need of complete demonstration of BIM's advantages to combat these challenges, that aligned with Charef's [6] common user concern including the lack of BIM expertise and knowledge within the project team.

Applicable demonstration of BIM's benefits will gain further awareness and decrease the occurrence of challenges. This concern was discovered by Xue et al. [13] on how BIM in coordination with a LCA is not utilised to its desired outcome. Applying standardisation and BIM training was suggested by 20% of the interviewees to prevent these challenges, where standardisation was found promising in Poljanšek [27] for exchange information in the application of different software.

Emerging examples of BIM-enabled CE principles, also found by Kevin van Langen et al. [39], are reported by all interviewees, including economic growth, reduced carbon footprint, lessened energy consumption, lessened environmental impact, and reduced costs on a material, operational, and constructional level. This theme is in accordance with what was purported by Manzoor et al. [40], that BIM offers a vast selection of tools to enhance that sustainability in construction projects. Based on the above findings, in the following section a proposed conceptual framework is produced to demonstrate the potential relationship between BIM features and circularity principles within the built environment.

6 Conceptual Framework

A proposed framework presented in Fig. 5 is developed in combination with the analysis and results emerging from the above existing literature and data analysis, in order to display how the competencies of BIM can aid the further adoption of the CE principles in the BE. The various BIM competencies are highlighted in colours on the left, and the CE principles are located on the right hand side in non-coloured segments. Highlighted texts in red within the links between BIM competencies CE principles show the facilitated outcome that in the link could achieve sustainable aspects within the CE principles.

The conceptual framework in Fig. 5 sheds light on the existing gap between the competencies of BIM and the CE principles, in exhibiting an interconnection that could aid further sustainable approaches, resilient projects, and resource efficiency within the BE. BIM’s data driven capacities aligns with procedures to achieve CE, and the framework can be used as a practical tool by industry professionals and stakeholders to analyse and navigate for more sustainable, net-zero carbon projects. For example, ‘data and information management’ as one of the key BIM

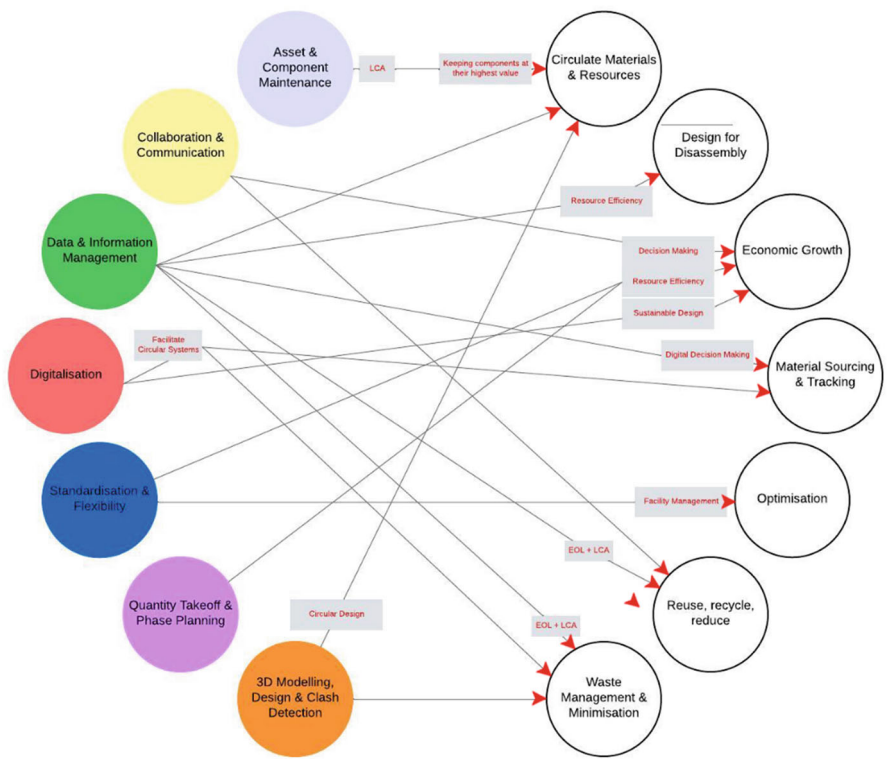


Fig. 5 Links between BIM Competencies and the CE principles

competences plays a crucial role in enabling ‘Design for Disassembly’, ‘tracking materials and provide information on life span and circularity’, and updating the data on ‘reuse, recycle, reduce principles’ which in turn enable waste management and minimisation. No doubt DfD and Standardisation goes hand in hand, which are essentials for circularity, reuse, repurpose and waste minimisation. The potentials of using BIM to enable circularity principles are many and difficult to cover them here.

Vital synergy, patterns, and themes between the BIM competencies and the CE principles can be identified when applying the framework which facilitates through knowledge of current synergies and challenges within the AEC sector. Critical insight emerging from the framework: circular strategies, collaboration & communication, design for adaptability, decision-making, efficiency gains, interdependence of competencies and principles, and lifecycle perspectives.

7 Conclusion

The most vital role as an enabler can be found in stakeholders and their resilience to apply BIM requirements that facilitate and foster sustainable procedures, and the shared BIM model’s data allows for sufficient interoperability between stakeholders. To achieve BIM-enabled CE principles within the BE, it is crucial that stakeholders, and mainly the client, encourage various construction project participants to increase their training of BIM’s use and explore its wide potentials. These findings align with both relevant literature and the suggested growing interest of BIM-enabled CE principles for preservation of embodied energy and waste reduction, and reports of increased recycling rates that occur when shifting to a Circular Economic Model.

Some of the frequently used BIM competencies emerging from the data include asset & space management, communication & collaboration in the supply chain, energy efficiency management, phase planning, and quantity take-off. These competencies enable the possibility of design and resource optimisation, deconstruction, energy analysis for operational costs and waste reduction, material sourcing and tracking, and displays the interconnection between BIM and CE principles. As seen in the conceptual framework, these links can facilitate the proper adoption of circularity in construction projects. Emerging from the qualitative data, most frequent principles of CE currently utilised within the BE include the 3Rs, design for eco-principles, design for lessened energy consumption, design for longevity, and prefabrication of construction elements. Furthermore, the findings of this research and the proposed conceptual framework could be used as a basis for further research and investigation, where some case studies could be used to demonstrate the most significant contributions of BIM towards enhancing circularity and sustainability within the built environment.

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