ABC2: Journal of Architecture, Building, Construction, and Cities

Empowering research for Sustainable Development Goals, ABC2: Architecture, Building, Construction, and Cities is a fundamental manifesto to address these pressing issues, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Exploring sustainable design, resilient infrastructure, advanced construction methods, and equitable urban development, ABC2 aims to empower the global community to create adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable environments. The ABC2 focus on cutting-edge research, technological advancements, and transformative strategies is essential for navigating the future of our cities and communities.

Editorial Article

Bridging Disciplines, Building Futures: Launching ABC2 as a Platform for Architecture and Built Environment Research

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Abstract

This editorial introduces *ABC2: Journal of Architecture, Building, Construction, and Cities* as a scholarly response to the escalating complexity of global built environment challenges. Rapid urbanisation, climate change, resource depletion, housing crises, and social inequality demand a departure from fragmented, discipline-specific research approaches. The editorial argues that prevailing academic silos—separating architecture, building science, construction management, and urban studies—limit the capacity of research to address these interconnected issues holistically. ABC2 is positioned as a trans-disciplinary platform designed to bridge these divides by cultivating "knowledge spaces" where theoretical, methodological, and practical perspectives intersect. Drawing on the complementary expertise of its editors-in-chief, the journal foregrounds both human-centred and technology-driven approaches, integrating socio-cultural inquiry with digital innovation. The editorial outlines ABC2's vision, scope, and ethical commitments, emphasising rigorous peer review, research integrity, and open-access dissemination under a Creative Commons licence. It also introduces the journal's three article types and highlights its alignment with global sustainability agendas, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The inaugural issue exemplifies this vision through geographically diverse and methodologically plural contributions spanning cities, buildings, construction systems, and architectural experience. Collectively, these articles demonstrate how boundary-crossing research can generate actionable knowledge with real-world relevance. The editorial concludes with a call to action, inviting scholars, practitioners, and policymakers worldwide to contribute to a shared, integrated knowledge base capable of shaping more sustainable, resilient, and equitable built environments.

Keywords: Architecture; Building; Construction; Cities; Transdisciplinary research; Built environment; Knowledge spaces; Sustainability

Highlights

- Launches ABC2 as an integrated platform bridging architecture, building, construction, and cities.
- Introduces the "knowledge spaces" framework to overcome disciplinary fragmentation.
- Emphasises ethical, open-access, and practice-relevant research with global impact.

1 The Imperative for Integrated Built Environment Research

The built environment continues to encounter many challenges. Rapid urbanisation continues to reshape our cities at unprecedented scales, with projections indicating that approximately 70% of the global population will live in cities and urban areas by 2050. Simultaneously, the climate emergency warrants serious and committed transformations in how we design, construct, and operate our future built environment. The construction sector accounts for approximately 37% of global energy-related carbon emissions, while buildings consume 40% of raw materials extracted globally. All these challenges are coupled with pressing housing crises, heritage deterioration, socioeconomic inequality, and environmental depletion. Evidently, the business-as-usual is no longer acceptable.

These interconnected challenges require a dramatic departure from siloed approaches. They require knowledge that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, research that bridges theory and practice, and scholarship that speaks simultaneously to academics, professionals, and policymakers. Yes, in many cases, our academic journals mirror the fragmentation of the disciplines themselves and the audience they speak to. Architecture journals focus on design and cultural discourse, construction journals emphasise project delivery and management, building science journals concentrate on technical performance, and urban studies journals examine city-scale phenomena. While they make significant contributions within their knowledge domains, the spaces between these disciplines remain underexplored areas where some of the most pressing questions can be located.

Clearly, it is this gap that ABC2: Journal of Architecture, Building, Construction, and Cities aims to address. We launch this journal with a belief that the complexity of contemporary built environment challenges requires an integrated response, which embraces trans-disciplinarity as a fundamental choice and operating principle. The title of the journal itself signals this commitment, bringing together four domains that are typically treated as separate realms when they are, in essence, indivisible dimensions for a unified understanding of the built environment.

As co-editors-in-chief, we bring complementary perspectives to this endeavour. The extensive work of Ashraf Salama spans architecture and urbanism with emphasis on design pedagogy, human-environment interactions, social sustainability, and architecture in emerging cities of the global south (Salama, 2015; Wiedmann and Salama, 2019). His scholarship on decolonising architectural knowledge (Harriss et al., 2022; Salama & El-Ashmouni, 2020), utilising digital technology in assessing urban open spaces (Salama and Patil 2024; Patil et al., 2024) and theorising knowledge production in Architectural and built environment research (Salama, 2022) offers vital foundations for how we conceptualise the mission of ABC2. The significant work expertise of Farzad Rahimian in digital engineering and manufacturing, encompassing Building Information Modelling, artificial intelligence, digital twins, and Construction 4.0/5.0 technologies (Park et al., 2023; Rahimian et al., 2020), represents the cutting edge of technological innovation, clearly supporting sustainability and NetZero agendas through data-driven building performance optimisation (Seyedzadeh & Pour Rahimian, 2021), digital twins for lifecycle management (Adu-Amankwa & Rahimian, 2023), and retrofit strategies for net-zero targets (Okonta & Rahimian, 2024). Both are leaders of two highly acclaimed peer-reviewed journals: *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* and *SASBE: Smart and Sustainable Built Environment*. These backgrounds cover the human-centred and the technology-driven, the theoretical and the applied, the socio-cultural and the computational dimensions of the built environment, echoing the integrative principles that ABC2 embodies.

2 ABC2's Vision: Cultivating Knowledge Spaces Beyond Disciplinary Boundaries

ABC2 is envisaged as more than another addition to the academic publishing landscape in architecture and built environment research. It represents a conscious, deliberate effort to create a platform where diverse perspectives converge, where theoretical insights inform practical applications, and where

research findings are captured into meaningful impact for the overall benefit of the future built environment. Drawing upon conceptual frameworks developed in previous scholarship (Patil & Salama, 2024; Salama, 2022), we conceive ABC2 as cultivating knowledge spaces, which are defined as domains characterised by diversity in ontological interpretations of reality and plurality in epistemological approaches to inquiry. These knowledge spaces possess transparent, blurred borders that encourage cross-fertilisation while maintaining sufficient definition to guide focused investigation. They are spaces of possibilities and anticipation of growth, evolution and development.

Our aim is to empower the development of knowledge that advances the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while addressing the most pressing challenges facing the built environment today and in the future. Full details of the journal's aims and scope are available at:https://abc2.net/index.php/journal/about. The focus reflects this vision of interconnected knowledge spaces across four domains.

Under ***Architecture***, we welcome contributions exploring the human, cultural, technical, and environmental dimensions of design, from architectural pedagogy and biophilic design to heritage conservation and the role of architecture in social equity. Under ***Building***, ABC2 addresses technological and operational aspects, encompassing building performance analysis, indoor environmental quality, smart building technologies, and life cycle assessment. Under ***Construction***, ABC2 focuses on methodologies and innovations that improve efficiency and sustainability, including circular economy approaches, AI and robotics integration, and advanced construction management techniques embracing the digital transformation of the industry (Park et al., 2023; Rahimian et al., 2020). Finally, under ***Cities,*** ABC2 interrogates urban design, planning, and governance, covering a wide spectrum of issues, which range from affordable housing and climate-adaptive strategies to smart cities and participatory planning.

This focus is intentionally permeable, and we recognise that the most compelling research emerges at the intersections between these domains. We actively encourage such boundary-crossing scholarship that generates new knowledge spaces at these important and relevant intersections. Equally vital is the ABC2 commitment to bridging the theory-practice divide. While academic rigour remains non-negotiable, we seek research that speaks to real-world challenges, instigates societal and environmental implications, and offers insights relevant to architecture and built environment practices and industries. This means that ABC2 welcomes contributions that integrate theoretical frameworks with empirical investigations, case studies that develop generalisable lessons, and critical analyses that inform policy development.

Our editorial leadership and advisory board embody the preceding interdisciplinary and international vision. As co-editors-in-chief, we bring complementary expertise in architecture, urbanism, and digital engineering, supported by Dr Faris Elghaish as Managing Editor, whose work in construction management and digital integration bridges multiple domains, along with Assistant Editors Dr Mina Najafi and Dr Madhavi P. Patil, whose work extends to city and urban scale and places emphasis on environment-behaviour studies and human-environment interactions.

The journal benefits immensely from an Editorial Advisory Board comprising eminent scholars whose collective expertise spans continents and disciplines. This includes leaders in construction management and digital innovation such as Professors Clinton Aigbavboa (University of Johannesburg), Abiola Akanmu (Virginia Tech), and Mirosław J. Skibniewski (University of Maryland); distinguished figures in architecture and urban design including Professors Kheir Al-Kodmany (University of Illinois Chicago), Nikos A. Salingaros (University of Texas San Antonio), and Emeritus Professor Tomasz Arciszewski (George Mason University); experts in sustainable building and technology such as Professors David Edwards (Birmingham City University), Suresh Renukappa and Subashini Suresh (University of Wolverhampton); specialists in digital design and BIM including Professors Ipek Gurcel Dino (Middle East Technical University) and Ümit Işıkdağ (Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University); authorities on inclusive design such Professor Phillippa Carnemolla (University of Technology Sydney); scholars

addressing regional and urban perspectives such as Professors Abeer El-Shater (Ain Shams University) and Chansik Park (Chung-Ang University); and architectural policy expertise through Dr Selma Harrington of the Architects Council of Europe. This distinguished board ensures that published research maintains relevance across academic, professional, and policy spheres while sustaining the highest scholarly standards.

3 Our Commitment to Research Excellence and Integrity

Excellence in research requires intellectual ambition, and it demands robust systems, clear standards, and firm ethical principles. ABC2 has established comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure the highest quality of published scholarship while maintaining transparency and integrity throughout the editorial process. Check our policy framework on the journal's platform, which offers detailed guidance on all aspects of research ethics and publication standards.

Our submission process accommodates three article types, each serving distinct purposes. Research Articles of up to 10,000 words present considerable scholarly investigations, assessed on originality, potential to advance knowledge, broader relevance across disciplines, and methodological rigour. Review Papers, extending to 14,000 words, offer authoritative analyses of recent advancements while critically evaluating literature, identifying knowledge gaps, and challenging traditional perspectives to inspire new research threads. Perspective Articles of 6,000 words provide analysis or commentary on emerging topics while offering flexible formats for thought-provoking insights that stimulate dialogue and innovation. Check our author guidelines on the journal's platform.

All submissions undergo rigorous double-blind peer review, ensuring impartial evaluation based on scholarly merit. Our peer review process adheres to the highest standards of fairness, confidentiality, and constructive critique, as detailed in our Peer Review Process and Standards Policy. Research ethics is at the core of our editorial approach, guided by our comprehensive Research Ethics and Integrity Framework.

We require full ethical approval for studies involving human participants or animals, with clear statements in manuscripts regarding compliance with institutional, national, and global guidelines. Authors must disclose potential conflicts of interest and funding sources through our Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Policy to ensure transparency which allows readers to evaluate research within its full context. We maintain zero tolerance for research misconduct, following the recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) in addressing any concerns on data falsification, plagiarism, or breaches of confidentiality, as outlined in our Research and Publication Misconduct policy.

As an open-access journal operating under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), ABC2 ensures that research findings reach the widest possible audience without financial barriers. Our Open Access Policy and Licensing Framework outlines how authors retain copyright while granting us rights of first publication. This commitment to open access reflects our belief that research addressing urgent global challenges should be freely available to all who can benefit from it, whether academics in resource-limited institutions, practitioners seeking evidence-based guidance, or policymakers developing informed strategies.

4 Introducing the Inaugural Issue

The inaugural issue of ABC2 demonstrates ABC2 commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship addressing real-world challenges across diverse geographical contexts. The five articles span all four domains of our scope while establishing how integrating theoretical frameworks with empirical investigation, advanced computational methods with practical applications, and global perspectives with local insights generates new knowledge spaces at disciplinary intersections.

Urban Infrastructure, Quality of Life, and Pro-Tourism Behaviour: Evidence from Turkistan City, Kazakhstan: Mamirkulova and Zhang (2025) investigate gender-sensitive dynamics of urban development in Turkistan, Kazakhstan. Through structural equation modelling of survey data, they reveal that female residents demonstrate stronger positive reactions to infrastructure development in both perceived quality of life improvements and pro-tourism behaviours. This research contributes to the ***Cities*** knowledge space by highlighting how sustainable tourism development should account for gender considerations in infrastructure planning, offering evidence-based guidance for policymakers in emerging tourism destinations where such empirical research remains limited.

Prototyping an AI-powered Tool for Energy Efficiency in New Zealand Homes: Baghaei Daemei (2025) addresses the challenge of translating national energy policies into household-level action. The study presents an AI-powered decision-support prototype that integrates data ingestion, anomaly detection, baseline modelling, and scenario simulation into a user-friendly dashboard. Assessed by fifteen domain experts, the tool demonstrated strong usability and high perceived value. This work exemplifies how artificial intelligence can democratize access to building performance expertise within the ***Building*** knowledge space, offering a replicable framework for reducing energy hardship while supporting decarbonization targets.

Probabilistic Feature-based Grading and Classification System for End-of-Life Building Components Toward Circular Economy Loop: Meng et al. (2025) introduce the Multi-Level Grading and Classification System (MGCS), an adaptive probabilistic framework evaluating end-of-life building components. Combining Bayesian modelling with scenario-specific thresholds, the system assigns quality grades and then determines optimal intervention classes, guiding strategic decisions for reuse, up-use, or down-use. A critical innovation lies in the sensitivity of this scenario, where a single component can be accurately valued for multiple potential afterlives, maximising economic and environmental potential. For the ***Construction*** knowledge space, this work addresses environmental, economic, and operational challenges of end-of-life management through an extendible design elucidating pathways toward standardising reuse decisions across diverse engineering contexts.

Gesture-based Survey Design for Evaluating Indoor Spatial Experience in Extended Reality: Choi et al. (2025) address a methodological gap in the assessment of buildings, where Extended Reality technologies increasingly merge physical and virtual environments. The authors present SEEMEE (Spatial Experience Evaluation Method for Extended Environments), a comprehensive framework evaluating XR spatial experience through behavioural congruence measurement. The three-stage guideline captures Personal and Spatial Pattern Baselines, experiential responses at multiple temporal scales, and Response Congruence Formatting through Temporal and Uncertainty Distillation Protocols. For the ***Architecture*** knowledge space, this methodological innovation offers tools for genuine assessment of spatial experience.

Green Building Standards and Their Application in Retrofitting Educational Buildings in South Africa: Idowu et al. (2025) examine the intersection of sustainability standards, educational infrastructure, and climate action in the South African context. Through comprehensive surveys across Gauteng province, the study unveils that while awareness of green building standards grows, application remains limited by financial constraints, regulatory challenges, and insufficient technical expertise. Despite implementation barriers, projects incorporating standards confirmed significant benefits, including reduced energy consumption, improved indoor environmental quality, and enhanced building longevity. For the Building knowledge space, this research provides empirical evidence supporting policy interventions essential for mainstreaming green building adoption while highlighting how global sustainability frameworks must adapt to regional economic realities.

5 Reflections on Key Features and Themes

The five articles included in this inaugural issue embody the knowledge spaces framework that guides ABC2's mission. They demonstrate how established knowledge spaces, including theorising

architectural and urban production, assessing designed environments, and addressing housing and performance of the built environment, continue to evolve through fresh methodological approaches and contextual applications. Collectively, they contribute to evolving knowledge spaces in architectural and urban sustainability, collaborative planning, and digital innovation in the built environment. Several common threads emerge across this collection.

- *First, geographical diversity* enriches our understanding. From Central Asian emerging cities (Mamirkulova & Zhang, 2025) to Pacific island nations (Baghaei Daemei, 2025), and from East Asian technological frontiers (Choi et al., 2025) to African urban centres (Idowu et al., 2025), these studies uncover how universal challenges manifest differently across varied economic, climatic, cultural, and regulatory contexts.
- *Second, methodological plurality* characterises the collection, spanning structural equation modelling, AI-powered prototyping, Bayesian probabilistic frameworks (Meng et al., 2025), behavioural congruence measurement, and comprehensive survey research. This diversity in research methods reflects the pluri-epistemological character of productive knowledge spaces.
- *Third, theory-practice connectivity,* where all five articles bridge theory and practice, offering conceptual contributions and operational frameworks, tools, and evidence that practitioners and policymakers can apply.
- *Fourth Trans-disciplinarity*, where these articles demonstrate the productive potential of research occupying intersections between our four domains in architecture, building, construction, and cities. The Kazakhstan study connects cities and tourism development. The New Zealand energy tool bridges building science and digital technology while reflecting broader trends in construction digitalisation and policy implementation. The circular economy framework spans construction management and environmental sustainability. The SEEMEE method links architecture, digital technology, and human behaviour. The South Africa study connects building performance, education infrastructure, and climate policy. These intersections represent the knowledge spaces ABC2 seeks to cultivate, domains where disciplinary boundaries become transparent, enabling new insights that single-discipline approaches cannot develop.

6 Outlook: A Call to Action

This inaugural issue establishes ABC2's fundamental premise. The complexity of the contemporary built environment challenges stresses scholarship that transcends disciplinary boundaries, geographical limitations, and the theory-practice divide. From gender-sensitive urban planning in Kazakhstan to AI-powered energy tools in New Zealand, from probabilistic frameworks for circular construction to methodological innovations in spatial experience evaluation, and from green building implementation in South Africa to countless future investigations, the research published in this inaugural speaks to global challenges while respecting local contexts.

The inaugural issue reflects ABC2's global reach and commitment to diverse perspectives. Our authors represent institutions across five continents, examining challenges in contexts ranging from emerging Central Asian cities to developed Pacific nations, from East Asian technological frontiers to African urban centres. This geographical diversity enriches our understanding, revealing how universal challenges manifest differently across varied economic, climatic, cultural, and regulatory contexts. It reminds us that sustainable built environments cannot emerge from one-size-fits-all approaches to solutions but require frameworks adaptable to local conditions while advancing global objectives.

As we launch ABC2, we extend an invitation to the international research community to join us in building this platform for transformative scholarship. We seek contributions that challenge conventional thinking, bridge disciplinary divides, and offer evidence-based pathways toward sustainable and resilient built environments. We welcome research employing diverse methodologies,

from computational modelling and artificial intelligence to ethnographic investigation and policy analysis, provided it maintains scholarly rigor and addresses pressing challenges. We encourage submissions from early-career researchers together with established scholars, voices from underrepresented regions alongside global leaders, and innovative perspectives that expand the boundaries of built environment discourse.

The challenges confronting our cities, buildings, and communities grow more urgent exponentially. Climate change accelerates, urbanization intensifies, resource constraints tighten, and inequalities persist. However, within these challenges lie opportunities for innovation, transformation, and meaningful impact. ABC2 exists to capture and disseminate the research that will guide us through these challenges decades ahead. We invite you to be part of this conversation. The future of the built environment depends on the quality of knowledge we generate, the rigor of evidence we gather, and the wisdom we apply in translating research into practices and industries.

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