

Harnessing Emerging Technologies for a Resilient and Sustainable Construction Industry

Babatunji Adegoke (Nigeria)

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SUMMARY

Abstract

Objectives: The construction industry is evolving through the gradual integration of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3D printing, and sustainable building materials. This paper explores how these innovations influence project efficiency, cost management, and sustainability within the broader pursuit of resilient and sustainable infrastructure. The study also assesses how these technologies can be contextually applied in Africa—where economic volatility, skills shortages, and regulatory complexities challenge sustainable development.

Methods:

A qualitative analytical approach was adopted, drawing insights from global best practices, case studies, and professional experience within the African construction industry. The paper reviews applications of AI in project planning, safety management, and cost prediction; evaluates early examples of 3D-printed construction; and examines sustainability strategies rooted in traditional and local building practices. It also explores institutional and regulatory frameworks that affect technology adoption and project execution.

Results:

Findings reveal that AI enhances construction productivity by automating design processes, predicting project outcomes, and supporting data-driven decision-making. While fears of professional displacement exist, the study argues that AI will complement rather than replace human expertise—augmenting professional judgment, creativity, and oversight. 3D printing, though

still limited in Africa, shows promise for affordable mass housing, as demonstrated by pilot projects such as the \$10,000 printed home in Malawi. However, its high capital cost and potential employment impacts require careful policy alignment. Sustainability, often narrowly interpreted as “green building,” is redefined here as a holistic framework encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Traditional methods—such as natural ventilation, use of local materials like bamboo and raffia, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings—demonstrate how indigenous knowledge can advance sustainability affordably.

Conclusions:

Emerging technologies have the potential to reposition the construction industry as a driver of sustainable and resilient infrastructure. However, realizing this potential requires balancing innovation with contextual realities. Policymakers must promote technology-friendly regulations, invest in technical training, and encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to bridge funding and capacity gaps. By integrating digital tools with local resources and sustainable design, the construction industry can foster infrastructure that is not only efficient and cost-effective but also environmentally responsible and socially inclusive—paving the way toward a truly resilient built environment in Africa.