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## Integrating 3D Printing in Construction

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Master's Thesis

Construction And Real Estate Management

**Faculty 2**

From

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Date:

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**Conceptual Formulation**

**Master Thesis for Mr. Dael Muez Muruts**

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**Topic: Integrating 3D Printing in Construction**

**Background :**

Robotic 3D printing is transforming traditional construction methods, causing a major paradigm shift in the industry (dustyrobotics.com, 2023). While this technology offers new design possibilities and encourages efficient resource use, its incorporation into existing workflows requires careful planning to ensure smooth integration. The success of integration depends on fulfilling certain functional requirements—like strong system performance, compatibility, and dependability (Clark, 2024)—and complying with rigorous regulatory standards that guarantee safety and structural integrity (Socio-Technical Theory, 2023). Furthermore, it is crucial to comprehend the process requirements for reengineering construction workflows, to train personnel effectively, and to uphold strict quality control. This thesis will investigate these essential integration prerequisites in order to create a strategic roadmap for effectively adopting and sustainably implementing robotic 3D printing in construction projects.

**Research Objectives and Methodology:**

Table 1. Objective Output Matrix

Specific Objective	Research Questions	Indicators	Data Source	Expected Outputs
Identify the functional requirements for the effective integration of robotic 3D printing in construction.	What are the key functional parameters (performance, system compatibility, reliability) required for integrating robotic 3D printing into construction workflows?	System efficiency, integration with existing technologies, performance benchmarks.	Technical literature pilot project data	A detailed framework of functional prerequisites and recommendations for technological development.
Evaluate the regulatory requirements	How do current building codes, safety standards, and certification	Compliance levels, regulatory barriers,	Regulatory documents	Guidelines for navigating regulatory

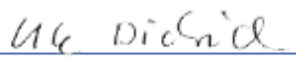
impacting the adoption of robotic 3D printing.	processes affect the integration of robotic 3D printing in construction?	certification timelines.	, industry reports	challenges and aligning 3D printing practices with industry standards.
Analyze the process requirements necessary for seamless integration.	What process changes are needed in traditional construction workflows to successfully incorporate robotic 3D printing?	Workflow modifications, training requirements, quality control measures	Case studies, project management reports	Best practice models for process integration


## Methodology

A comparative, qualitative approach will be utilized in the research, bolstered by a thorough literature review and detailed case study analyses. Information will be collected from scholarly journals, market reports, and compliance documents. This approach will facilitate a detailed investigation of the functional, regulatory, and procedural requirements, while also offering a solid framework for comprehending the challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating robotic 3D printing into the construction sector.

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Signature of 1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor.

  
Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor.

## Abstract

Extrusion-based 3D concrete printing (3DCP) offers significant potential for construction automation, including reduced labor, minimized waste, and enhanced design freedom. However, its transition from proof of concept to scalable deployment is hindered by misalignment between material-machine performance, regulatory compliance, and on-site workflows. This thesis addresses this gap by developing and validating a Three-Pillar Integration Framework (Functional, Regulatory, Workflow). Informed by secondary case analysis of four landmark projects (ICON's House Zero, Winsun Villas, COBOD/Van Wijnen homes, Dubai's Office of the Future), the framework is demonstrated on a 50 m<sup>2</sup> gantry-printed wall use case. The Functional Pillar establishes critical parameters, including structural performance targets ( $\geq 31$  MPa compressive strength,  $\geq 2$  MPa interlayer bond, and 2-hour fire resistance), as well as real-time dimensional accuracy ( $\pm 5$  mm), for reliable printing under variable conditions. The Regulatory Pillar defines a structured compliance pathway integrating ICC-ES AC509, ISO/ASTM 52939, comprehensive permitting, digital traceability, and post-approval monitoring. The Workflow Pillar ensures seamless integration into construction through BIM-to-print handoffs, calibrated site protocols, inline quality assurance, and automated error correction. While focused on extrusion methods and secondary data, this framework provides a scalable roadmap for mainstreaming 3DCP in regulated environments and forms a basis for future extensions.

Keywords: 3D concrete printing, integration Framework, BIM, functional pillar, regulatory pillar, workflow pillar

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Figures</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Integration Challenge .....	1
1.2 Research Aim and Questions .....	2
1.3 Scope and Boundaries.....	3
1.4 Contributions and Significance.....	3
1.5 Methodological Preview .....	4
<b>2 Literature Review</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 Overview of 3D Printing in Construction.....	6
2.1.1 Principles of Additive Manufacturing.....	7
2.1.2 Types of 3D Printing Technologies Used in Construction .....	9
2.1.3 Materials and Tools .....	14
2.1.4 Current status and trends .....	17
2.2 Technology and Innovation .....	19
2.2.1 Tracing the Historical Evolution of 3D Printing.....	19
2.2.2 Recent Pilot Projects and Implementations .....	22
2.2.3 Demonstrated Benefits .....	24
2.2.4 Common Challenges Reported.....	26
2.3 Functional Integration: System Requirements .....	28
2.3.1 Performance metrics and System compatibility .....	28

2.3.2	Workflow Adaptation and Process Engineering .....	31
2.3.3	Workforce Transformation and Cultural Adaptation .....	33
2.3.4	On-site Logistics and Infrastructure Readiness .....	35
2.4	Regulatory and Institutional Context .....	36
2.4.1	Codes, Standards, and Safety Protocols .....	36
2.4.2	Certification, Approval, and Quality Control .....	39
2.4.3	Legal and Insurance Implications .....	41
2.4.4	Institutional Pressures and Global Regulatory Comparisons .....	43
2.5	Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives .....	45
2.5.1	Socio-Technical Systems Theory .....	45
2.5.2	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) .....	47
2.5.3	Institutional Theory .....	48
2.5.4	Research Gaps .....	49
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>51</b>
3.1	Reference Use Case .....	52
3.2	Case Selection and Mapping to Research Questions .....	53
3.3	Data Collection Protocol .....	54
3.4	Thematic Analysis and Framework Development .....	55
<b>4</b>	<b>Integrated Findings .....</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1	Functional Integration .....	57
4.1.1	Structural Performance Outcomes .....	57
4.1.2	Dimensional Accuracy and Tolerance Control .....	58
4.2	Regulatory Integration .....	60
4.2.1	Overview of Regulatory Landscape .....	61
4.2.2	Case Narratives .....	62

4.2.3 Cross-Case Synthesis .....	64
4.2.4 Regulatory Pillar of the Framework.....	65
4.3 Workflow Integration .....	67
4.3.1 Digital Workflow from BIM to Print .....	68
4.3.2 On-Site Coordination and Roles .....	69
4.3.3 Process Monitoring and Quality Assurance .....	70
4.3.4 Unplanned Stoppages & Contingency Management .....	70
4.3.5 Case Evidence of Workflow Innovations.....	71
4.3.6 Implications for the Workflow Pillar of the Framework .....	71
<b>5 Integrated Framework.....</b>	<b>74</b>
5.1 Framework Architecture.....	74
5.2 Pillar 1: Functional Integration.....	76
5.2.1 Structural Performance Outcomes.....	76
5.2.2 Dimensional Accuracy & Tolerance Control.....	76
5.3 Pillar 2: Regulatory Integration.....	77
5.4 Pillar 3: Workflow Integration .....	78
5.5 Reference Use-Case Application .....	80
5.5.1 Application of Pillar Modules.....	80
5.6 Implementation Guidelines.....	83
<b>6 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>85</b>
6.1 Summary of Key Findings.....	85
6.2 Practical Implications & Recommendations .....	86
6.3 Limitations.....	87
6.3.1 Reliance on Secondary Data .....	88
6.3.2 Focus on Extrusion Process .....	88

6.3.3 Scale and Structural Limits .....	88
6.4 Future Research Directions .....	89
6.4.1 Field-Based Pilot Projects.....	89
6.4.2 Expansion to Non-Extrusion Techniques .....	89
6.4.3 High-rise and Reinforced Structures.....	89
6.4.4 Environmental Impact Assessments.....	90
<b>Declaration of Authorship .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Consent of Publishing the Master's Thesis .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>List of References .....</b>	<b>94</b>

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: 3D printer extruding cementitious material (Kauppila, 2023).....	7
Figure 2: Binder Jetting (ExOne, 2019) .....	8
Figure 3: Gantry-based construction 3D printer (industry4blog, 2022) .....	10
Figure 4: Robotic-arm 3D construction printer (Startup Selfie, 2024).....	11
Figure 5: Mobile 3D printer (MaxiPrinter, 2024) .....	12
Figure 6: Comparison of Gantry-based (Duran et al., 2019) and Robotic-Arm 3D Printers (Pall, 2023).....	13
Figure 7: 3D Printer Nozzle (D., 2019) .....	17
Figure 8: ICON and Apis Cor's project (Garfield, 2017) .....	18
Figure 9: Typical workflow of 3D printing.....	32
Figure 10: Conceptual model of Integration dimensions .....	51
Figure 11: Architecture of the Integration Framework .....	75

## List of Tables

Table 1: Comparative overview of 3D printers .....	14
Table 2: Research questions mapped with real-world examples. ....	54
Table 3: Comparative analysis of each case navigated by the regulatory context .....	64
Table 4: Mapping research questions to pillar modules .....	72
Table 5: Integration framework.....	80

## List of Abbreviations

3DCP	3D Concrete Printing
AC509	Acceptance Criteria 509
ACI	American Concrete Institute
AM	Additive Manufacturing
BIM	Building Information Modelling
BJ	Binder Jetting
CAD	Computer-Aided Design
CAM	Computer-Aided Manufacturing
CC	Contour Crafting
CERL	Construction Engineering Research Laboratory
CNC	Computer Numerical Control
CS	Calcined Oyster-shell Powder
DOE	Department of Energy
DT	Digital Twin
ESR	Evaluation Service Report
ICC	International Code Council
ICC-ES	International Code Council- Evaluation Service
ICE	Institute of Civil Engineering
IP	Intellectual Property
IRC	International Residential Code
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISO/ASTM 52939	Additive Manufacturing for Construction Qualification principles
LCA	Life Cycle Analysis
LBNL	Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
M3DCP	Mobile 3D Concrete Printing
MCSC	Marine Corps Systems Command
MPa	Megapascal
NC	Numerical Control
OPC	Ordinary Portland Cement
PEU	Perceived Ease of Use

PU	Perceived Usefulness
QA	Quality Assurance
SCM	Supplementary Cementitious Materials
SIL	Safety Integrity Level
SLA	Stereolithography
SRA	Shrinkage-Reducing Admixture
STS	Socio-Technical Systems
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UL3401	Underwriter Laboratories 3401
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
UV	Ultraviolet

# 1 Introduction

The global construction industry is at a critical juncture, facing three significant challenges: widespread skilled labor shortages, high levels of waste, and increasing demand for design flexibility and sustainability. While 45% of European construction firms report difficulty hiring qualified workers, projections suggest this shortage will intensify as older employees retire and fewer young professionals enter the industry (Jones, 2024). At the same time, waste from the construction industry accounts for approximately one-third of global solid waste, which is projected to keep increasing, placing immense pressure on landfill capacity and resource consumption. The growing demand for custom architectural elements, driven by sustainability goals and aesthetic innovation, necessitates the delivery of efficient products by traditional frameworks.

Extrusion-based 3D printing offers a promising solution that automates layer-by-layer fabrication directly from digital models, demonstrating reduced waste, faster build times, and increased design freedom. Despite many successful prototypes, such as homes and bridges, most implementations remain isolated demonstrations, as industry surveys and reviews consistently identify a lack of systemic processes to integrate machine performance, regulatory compliance, and workflow coordination. Since these innovations remain “proofs of concept” without a unified framework, this study addresses that gap by building a practical, evidence-based integration framework.

## 1.1 Integration Challenge

While individual pilot projects, such as ICON’s House Zero and Winsun’s Villa Complex, have demonstrated the technical promise of 3D concrete printing, their success has relied on isolated strengths rather than cohesive process integration. Although machine performance, such as material rheology, extrusion dynamics, and structural loading capacity, must be directly linked to regulatory compliance, including approved material tests and permits, construction practices must also adapt to include site workflows that accommodate continuous layer deposition, digital coordination, and trade sequencing.

Although ICON's House Zero project achieved compliance through ICC-ESR 4652, utilizing Lavacrete that exceeds 41 MPa of compressive strength, and embedded sensor networks for real-time control. However, the widespread industry uptake is limited by specialized training and internal workflows tailored to its proprietary BuildOS system. On the other hand, Winsun's project in China utilized flexible pilot-zone regulations and modular prefabrication, whereas the lack of international design standards and structured on-site utility integration restricts replication in other regulatory environments.

Since these examples fail to guarantee broader scalability, a unified roadmap is needed that aligns the performance of extrusion-based systems, standardizes approval pathways, and streamlines on-site workflows. This study responds to that need by synthesizing cross-case insights into an integration framework that ensures each element supports the others, making 3D concrete printing practical and repeatable in mainstream construction.

## **1.2 Research Aim and Questions**

The thesis aims to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based integration framework that enables extrusion-based 3D concrete printing to transition from pilot experiments to routine construction practice. The proposed framework is structured around three interdependent pillars: functional integration, regulatory compliance, and workflow adaptation, each addressing a critical dimension of integration. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key functional parameters required for integrating 3D printing into construction?
2. What validation and documentation practices enable regulatory approval for extrusion-based 3D concrete construction?
3. What process changes are needed to embed extrusion-based 3D printing into standard construction workflows?

These questions, when combined, will drive a cross-case analysis of ICON House Zero, Winsun Villas, COBOD/Van Winjen homes, and Dubai's Office of the Future, ultimately

culminating in a unified framework that aligns machine capabilities, compliance mechanisms, and practical site operations.

### **1.3 Scope and Boundaries**

This research is confined to extrusion-based 3D concrete printing systems, encompassing both gantry platforms, such as ICON's Vulcan and COBOD's BOD2, and multi-axis robotic-arm printers, such as the one used for Dubai's Office of the Future. By exclusively focusing on these extrusion methods that deposit cementitious materials in continuous layers, the study avoids conflating results with alternative additive techniques, such as powder-bed fusion or inkjet binder jetting, as they differ in scale, material behavior, and on-site requirements. This limitation ensures that three dimensions remain directly comparable across all cases.

Methodologically, this thesis integrates a secondary case-study approach, and no new field experiments or primary data collection are undertaken. Instead, four well-documented projects, such as ICON House Zero in the USA, Winsun Villa Complex in China, COBOD/VAN Winjen Home in the Netherlands, and the Office of the Future in the UAE, demonstrated on a 50 m<sup>2</sup> gantry-printed wall use case, serve as the empirical foundation, having been selected for their technological relevance, regulatory significance, and the richness of publicly available information such as peer-reviewed articles, regulatory filings, and technical white papers. The study develops an evidence-based framework that is based on real-world experience and broadly applicable to future extrusion-based 3D printing initiatives.

### **1.4 Contributions and Significance**

This study delivers both theoretical and practical contributions by bridging a critical gap in the field of 3DCP.

Theoretically, it integrates insights from diverse real-world applications to construct a structured, cross-case integration framework. Prior studies have focused individually on strength parameters, regulatory hurdles, or workflow dynamics, rather than connecting the domains. This thesis advances academic understanding by demonstrating how the three dimensions—Functional Performance, Regulatory Compliance, and Workflow

Adaptation—can be aligned. This holistic perspective addresses a notable absence in literature, such as the need for a unified roadmap that consolidates technology, permission pathways, and site operations.

On the other hand, it provides practical guidance for industry regulators seeking to scale extrusion-based 3D printing. For practitioners, it defines validated material and machine benchmarks, outlines testing and permit requirements, and specifies operational protocols for site integration. At the same time, for regulatory authorities, the framework clarifies the evidence and monitoring systems required to assess structural safety and compliance.

Consequently, this work is positioned to facilitate a more reliable, repeatable, and scalable deployment of extrusion-based 3D printing in mainstream construction, thereby supporting both scholarly progress and on-site innovation.

## **1.5 Methodological Preview**

This study employs a qualitative, multiple-case approach, utilizing secondary data from the four exemplary projects to investigate how extrusion-based 3D printing can be fully integrated into the construction process. The three-dimensional conceptual model, which encompasses functional, regulatory, and workflow aspects central to the methodology, guides systematic data collection and analysis across all case studies.

To anchor the investigation, the case utilizes the predefined gantry-based 50 m<sup>2</sup> printed wall use case introduced in Section 2.3.1. The data from each real-world project is collected using a structured protocol, which organizes information around three domains: material-machine performance metrics for the functional dimension, permit documents and standards references for regulatory understanding, and BIM-to-Field logs, on-site coordination records, and sensor dashboards for workflow evaluation.

Analysis follows a two-stage thematic coding strategy. In the first stage, data is tagged according to the three conceptual pillars by encapsulating rheology and strength outcomes, regulatory approval steps, and role definitions or scanning routines. In the second stage, themes such as Material-Machine Fit, Permit Pathway, and Digital-Field

Coordination are synthesized across cases to identify cross-cutting patterns that support the framework's components.

Overall, the structured, theory-informed, and evidence-driven approach ensures that the resulting integration framework is grounded in real implementation experience and withstands academic scrutiny.

Grammarly was used as a tool to check the orthography and grammar of the paper.

## **2 Literature Review**

This literature review builds essential knowledge through four interlocking strands of inquiry. First comes the technical bedrock—the operating mechanisms, material compositions, and hardware systems that enable concrete extrusion printing today, examined alongside cutting-edge industry developments.

The analysis then shifts to documented field applications, following the technology's evolution from experimental prototypes to functional buildings. This trajectory reveals both successful implementations and persistent pain points, particularly in areas such as workflow integration and large-scale deployment.

Regulatory dimensions constitute the third focus, analyzing the changing rulebooks, compliance challenges, and liability issues that shape the legal landscape of additive construction.

Finally, three established theories provide analytical lenses: Socio-Technical Systems expose the interdependencies between technology and the workforce; the Technology Acceptance Model explains adoption barriers; and Institutional Theory decodes how industry norms shape the uptake of innovation. Together, these strands create a diagnostic framework for identifying knowledge voids that this study targets.

### **2.1 Overview of 3D Printing in Construction**

3D printing, Additive Manufacturing (AM), creates tangible objects by sequentially adding materials based on a geometric model. In advanced manufacturing, 3D printing technology has become a versatile and potent tool in recent years. It is growing in the automotive, locomotive, aviation, healthcare, and agricultural sectors, enabling mass customization and fabrication of any open-source design. Many Nations have extensively used this technology, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The production line and entire sectors could be transformed by 3D printing technology. The use of 3D printing technology is expected to lower prices and increase production speed (Sharafuddin et al., 2019).

### 2.1.1 Principles of Additive Manufacturing

Additive Manufacturing (AM) involves depositing materials layer by layer to create a 3D structure from a digital design under computer control. The data from the computer model is sent to the printer to be deposited in the form of two-dimensional cross-sections, creating a 3D object. This process contrasts with subtractive manufacturing, which involves removing material from a solid block to create an object. AM's main principles include digital design, slicing, and layer-by-layer fabrication (Gibson et al., 2018).

The primary aspect of construction-scale AM is the extrusion of a cementitious mixture through its nozzle, which flows along a predetermined path as shown in the image below. This includes depositing beads layer by layer.



Figure 1: 3D printer extruding cementitious material (Kauppila, 2023)

Digital design serves as the starting point of this process, and it is then segmented into distinct cross-sections. These segments direct the toolpath for the extrusion head (Perkins & Skitmore, 2015). The toolpath is then guided by a gantry or robotic arm, which allows constant extrusion rate and travel speed, ensuring uniform bead geometry (Lim et al., 2011). The thickness of the layer and surface finish are influenced by extrusion rate and nozzle diameter (Czyżewski et al., 2022).

Powder bed and binder jetting are less commonly used techniques for construction-scale additive manufacturing (AM). Powder bed fusion processes consist of thin layers of excellent powders spread and closely packed on a platform. Each layer's powder is fused with a laser beam or a binder. Subsequent layers of powders are rolled on top of previous layers and fused until the final 3D part is built. A vacuum removes the excess powder (Ngo et al.,2018). Binder jetting (BJ) is an additive manufacturing process in which a liquid binder is selectively deposited through a printhead onto thin layers of powder, such as ceramic or sand, gluing particles together to form a part layer by layer. BJ offers a more accurate process in which a printer nozzle crosses a powder bed and deposits a liquid binder to form the desired shape for each layer. This technique offers lower heat-induced distortions and defects, which are common in methods involving high-temperature processes (Zhou et al., 2024).



Figure 2: Binder Jetting (ExOne, 2019)

Extrusion allows for a larger construction space than the powder bed technique, while the powder bed technique offers design freedom and higher accuracy (Paolini et al., 2017). Some of the standard applications of the powder bed technique include the fabrication of fixtures and automation; this technique requires minimal support. On the other hand, Binder Jetting enables printing without support and produces multiple parts in a single print, reducing material costs and post-processing time. However, this technique requires additional equipment for post-processing, and most post-processing is done manually (Metal 3D Printing, 2023).

Interlayer bonding is crucial for extrusion-based additive manufacturing (AM). Each layer printed must support the stability of the subsequent layer. The bond strength between the cementitious-based material layers is a critical mechanical property. Fabrication speed should be designed to allow the layers to create intimate cohesion, establishing sufficient stability to sustain their weight and the weight of subsequent layers. Lengthy interlayer time gaps can result in low bond strength, which in turn leads to lower structural properties in printed structures. Cementitious-based materials must develop sufficient strength in a minimal amount of time to withstand the load of subsequent layers without deformation (Ghaffar et al., 2018). Printed models with strong interlayer connections have structural stability with no displacement or separation between layers. It also ensures fatigue resistance (Chen et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Digital Twin (DT) is a developing area that has potential benefits for simulating printing. While AM faces challenges such as part defects, real-time monitoring, and process optimization, DT can be used to predict errors and enhance decision-making based on real-time data flow (Jyeniskhan et al., 2024).

To summarize, mechanical motion systems and layer-by-layer material deposition are key principles of construction additive manufacturing. While extrusion-based additive manufacturing (AM) is used for on-site manufacturing, binder jetting offers a more accurate printing process. Gantry systems only offer three-dimensional positioning but can be used to construct small buildings. Robotic arms comprise six-axis positioning and enable the printing of complex objects.

### **2.1.2 Types of 3D Printing Technologies Used in Construction**

Based on kinematic arrangements, material delivery, and site, additive manufacturing in construction has four principal system deliveries: gantry-based, robotic arm, mobile, and hybrid systems. The section reviews only these physical 3D printer platforms and does not cover the digital modelling or slicing tools that feed these machines.

## Gantry-Based Systems

Gantry systems are the most common, utilizing a gantry along the XYZ Cartesian axes to position the print nozzle (Zhang et al., 2023). As shown in the image below, these provide reasonable access to printable objects and have simpler handling systems.



Figure 3: Gantry-based construction 3D printer (industry4blog, 2022)

Their advantage is that they have more space for printing, allowing for the construction of smaller buildings. However, they have limited mobility compared to robotic arm systems and are constrained by their design, which limits them to being larger than the object to be printed (Puzatova et al., 2023).

## Robotic-Arm Systems

Robotic arm systems are new compared to gantry printers. They comprise a six-axis robotic arm, a camera, and a pump (Zhang et al., 2018). These systems enable the printing of complex objects to be more accurate and detailed using the tangential continuity method. The tangential continuity method maintains a constant rate of change in curvature, provides smoother transitions between layers, and yields a more aesthetically pleasing appearance (Puzatova et al., 2023).



Figure 4: Robotic-arm 3D construction printer (Startup Selfie, 2024)

The extensive range of movements of the robotic arm makes it well-suited for large-scale construction without the need for support. Some of the notable advantages of this system include precise control over the toolpath trajectories and the ability to move the deposition head in a unique way that cannot be done with traditional 3D printers. However, this system integration encounters limitations in printing enclosed surfaces or bridges since the deposition head collides with already printed sections (Meltio, 2024).

### **Mobile-Systems**

Mobile 3D Concrete Printing (M3DCP) utilizes mobile-manipulator robots that can perform terrain navigation and execute material extrusions that exceed their size. Like gantry systems and cranes, M3DCP also allows for relocation and installation at a low cost.



Figure 5: Mobile 3D printer (MaxiPrinter, 2024)

Moreover, mobile printers hold significant value in repairing and strengthening existing structures. In addition, like material extrusion, mobile printers can be used for material spraying by incorporating air in the nozzle and at a greater distance from the surface, which can be helpful for intricate parts and out-of-reach areas. However, mobile robots face challenges when utilized for continuous printing or printing while in motion due to the limited autonomy available (Döfler et al., 2024).

### **Hybrid-Systems**

Hybrid 3D printing is a promising invention in this field. It integrates additive and subtractive manufacturing technologies to optimize the production process and overcome the limitations of each process. Hybrid AM starts with complex geometric 3D printing, which is then subjected to a subtractive process to achieve the desired mechanical properties (Philipscorp, 2025).

This mixed integration provides manufacturers with an advantage in terms of both time and accuracy. Hybrid printing also offers production flexibility, enabling manufacturers to quickly respond to market demands by creating customized designs. The versatility and effectiveness of hybrid printing have enabled its adoption in various industries, including aerospace, medical centers, and the automotive sector (López, E., 2024).

To summarize, Gantry and Robotic arm systems allow huge prints. However, Robotic arm printers accomplish these large prints with smaller devices, while a Gantry printing system consists of beams and slide rails to support the print head and guide its motion. These two systems can still be used for smaller printers, but many robotic arms have limited degrees of freedom in motion. For this reason, a robotic arm system is more expensive than a gantry system in printing smaller parts (McClements, D. & Keane; P., 2025).



Figure 6: Comparison of Gantry-based (Duran et al., 2019) and Robotic-Arm 3D Printers (Pall, 2023)

On the other hand, hybrid systems offer improved productivity, higher precision, and enhanced surface quality. However, this printing system requires a higher initial investment, limited material choices, and complex operations that necessitate trained staff (Kauppila, I., 2022).

Mobile systems become more advantageous when discussing the low to no installation or relocation costs. Mobile printing systems enable printing on virtually any surface. Moreover, the smaller scale and high degree of freedom of movement of manipulators allow for greater complexity in print design (Döfler et al., 2024).

This table categorizes standard extrusion 3D printers by key features: their build size, accuracy, versatility, typical applications, and main disadvantages.

Table 1: Comparative overview of 3D printers

System Type	Build Volume	Precision	Flexibility	Use Case	Key Limitation
Gantry based	Up to 8*8*3 m	±2 mm	Low	Structural components	Site preparation, Immobility
Robotic-arm	Envelope of 5*5*2.2 m	± 1 mm	High	Free form elements	Reach, complexity
Mobile	variable	± 5 mm	Medium	Infrastructure	Stability, pressure control
Hybrid	Modular	± 0.3 mm post machining	Very high	Precision panels	System complexity

Overall, each system type offers distinct advantages and challenges: gantry-based platforms excel in large-scale structural work but lack mobility, robotic arms deliver fine tolerance and form complexity at the expense of reach, mobile units provide on-site infrastructure deployment with moderate precision, and hybrid solutions achieve the highest accuracy through post-processing while introducing greater operational complexity.

### 2.1.3 Materials and Tools

The success of 3D printing applications depends on the materials and delivery method used in the extrusion process. This section examines printable materials, ranging from geopolymers to other alternatives, including rheology control and buildability, curing behavior, and nozzle technologies that ensure reliable deposition.

#### Printable materials

The selection of printing material must consider its parameters, such as properties in both a fresh and hardened state, as well as the printing specifications. The cementitious material selected must have a suitable extrusion capacity, be fluid, buildable, and dimensionally stable. Ordinary Portland cement (OPC) is a conventional cementitious

material suitable for 3D printing. OPC can be modified with admixtures, fine aggregates, and fibers (Robayo-Salazar et al., 2022).

### **Geopolymers and Low-Carbon Alternatives**

Geopolymer, also known as alkali-activated material, is synthesized by reacting aluminum silicate materials with alkaline activators. Geopolymers are low-carbon alternatives and can be considered a potential choice compared to cementitious materials for 3D printing, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the process. For this reason, they have been increasingly implemented in AM (Zhong & Zhang, 2022).

### **Fiber-reinforced composites**

Continuous fibers are stronger when loaded in tension but have low compressive strength. For this reason, numerous studies have been conducted to enhance the compressive strength of 3D-printed materials. Different types of fibers are used for AM, including steel fiber, glass fiber, carbon fiber, basalt fiber, and many others. To examine steel fiber, a 1.2% content shows a notable increase in compressive strength of 40.3 MPa and a flexural strength increase of 6.3 MPa, which is considered sufficient. However, it is crucial to recognize that magnified fiber content above the recommended percentage creates spots of weakness due to inadequate bonding with other components, resulting in decreased compressive strength (Warsi et al, 2023).

### **Rheology control and buildability**

Rheology is the study of the flow and deformation of materials, and Rheology control manages these flows and deformations to achieve optimal performance (Christ, J. *et al.*, 2024). Rheology control, which is most critical for the success of 3D printing, is achieved through the hydration control of cement. This hydration control is crucial for creating the capacity for each printed layer to support subsequent deposition—continuous hydration results in the rigidification of the fresh cement (Sun, Z. et al., 2024).

### **Curing behavior and structural performance**

Post-print curing affects the durability and dimensional stability of 3D prints. Improper handling often leads to underperforming prints. Tiny cracks or deformations usually

occur when concrete dries due to shrinkage. Shrinkage occurs within the first 24 hours of printing, and several methods exist to minimize shrinkage in 3D printed concrete. One such method is covering the concrete with plastic foil; however, this approach is not practical for real-world projects. Another way to reduce shrinkage is to mix concrete with shrinkage-reducing admixtures (SRA), which, as a result, reduces shrinkage without affecting the long-term strength of the concrete (Federowicz, K. et al., 2020).

### **Sustainability considerations**

3D printing offers a promising solution for sustainable construction practices. It has excellent potential in minimizing waste and conserving resources. To address these sustainability concerns, studies have explored various eco-friendly alternatives, including fly ash, geopolymers, and recycled glass aggregates, for 3D printing to minimize environmental impact.

A formulation of high-volume fly ash can be suitable for 3D concrete printing, potentially improving the environmental impact. It also enhances the long-term strength of building materials.

Geopolymer—a cement-free binder—can replace Portland cement and result from polymerization. The carbon dioxide emissions in geopolymers are 80% lower than those of Portland cement, making it another sustainable option.

Sand for construction is in short supply, which is increasing the need for other options such as recycled glass aggregates (Tabassum, T. & Mir; A.A., 2023).

### **Nozzle design**

As shown in the image below, the nozzle is a crucial component of the 3D printer, extruding the material, and thus plays a significant role in additive manufacturing (AM).



Figure 7: 3D Printer Nozzle (D., 2019)

Different nozzle designs impact various aspects of the 3D printing outcome, including printing time, geometrical errors, surface finish, pressure fluctuations, and material temperature (Kedare et al., 2020). Studies also find that increased nozzle size has a positive effect on buildability, as reflected in greater layer height and width, whereas increased printing speed reduces buildability (Khan et al., 2023).

#### **2.1.4 Current status and trends**

3D printing has evolved from isolated laboratory experiments to early commercial usage with notable activity across North America, Europe, and Asia. Europe, Germany, and the Netherlands have begun implementing a regulatory framework for load-bearing 3D-printed houses. A project called “Kamermaker” in the Netherlands, a 95-square-meter structure, combines aesthetics and structural compliance with emerging standards (Mime, 2016).

Two companies from North America, ICON and Apis Cor, have partnered to build advanced 3D-printed small homes that cost approximately USD 10,000 each and can be completed in under 48 hours (Peter Corboy, 2017). This demonstrates that polymer-modified cement meets performance targets and achieves compressive strength of 30 - 40 MPa while reducing time and cost compared to traditional methods.



Figure 8: ICON and Apis Cor's project (Garfield, 2017)

Winsun, a company based in Suzhou, China, built 10 full-sized eco-friendly houses, each measuring 200 square meters, for a total cost of USD 4,800, in just one day. Each house took a few hours to create, and the company utilized recycled construction materials, industrial waste, and a large 3D printer. The printer extrudes a mixture of cement and recycled fiberglass material, aided by CAD design. Insulation materials, electrical lining, and plumbing were later installed once the structures were assembled (Rodrigo Caula I., 2014).

Current industrial analysis shows contractors and developers are increasingly interested in integrating 3D printing. Studies show that many European construction firms have already conducted their feasibility studies, and some are expected to launch their pilot programs in the next two years. However, 20% of construction companies in Norway have already integrated 3D printing, primarily for prototyping purposes (Olsson et al., 2019).

While the lack of standard testing methods, processing steps, and approval rules makes it hard to adopt 3D printing worldwide, digital concrete production can contribute to sustainability as a resource-efficient construction technique. Since there are no uniformly defined testing principles, specific products, or standards for 3D printing, uniform testing procedures and processing requirements are essential to mitigate the complexity, length, and cost of the construction process (Vasilić, 2024).

Although it has been clear that the technical feasibility of printed buildings is possible, there remains a scarcity of studies on the comprehensive view of the entire building life cycle, as well as economic feasibility regarding large-scale structures (Motalebi et al., 2023). Regarding the long-term issues of interlayer adhesion under freeze-thaw cycles, some studies indicate that after almost a decade of temperature fluctuations and freeze-thaw exposure, the bond strength decreased by 40%. This reduction highlights the vulnerability of interlayer bonds, and further studies are needed to identify practical solutions.

Ultimately, the status of 3D printing in construction demonstrates technological advancements, regulatory adaptations, and ongoing experiments. Projects worldwide show methods to redefine the potential of construction economics and sustainability. However, critical gaps in standardization, long-term data collection, and workforce preparedness must be addressed to fully reap the benefits of 3D printing in construction over the coming decades.

## **2.2 Technology and Innovation**

3D printing has pushed the boundaries in design, as it provides flexibility in printing complex designs and architectural details. It offers speedy construction, with houses being built within 24 hours. It also enables printing with precision, eliminating the need for formwork and associated labor costs. This section explores the evolution of 3D printing, essential principles, technological advancements, integration with digital tools, material science advancements, environmental considerations, and future directions. Each section is drawn from a range of peer-reviewed sources to present a decisive analysis that meets the expectations of academic research.

### **2.2.1 Tracing the Historical Evolution of 3D Printing**

During the 1940s and 1950s, digital manufacturing was processed by machines that followed programmed instructions from numerical control (NC) and subsequently computer numerical control (CNC) (Gibson et al., 2010). The 1960s and 1970s were the beginning of layered manufacturing and material deposition studies. The first method proposed for building objects, which later inspired the concept of additive

manufacturing, involved adding layers by layer rather than removing material from a block. This, the earliest patent in the 1970s, created ways for future inventions related to layered fabrication.

The earliest developments in 3D printing date back to the 1980s, when additive manufacturing was introduced as a rapid prototyping tool in the manufacturing industry. It was initially intended to produce small, intricate items quickly and affordably. Early efforts, such as stereolithography, laid the groundwork for future technological advancements in creating tiny yet incredibly detailed models (Gibson et al., 2010). It was later modified for use in extensive applications. The transition from prototyping to full-scale fabrication began with small-scale experiments that demonstrated the feasibility of layer-by-layer material deposition for building large structures. In 1981, Hideo Kodama introduced a method that hardens photopolymers layer by layer using ultraviolet (UV). Supported by Kodama's ideas, Charles Hull introduced Stereolithography (SLA) technology. This technology cures liquid resin into solid objects using a laser. Hull then patented this technology and founded one of the first commercial 3D printing companies called 3D Systems (Savini, 2015).

Another early conceptual breakthrough was the Contour Crafting project, proposed by Behrokh Khoshnevis from the University of Southern California. In 1998, Khoshnevis proposed a layered extrusion system for large structures. Contour Crafting (CC) is an additive manufacturing (AM) technology with superior surface forming capabilities. It utilizes computer control to create smooth, planar surfaces. Compared to earlier innovations, CC enabled the fabrication of surfaces with better quality, higher fabrication speed, and a wider range of material choices. The construction of many houses with different designs and electrical and plumbing fittings in a single run first became possible with CC. This technology was considered one potential approach to building structures on the moon (Khoshnevis, 2003).

Technological advancements in the 2000s enabled the development of the first working prototype. In 2008, researchers at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom initiated the “freeform construction” project. The freeform construction refers to additive

manufacturing without the aid of formworks or molds. This project showed the possibility of printing concrete elements with adequate compressive strength using the extrusion method. Freeform construction utilizes contour crafting or concrete printing to create intricate designs and organic shapes, thereby reducing material waste and optimizing strength and efficiency, all without the need for formwork or manual assembly (Lim et al., 2011).

In 2014, another milestone was achieved when Winsun, a Chinese company, demonstrated the construction of ten small houses in Shanghai using a concrete printing system. They were all built within 24 hours, costing 4800 per unit. Although the construction process was first kept a secret, this news attracted considerable media and industry attention. It was a possible solution for the poorer part of the Chinese population (Luimstra, 2020).

The 3D-printed Canal House project in Amsterdam, led by DUS Architects, made further progress in 2015. The Dutch firm built a custom-made “Kamermaker” gantry printer, a printer large enough to print significant building parts with a size of 2\*2\*3.5 meters high from bio-plastic mix made of 75% plant oil called Hotmelt. The building parts were arranged like LEGO to create multi-story homes and adapted according to user needs. A 180 kg, 3m-high sample corner of the Canal House has been printed because the lightweight concrete needed to backfill the blocks is not as biodegradable as the creators would like. This highlights the challenges of material consistency (Quirk, 2014).

Between 2017 and 2019, the number of completed 3D printed projects increased. In 2017, a Dutch start-up called MX3D printed a fully functional pedestrian bridge in Amsterdam using a robotic metal 3D printer (Dutch startup MX3D to 3D Print Steel Bridge in Amsterdam, 2015). In 2018, ICON's non-profit company printed a single-family home in less than 48 hours, significantly cheaper than traditional methods (Bauguess, 2018). Additionally, 2019 was the completion year of the “Office of the Future” project in Dubai. It was printed with a robotic arm off-site and took 17 days to assemble. This historical project represents a significant step forward in terms of scale and finish quality (O'Neal, 2024).

This progress was achieved through hardware advancements and software developments that were essential to historical progress. Despite the impressive milestones, it is crucial to recognize the subsidized projects and experiments done in controlled environments.

### **2.2.2 Recent Pilot Projects and Implementations**

The decade has illustrated pilot projects that brought 3D printing from prototypes to on-site demonstrations. In 2016, the Dubai municipality, in partnership with a Chinese construction company, Winsun, completed the world's first fully functional, completely 3D-printed office building. The external structural components, furniture, and fixtures were all printed with industrial-grade 3D printers with a 20-foot-tall robotic arm. The 2,700-square-meter single-story office building currently serves as the headquarters for the Dubai Future Foundation and can accommodate up to 16 people (MacRae, 2016).

In 2017, the Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) collaborated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to perform the first 3D concrete printing at the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) in Illinois. Initially, a continuous mixer with a three-inch nozzle was tested to manufacture 512-square-foot barracks. A year later, the printing of buildings and barracks was accelerated, utilizing a new concrete composition developed and patented by the USACE. The composition can reduce costs by 40%, time by 50%, and material consumption by 44% (Kunze, 2019).

In 2020, Van Wijnen, a Dutch construction company, partnered with COBOD, a Danish company specializing in 3D construction printing solutions, to print a family home in Eindhoven. They used a gantry printer called BOD2 to extrude cementitious mortar. The four-room, single-story house has a net floor area of 94 square meters, is made with extra-thick insulation, and is connected to the heat grid. The house is comfortable and energy-efficient, making it a flexible design and sustainable (First resident of 3D-printed concrete house in Eindhoven receives key, 2020).

In 2021, a group of researchers from Zurich collaborated to build a 12\*16-meter arched pedestrian bridge called "Stiatus" in Venice, completely without reinforcement. Like traditional masonry bridges, the additive process included concrete blocks forming the

arch. The footings, tied together on the ground, carry the load that travels from the compression-only structure. The only reason the structure remains standing is due to its geometry. Additionally, the bridge was constructed without mortars, allowing it to be disassembled and reassembled at a different location (Walther, 2021).

In December 2023, Mighty Buildings, based in California and a leader in 3D-printed construction, partnered with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), a U.S. DOE Office of Science national laboratory managed by the University of California, to develop three advanced, prefabricated, low-carbon townhouses that will benefit low-income families in Bay Point, California. The printing was done at Mighty Buildings' factory, and construction assembly was completed within a few days at the site location. The project aimed to drive affordability and resilience through new features, such as a "cool room" concept that utilizes solar power to mitigate power outages and extreme temperature events (Mighty Buildings, 2023).

In 2024, the Cleveland City Council approved \$500,000 to 3D print housing as a solution to homelessness. The Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, known for providing homeless shelter, received funding to 3D print two homes, aiming to increase affordable housing and promote community stabilization (Connor, 2024).

Australian company LUYTEN 3D constructed and unveiled the first multi-story home in the southern hemisphere. The 350-square-meter home in Melbourne, Australia, was built in five weeks. The ability to economically print tiny homes for millions has presented 3D printing as a promising future for construction (Blair, 2025).

A pilot project in Luxembourg is examining the feasibility of 3D printing small houses to address housing issues and mitigate the environmental impact of construction. This 47-square-meter space is designed with sustainability in mind, and it will have a carbon footprint of 4.4 tons, which is significantly lower than that of traditional building methods. The home is also built with solar panels; the materials can be reused during the structure's lifetime. The homeowners will benefit from lower energy bills due to the installed solar power and reduced construction costs resulting from shorter construction periods (Sattler, 2024).

### **2.2.3 Demonstrated Benefits**

The use of 3D printing in construction has provided sufficient evidence of its advantages over traditional methods. Pilot studies and academic research have highlighted the benefits of reduced material use, cost efficiency, expedited completion times, and design flexibility.

#### **Cost Efficiency**

Economic advantages are among the key benefits that 3D printing offers over traditional construction methods, particularly in terms of cost savings and financial efficiency.

While labor costs account for a significant portion of the project cost in conventional construction, 3D printing substantially reduces overall project costs by eliminating the need for manual labor. Additionally, the accuracy of 3D printing significantly reduces material wastage. Unlike traditional construction methods, 3D printing reduces material use by approximately 30%, ensuring that materials are utilized only when necessary. This reduces construction costs and aligns with lean construction principles (Firoozi & Firoozi, 2024).

#### **Speed of Construction**

3D printing enables a much faster construction timeline, being most valuable in crisis response and affordable housing. The first 3D-printed school was built in Malawi, with walls printed in 18 hours. This illustrates the advantages of additive manufacturing in terms of speed compared to traditional construction methods. While Malawi faces a shortage of classrooms, this breakthrough can help address the shortage, with the potential to build 36,000 units in 10 years, compared to the 70 years it would take with traditional construction methods. Due to weather and logistical constraints, 3D printing reduces expenditure and delays (Africalive, 2024).

#### **Design Flexibility and Customization**

One of 3D printing's main advantages is its high design flexibility. Complex designs that are challenging to manufacture with conventional construction methods can be easily created with 3D printing techniques (Schuldt et al., 2021).

### **Reduction in Material Waste**

Applying 3D printing in construction minimizes waste and reduces the environmental impact of buildings. According to research by Khan et al. (2023), geopolymer-based 3D-printed construction has less planetary warming capability than ordinary cement-based buildings and traditional masonry construction. Although processing material waste requires high energy demand, geopolymer construction provides sustainable waste utilization.

### **Labor Reduction and Automation**

While the construction industry is heavily dependent on labor, accounting for 8.4% of global employment, this dependency has hindered the industry's efforts to improve productivity for decades. However, the growing application of 3D printing in construction reduces reliance on human labor, enabling the maximization of productivity and optimization of safety. 3D concrete printing also reduces labor requirements. It can lower labor costs by up to 80%. On the other hand, while 3D concrete printing has the potential to address labor shortages in countries such as the USA, Singapore, and the UAE, its application may also lead to job cuts in countries where the workforce is heavily reliant on the construction sector (Hossain et al., 2020).

### **On-Demand and Remote Construction**

3D printing supports remote and on-demand construction, which is necessary for post-disaster areas. Integrating 3D printing into disaster response strategies can proactively solve infrastructure breakdown problems. It reduces dependency on traditional supply chains that are disrupted during emergencies. The ISO/ASTM 52900-15 and ISO/ASTM 52910-18 standards, which define terms used in additive manufacturing (AM) technology and gives requirements, guidelines and recommendations for using additive manufacturing (AM) in product design respectively, ensure the quality and performance of 3D printing in disaster management, particularly when deploying structural components. Following standardized practices, cities and remote areas can apply 3D printing solutions during emergency response efforts (Kantaros et al., 2024).

### **Thermal and Energy Efficiency of Printed Structures**

Buildings with sufficient thermal performance offer several advantages, including reduced energy consumption, a lower greenhouse effect, and improved comfort for inhabitants. Thermal efficiency is even more advantageous in countries such as the UAE. According to a study by Tamimi et al. (2023), 3D printing minimizes air leakage around doors and windows, thereby enhancing the building's thermal efficiency. Although the study mentions that large cavities (big empty spaces) in 3D printed parts allow more heat to pass through, making the building less energy efficient, breaking the cavities into smaller parts helps keep the heat from escaping.

#### **2.2.4 Common Challenges Reported**

3D printing has been a promising technology. However, several challenges have emerged from pilot projects to academic research, including material behavior, structural performance, equipment and process limitations, regulatory uncertainty, site and environmental factors, economic barriers, and workforce readiness that must be addressed.

##### **Material Rheology and Buildability**

The material used for 3D printing in construction must be fast to harden. The material's ability to quickly harden is significant; otherwise, it would collapse and lose its structure. The high speed of 3D printing requires that the material solidify very quickly. Additionally, the material used for extrusion should have sufficient buildability to lie correctly, remain in position, and be stiff enough to support subsequent layers. Buildability refers to a material's resistance to deformation under load. Since the material is extruded in a wet state, it must harden quickly and become self-supporting (Tripathi et al., 2022).

##### **Open time**

Open time refers to the period during which the material can be printed and shaped without structural issues, as extrusion works best when uninterrupted. Problems such as overprinting occur when a deposition pause does not coincide with the movement of the nozzle. Regular concrete would not be suitable for additive manufacturing, as it

does not harden quickly enough after deposition to support subsequent layers without collapsing (Barnett & Gosselin, 2015).

### **Scalability**

While Scalability is a 3D-printer machine-related challenge, it commonly appears in printing processes where the printer's chamber volume restricts the design's size. This illustrates that 3D construction printing technology is not yet ready for large-scale projects, as this challenge primarily arises when having a printer larger than the building is unrealistic (Zhang et al., 2018).

### **Geometric limitations**

Despite offering geometrical freedom, 3D printing still has its limitations. The printing technique is limited by specific geometry that conventional methods, such as those with straight-edge corners, can easily achieve (Bos et al., 2016).

### **Exclusion of Building Services**

The issue of excluding building services follows the lack of electric sockets, plumbing, and window and door openings in the design process. For instance, two Winsun projects encountered issues where building services, such as electrical outlets and plumbing fittings, were not integrated into the printing process. For this reason, additional efforts were required to provide the missing electrical and plumbing components. However, nowadays, some organizations claim that they can incorporate these elements into printed structures (Wu et al., 2016).

### **Structural Integrity**

Some printed parts' standards have been found delicate, which can cause problems with load-bearing components. The quality of concrete is essential for successful additive manufacturing. Since the connection among layers in 3D printing is crucial, many companies have focused on developing concrete with high compression and tensile bond strength. Furthermore, since freeform components are built without formwork, shrinkage has been a significant issue, often resulting in cracking. Not including coarse aggregates in the concrete material is also another cause of shrinkage and cracking (Zareiyan & Khoshnevis, 2017).

## **New design principles**

Integrating 3D construction printing also requires changes to design and engineering. 3D printing involves change due to its ability to create complex geometric components and customizable products. The materials needed for 3D printing also differ from those used in conventional projects. Old architectural systems cannot be used for additive manufacturing, as 3D printing has different requirements; hence, there is a need for new systems (Perrot et al., 2018).

## **Liability Issues**

Many stakeholders across various companies have been responsible for the development of 3D printed structures. However, in the time of failure or incidents, there is an issue of who would be accountable or liable. It is mandatory to establish a legal framework to identify the responsible parties in case of an accident (Labonnote et al., 2016).

## **2.3 Functional Integration: System Requirements**

The transition of 3D printing from laboratory experiments to real-life applications requires a clear, reliable, and precise set of rules. While rules ensure the technology works efficiently and is robust, they also comply with current building standards and methods. It integrates well with the construction processes, the performance metrics, and system compatibility criteria, which are crucial for integrating 3D printing into construction. While the technology mentioned in this section refers to the machine and tools that push concrete through the nozzle to create the potential for building walls layer by layer on construction sites, it includes the mixer and pump that prepare and pump the cement mixture, a moving frame guiding the nozzle and a simple sensor each layer is laid down correctly.

### **2.3.1 Performance metrics and System compatibility**

To ground this discussion of system requirements, the section presents a scenario involving the construction of exterior walls for a 50-square-meter small single-story home built with a gantry-based extrusion system, creating a situation that reflects the

majority of real-world 3D-printed objects. While this setup reflects the gantry-based systems commonly used by companies such as ICON, it consists of a fiber-reinforced concrete mix made to achieve a yield stress of 500-2500 Pa and plastic viscosity of 0.5-2 Pa · s, fed through the system with real-time pressure and flow sensors to ensure consistency (Zhang et al., 2022) and deposits 20 mm layers by following toolpaths generated from a BIM model. Since this use case is fixed, a clear context can be established to define both functional and non-functional requirements, ensuring that the subsequent requirements are relevant and meaningful.

### **2.3.1.1 Functional Requirements**

These requirements specify key performance metrics to ensure the printed structure meets the essential criteria for integration with conventional building systems.

#### **Machine-Material Interoperability**

The compatibility between printable material and extrusion hardware is crucial for successful 3D printing. The printable material must have a yield stress and plastic viscosity of 500-2500 Pa and 0.5-2 Pa·s, respectively, for successful pumping and rapid buildability (Zhang et al., 2022). An automated feedback system, where pressure and flow sensors send real-time data to the printer's control, adjusts speed and stroke to achieve the required rheological property for on-site printing. A difference in ambient temperature or water content can result in nozzle blockage or undesired adhesion, affecting the quality of the printed product and the printer's productivity.

#### **Dimensional Accuracy and Tolerance Control**

High geometric accuracy is expected when using 3D concrete printing to fit with either prefabricated components or adjacent sections. Several studies have been conducted to ensure this geometric accuracy. One of the most notable methods is the hybrid construction technique (integrating additive manufacturing with subtractive processes)—a study by Buswell et al. (2022) illustrates that hybrid manufacturing reduced errors significantly. Wall thickness deviations of approximately 15 mm in 3D concrete printing were reduced to about 2 mm when hybrid construction was employed. Additionally,

hybrid construction significantly reduced the standard deviation of surface flatness from 1.06 mm to 0.16 mm.

### **Structural Performance Benchmarks**

While 3D printed components are expected to demonstrate high compressive strength of over 31 MPa and satisfying flexural strength to comply with conventional building codes, supplementary cementitious materials (SCMs), such as fly ash, are crucial to ensure satisfactory performance, as they enhance the inter-layer bond quality and mechanical strength of the printed components (Colyn et al., 2024). SCMs maintain 90% of their flexural strength after 24 hours, compared to the traditional cement mixture, indicating that 3D printed components have great potential and can comply with building codes (Nerella et al., 2019).

### **Environmental Adaptability**

Given that construction sites are exposed to the open air, this results in fluctuations in temperature and humidity, which affect printing and hydration. For that reason, modern 3D concrete printing has introduced climate control measures such as mixing 3D-printed concrete with Calcined oyster-shell powder (CS), which includes CS, to intensify hydration heat and, in turn, reduce the temperature sensitivity of the 3D-printed concrete while maintaining the curing temperature at 20 degrees Celsius and a humidity of 95% enhances the mechanical properties of 3D-printed concrete (Wie & Zhang, 2024).

#### **2.3.1.2 Non-functional Requirements**

These requirements focus on quality attributes that support consistent performance and describe how the printing system should operate.

#### **Maintenance, Flexibility, and Consistency**

Meeting cost expectations and achieving the project timelines of 3D printing requires high flexibility and scalability in compliance with commercial requirements. It must allow the addition of components without interrupting the work or compromising the performance. It must also maintain its quality and be consistent in its results, as precision and repeatability are crucial. Although the initial cost of 3D printers is typically

high, they can significantly reduce construction time and lower the long-term operational costs. Additionally, it must ensure ease of use, be easy to learn, and provide troubleshooting and maintenance (Trejo-Morales et al., 2024).

### **2.3.2 Workflow Adaptation and Process Engineering**

Integrating 3D printing into construction necessitates the redefinition and reorganization of conventional construction processes. Conventional construction follows the steps of excavation, foundation, formwork, casting, curing, and finishing; however, these processes differ when 3D printing is adopted. Some processes may repeat and evolve, while others, such as excavation and foundation, remain constant. However, formwork and casting are merged into a single process, and reinforcement, routing, and finishing must be performed through layer deposition (Bhusal & Kshirsagar, 2020).

#### **3D Concrete Printing Workflow**

As stated above, traditional construction processes differ and take significantly longer compared to 3D printing. A specially designated crew performs the conventional steps, and there is always considerable downtime between each step. On the other hand, 3D concrete printing eliminates some of these steps and combines others. 3D printing enables concrete to be directly deposited into its final form, eliminating the need for formwork. However, the 3D printing process can be complicated when multiple tasks, such as embedding conduits and sensors, must be done simultaneously. Parallel coordination of the construction teams is necessary to manage the complexity (Nguyen-Van et al., 2022).

#### **Design to Print Sequencing**

A successful workflow for 3D printing technology involves transforming architectural designs into instructions for the machine to read. Beginning from CAD or the digital blueprint, the model is translated into printable layers using slicing software such as Cura, Slic3r, or the Autodesk 3D Print Extension as shown below.

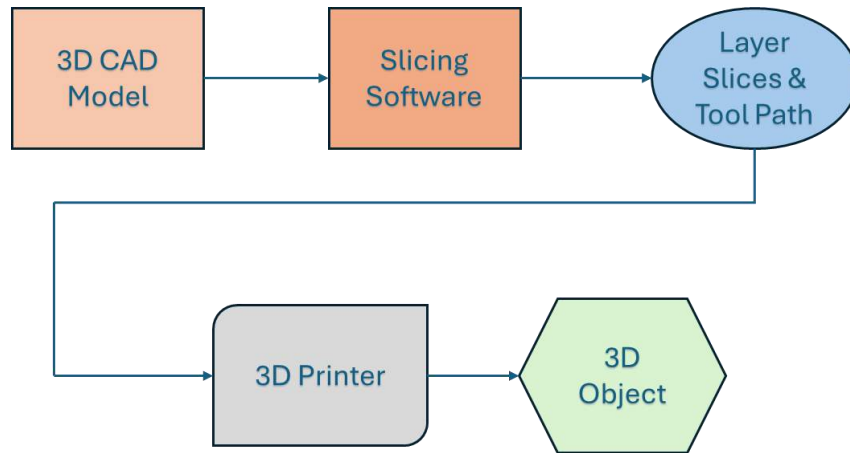


Figure 9: Typical workflow of 3D printing

These layers have different specifications, such as speed, height, and nozzle path. The specifications are then converted to be understood by the 3D printer. To avoid any print errors, process engineers always verify the models, simulate the printing process, and adjust the design to ensure it is suitable for the printer (Tay et al., 2017).

### Process Monitoring

Real-time monitoring has significantly changed workflow adaptation. Misalignments in 3D concrete printing can occur due to small flow rate or temperature changes.

Therefore, modern printers have integrated sensors that monitor the extrusion process, temperature, and bead width. Depending on the analysis, the system can adjust itself to provide desired results (M., 2025).

### Modular Printing Approaches

Structures, especially large-scale ones, are rarely printed in their entirety, and the usual procedure involves printing different components, such as walls, stairs, or facade panels, separately and then joining them later.

Another frequent procedure is a phased workflow, where one team reinforces a previously printed structure while another component is printed. This method offers various benefits, including risk reduction and improved quality (Jipa & Dillenburger, 2022).

## **Print Downtime Management**

Although 3D printing significantly reduces downtime compared to traditional construction methods, it is still susceptible to disruptions. Several mishaps can occur, from power loss to pump failures to weather interruption. Therefore, the workflow should include a contingency plan. Since resuming work after an interruption is not easy and requires time, several contingency options must be planned. Planning is essential for workflow competency to ensure high uptime (Burd, 2024).

### **2.3.3 Workforce Transformation and Cultural Adaptation**

While integrating 3D printing depends on changes in material and process, as well as transforming workforce structure and cultural orientation, this section discusses several human factors crucial to implementing 3D printing in construction, including skills development, interdisciplinary collaboration, cultural barriers, and institutional readiness. The most vital factor in fully adopting 3D printing depends on the industry's willingness and ability to transform its workforce.

#### **Redefining Roles in a Digitally Mediated Construction workflow**

Introducing additive manufacturing into construction necessitates the replacement of conventional roles with hybrid skill sets (Ozkan, 2023). Traditional roles, such as rebar placement, formwork, and manual masonry work, could be replaced with new roles, including parametric design, digital slicing, and process monitoring. Construction 3D printing relies on print operators and AM workflow coordinators as central members of project teams. It also combines professions such as civil engineering, architecture, and computer science, replacing conventional practice. Although the skill and understanding of CAD and BIM are necessary, the hybrid skillset also requires knowledge of the other 3D printing processes.

#### **Education and Training Initiatives**

Initiating new training programs that encompass the fundamental knowledge of construction and digital manufacturing is crucial for addressing skill gaps, and numerous institutions and research centers have already commenced this effort. For example, Loughborough University in the United Kingdom offers CAD/CAM (Computer-Aided

Design/Computer-Aided Manufacturing) 3D cutting and computer-controlled 3D printing at a complex structures facility within its School of Architecture, Building, and Civil Engineering program. Additionally, by working with industry partners, the program prepares students for advanced roles in construction 3D printing (Loughborough University, 2014). Because there are few construction-related programs with dedicated courses in 3D printing and digital manufacturing, as well as job training development, most students learn about additive manufacturing through pilot projects without a solid foundation to fully utilize the technology.

### **Cultural Resistance and Perceptions of Automation**

Looking beyond the shortage of a trained workforce, cultural or stakeholder perceptions of new technological advancements pose the biggest challenges for 3D printing adoption. Some of the reasons stakeholders are skeptical about the full adoption of the technology include unclear financial performance, insufficient intellectual property protections, and the need for the technology to be more effective (Mogali et al., 2023). The cultural resistance to adopting technology mostly comes from small to medium-sized construction firms, which comprise most global construction companies.

### **Institutional Capacity**

Training the construction workforce to adapt to digital manufacturing has been slow progress. Germany has initiated a project to address this challenge by funding pilot projects that integrate robotics and digital construction in higher educational institutions (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, 2020). While this demonstrates a commitment to transforming the workforce, such initiatives are rare and have not been widely adopted as the norm.

### **Resilient Workforce**

As stated, building a digitally capable workforce is essential for fully adopting 3D printing. Offering education and skills training at vocational and professional development levels, while providing an interdisciplinary learning experience with 3D printing, can facilitate partnerships between academic and industrial sectors. This

approach can have a positive impact on creating a resilient workforce that meets real-world requirements.

### **2.3.4 On-site Logistics and Infrastructure Readiness**

3D printing technology has been transitioning from research laboratories to practical use, and with the transition comes the complexity of on-site logistics and a shortage of industry preparedness. While 3D printing unlocks groundbreaking digital applications and efficient material use, it faces several challenges stemming from conventional practices. This section examines the reasons for transforming logistical systems, including site preparation, utility coordination, and safety protocols, to accommodate 3D printing.

#### **Site Preparation and Environmental Compatibility**

Unlike conventional construction sites, a stable and level surface free from moisture variation and temperature fluctuation is crucial for successful 3D printing. Additive manufacturing requires a leveled plane with consistency and mechanical integrity, unlike traditional construction, which tolerates changing terrain. Additionally, wind, rain, and other environmental conditions can easily disrupt extrusion quality and hydration rate. Protective covers are crucial to avoid additional site logistics and costs and ensure a high-quality product (Henderson, 2022).

#### **Printer Mobility and Positioning**

Depending on the 3D printer deployed, whether gantry-based, robotic-arm, or mobile printers, specific requirements come with the machine. For instance, Gantry systems require a mounted gantry frame for the printer to operate in the three-dimensional plane (McClements & Keane, 2025). On the other hand, robotic arms ensure more flexibility and require a more power-secured platform compared to the gantry system (Standard Bots, 2025).

#### **Power Supply**

3D printers consume 6 kW per hour for on-site additive manufacturing. There is a substantial need for electrical power for large-scale printers due to the high-temperature material extrusion process. While this may suffice in developed countries, a lack of a

stable power supply is a significant constraint in third-world countries, preventing the adoption of 3D printing in underdeveloped areas (Chiusoli, 2024).

### **Digital Connectivity**

Interfacing with several digital tools, including BIM platforms and modeling software, is crucial for the practical functionality of 3D printing systems. A stable Wi-Fi or 5G connection must always be provided to ensure a reliable connection, which enables a real-time print path and facilitates automated monitoring. Digital connectivity becomes a barrier since construction sites are not well-equipped digitally (5G Lab, 2024).

### **Safety and Regulatory Considerations**

The lack of traditional safety protocols to address 3D printing mechanisms in ongoing projects creates a need for the involvement of local regulators to help address issues such as regulatory frameworks and zoning strategies, thereby avoiding delays (Satish & Umar, 2025).

## **2.4 Regulatory and Institutional Context**

While integrating 3D printing in construction depends on the technical feasibility and relies on the regulatory and institutional framework, it can define safety protocols, approval processes, and normative pressures. In this section, factors such as the codes and standards being developed to address the peculiarities of additive manufacturing in construction will be discussed, including ensuring compliance with certification and quality control, the involvement of legal and insurance factors in shaping the risk and contract of a project, regulatory compliance, and convergence.

### **2.4.1 Codes, Standards, and Safety Protocols**

Throughout the years, construction codes assumed cast-in-place or precast concrete without accounting for layer-by-layer deposition or integrated robotics. However, the emergence of new technologies in the construction industry necessitates new provisions recognized by standard bodies. As a result, international standards bodies and regulatory agencies have introduced new regulations to ensure that 3D-printed construction components comply with safety, durability, and performance standards.

This section delves into the new provisions regarding acceptance criteria, material consistency, and tolerance standards.

### **Emergence of 3D Concrete Printing- Specific Acceptance Criteria**

In December of 2021, AC509, which is a designation for the International Code Council's Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) titled "3D Automated Construction Technology for 3D Concrete Walls," was published. The evaluation procedures for material properties, structural performance, and durability were specified under AC509 to be used as a mandate by building officials to approve 3D printed walls. Since establishing this code, manufacturers have submitted their concrete mixes and printing processes for testing, which is conducted to assess load-bearing capacity, fire resistance, and environmental exposure. If the results are satisfactory, the manufacturers receive an Evaluation Service Report (ESR) that jurisdictions can reference to issue permits (Mullen, 2022).

### **Residential Guidance Via IRC Appendix AW**

In 2021, the International Residential Code (IRC) introduced Appendix AW, which adapts conventional dwelling provisions for 3D-printed components to facilitate small-scale and residential applications. Under Appendix AW, AC509 is referenced for core material and structural criteria, which guide users to UL3401. UL3401 is used to test the printer, fabrication process, and materials to clarify that the same properties of elements are produced. Using the document builders, they can create a report to show that their building assemblies comply with the relevant codes and standards. In other words, this report provides the technical information necessary to inspect and approve 3D-printed buildings, thereby accelerating the approval process (VERZONI, 2024).

### **International Harmonization: ISO/ASTM 52939**

The International Organization of Standardization (ISO) together with the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), after recognizing the nature of 3D construction printing, published ISO/ASTM 52939:2023 titled "Additive Manufacturing for Construction— Qualification principles— Structural and infrastructure elements",

aiming to provide safety, quality, and efficiency within the additive manufacturing industry. The establishment of this document highlights the necessities that are beneficial as a starting point for producing and delivering high-quality 3D printed components (Shaikhmag et al., 2023).

The ISO/ASTM 52939:2023 was adopted by Standardization bodies across the European Union, as EN ISO 52939. As a result, this brought a harmonized cross-border recognized framework of additive-manufactured concrete systems across member states (DIN, 2024).

### **Printable Material Classifications**

Repurposing the traditional concrete codes is necessary since they do not address the rheological demands of extrusion. As a result, the AC509 and ISO/ASTM bring forth print-specific material classes, which focus on pumpability and buildability (Applied Testing & Geosciences, 2024). With 3D concrete printing, standardized test methods, such as the slump test, ensure that suppliers maintain consistent performance and prevent issues like layer sagging or nozzle clogging (Saak et al., 2003).

### **Dimensional Accuracy and Tolerance Standards**

There is little to no tolerance regarding the precision of 3D printed components. They are expected to fit precisely with precast or adjacent structures more tightly than typical prefabricated units. According to AC509 and EN ISO 52939 specifications, horizontal and vertical tolerances are expected to be no more than a few millimeters over a long span, as verified by both Laser scan's factory and in the field. However, these dimensional constraints become beneficial when they reduce error and rework on the site (AC509, 2023).

### **Machine Safety and Hazard Controls**

Large 3D printers pose safety risks due to their robotic motion and high-pressure pumps. This necessitates the establishment of codes such as the Safety Integrity Level (SIL) 2, which requires emergency-stop circuits and light-curtain exclusion zones

around moving gantries. Interlocks that halt extrusion if personnel enter the protected area sometimes include these (GmbH, 2025).

### **Pilot Project Exemptions**

Balancing innovation and oversight is a crucial method for regulating new technology projects. Dubai jurisdictions introduced a grant called “sandbox frameworks”, which limits approvals for pilot projects to follow strict reporting requirements and be audited by third parties. The framework enables municipalities to authorize housing experiments and collect performance data simultaneously. Such data includes structural behavior, durability, and safety, which help inform code updates (UAE Regulations Lab, 2025).

In conclusion, a detailed regulatory ecosystem for 3D printing in the construction industry was established through the definition of clear pathways for performance validation, machine safety, dimensional control, and pilot experiments.

### **2.4.2 Certification, Approval, and Quality Control**

Certifications and quality-control systems help 3D printing transition from research labs to actual building sites. These certifications assure integrity and safety to regulators, contractors, and users. Unlike conventional cast-in-place concrete, 3D concrete printing requires evaluating the printing equipment and the materials it deposits.

### **ICC-ES AC509 and Evaluation Service Reports**

As stated at the beginning of the previous section, the ICC-ES published the AC509 in 2021, which provided building officials with a structured pathway to renew and approve 3D concrete-printed wall systems. The AC509 code followed simple steps, where process documentation, mix designs, and printer configurations details are submitted by manufacturers for laboratory testing, mechanical performance checking, durability testing, and fire resistance (AC509, 2023). If the testing is deemed successful, the ICC-ES provides an Evaluation Service Report (ESR) that can be used as a reference for code compliance determinations by building departments.

### **UL3401: Investigation Outline**

In addition to AC509, fire endurance, alternate-material provisions such as thermal barrier integrity, indoor air quality, and machinery safety are addressed under UL3041: Outline of Investigation for 3D-printed building construction. Moreover, the UL3401 code partnered with influential firms, such as Mighty Buildings, to develop a uniform methodology for evaluating printers, cementitious mixes, and other processes (Verzoni, 2024).

### **On-Site Quality Assurance and Field Testing**

Approving factory certification does not remove the necessity for on-site quality assurance. Although guidelines such as AC509 require contractors to provide printed samples from walls to test compressive and interlayer bond strength, workers are still required to conduct on-site quality checks to ensure everything is built correctly and adhere to the permitted tolerances. These workers use laser scanners to verify that the parts are the correct size and ensure that the measurements remain within a few millimeters of the allowed tolerances. Consequently, if errors are found during measurement, they must be corrected immediately, as minor errors can cause substantial problems later (ICC, 2023).

### **Digital traceability and Audit Trails**

Digital traceability is one of the key levers of modern certification frameworks, enhancing transparency and expediting audits. 3D printers and other material mixers have a system that automatically records details such as batch numbers, temperature, speed, humidity, errors, and maintenance alerts, which can be sent to secure online systems, such as cloud-based or blockchain systems. The data sent to these systems cannot be altered or faked. This system ensures faster and more reliable inspections while also providing enhanced quality control. Additionally, they reduce dependence on manual logbooks and minimize the risks of data tampering (Langefeld & Covey, 2025).

### **Personnel Certification and Competency**

Due to the complex nature of 3D concrete printing, specialized training is essential for personnel such as machine operators, quality control inspectors, and maintenance

workers. Skills such as Digital slicing, material handling, emergency procedures, and safety rules should be taught beforehand. Guidelines such as AC509 and UL 3401 state that workers must complete a minimum number of working hours and pass skill tests to demonstrate their proficiency, as required by equipment manufacturers and approved training centers. Additionally, personnel must regularly update their certifications and stay current on new safety standards, improved methods, and best industry practices (ICC, 2021).

### **Lifecycle Monitoring and Maintenance Certification**

3D-printed buildings require long-term monitoring to assess their safety and structural integrity. Regular physical inspections, therefore, are required under new rules even after the construction is completed. Inspectors are required to take samples from walls to test for weathering and seismic stresses (Rekhi & Stern, 2022). Moreover, formalizing lifecycle monitoring protocols and advocating for digital twin systems can help track the structural health and issue maintenance alerts (Gardan et al., 2025).

### **2.4.3 Legal and Insurance Implications**

The transition of 3D printing technology from small-scale tests to actual construction projects creates legal and insurance issues that are typically not encountered in conventional construction projects. Unlike traditional construction, 3D printing is susceptible to unique problems, such as printer malfunctions, software errors, hacking, and the unpredictable nature of printing materials, which necessitate the industry to establish standard practices for liability, insurance coverage, and contract terms. Stakeholders have developed innovative solutions such as joint-venture agreements to share risks and custom accident insurance policies, which will be discussed in this section.

### **Joint-Venture Agreements and Liability Allocation**

3D printing in construction projects requires the collaboration of several stakeholders, including general contractors, technology providers, material suppliers, and software developers, who are all responsible for different aspects of the project. Due to the involvement of multiple parties, determining liability for various issues, such as design

errors or printer malfunctions, presents complications. Joint ventures are established to assign accountability to avoid confusion and legal disputes. They follow the best industry practices outlined by insurance experts and categorize key 3D printing risks according to property damage, product defects, cyber-risks, and intellectual property disputes. Not only do joint-venture agreements assign accountability, but they also specify each party's tasks when the printed structure does not align with the digital model (Liberty Mutual, 2024).

### **Technology Errors and Equipment Breakdown**

Standard policies address the issues of traditional construction, such as builders' risks or general liability coverage, but not the unique problems associated with 3D printing technology. 3D printing problems include software errors, corrupted design files, or mechanical failures. Now, major insurers provide extensions to protect against tech-related issues that could damage the printed structures (J. Friedman & Buschmann, 2017).

Moreover, equipment breakdown insurance, which is essential for 3D printing in construction, ensures that printer malfunctions do not halt the entire project, thereby causing expensive delays and interruptions. Therefore, contractors and developers add tailored insurance to their policies to mitigate these risks.

### **Cyber-Liability and Data Integrity**

Since 3D printing in construction relies on cloud-based design software and internet connections, it creates new vulnerabilities that hackers can exploit to alter design files, weaken building structures, or steal proprietary printing methods. To mitigate risks, insurers recommend incorporating cyber-liability insurance into construction policies. Unlike standard cyber insurance, these specialized policies protect from scenarios where a cyber-attack can cause physical harm due to an altered design, leading to a collapsed structure. These cyber-liability coverages include costs for investigating the breach or restoring tampered digital systems (PWC., Industry 4.0: Building the digital enterprise, 2018).

### **Product Liability and Intellectual-Property Coverage**

3D printing introduces unique insurance considerations for finished components. These finished structures include two products, the physical printed product and the digital design. The physical product requires product liability insurance, and the design file needs intellectual property (IP) Insurance. Standard liability policies do not cover intellectual property (IP) infringement or design file distributions that result in defects (J. Friedman & Buschmann, 2017). As a result, firms now have tailored IP protections to endorse legal defense costs for IP disputes.

### **Risk Management Best Practices**

3D printing companies are also implementing risk management strategies. These strategies include programs that include prototype testing, structural load trials, and safety protocols. While also working on tracking adhesion and maintaining printer exclusion zones to reduce incidents. Every activity, from print runs, sensor readings, and maintenance actions, is documented and audited by insurers and evaluated by evaluators.

#### **2.4.4 Institutional Pressures and Global Regulatory Comparisons**

The worldwide acceptance of 3D construction printing is driven by technological capabilities and institutional forces that shape regulations and their implementation. These forces include coercive pressures, such as laws and codes; normative pressures, including professional bodies and academic standards; and mimetic pressures, which arise from firms copying successful practices. This section will discuss these pressures and provide an overview of regulatory frameworks worldwide.

#### **Coercive Pressures**

Many government jurisdictions worldwide have introduced binding rules to govern 3D printing activities in construction. To start with, the United States, under the International Building Code, references the ICC-ES AC509 acceptance criteria for 3D-printed walls, which instructs building departments to first acquire ESRs' acceptance as part of the permitting process for 3D-printed components (AC509, 2023).

In Dubai's further perspective approach, the No. 24 decree 2021 clearly states that a quarter of the buildings should be constructed using 3D printing technology. The legislation also aims to enhance efficiency by monitoring project implementation to ensure compliance with standards and safety, certifying plants that produce 3D printed concrete mix, and reviewing designs to issue permits for 3D printing projects (Dubai Municipality, 2024). Additionally, the European Commission's work program of 2025 ENISO52939, the European version of ISO/ASTM 52939:2023, dictates that all member states' building regulations align with international qualification principles. Moreover, pilot projects in China must adhere to the guidelines of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and require local governments to supervise and verify printed wall panels against national standards (F\_126, 2019).

### **Normative Pressures**

Academic institutions and Professional associations have pushed for the adoption of 3D printing by embedding competencies into codes of practice and curricula. The American Concrete Institute (ACI) and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) recommend quality control guidelines for printed materials and structures that can encourage the acceptance of ISO/ASTM 52939 best practices even without the mandate of local codes (Sher, 2023). Educational Institutions, such as ETH Zurich and Singapore Polytechnic, have begun providing hands-on modules on 3D printing for construction. These initiatives by educational institutions set normative expectations for competency requirements in digital fabrication.

### **Mimetic Pressures**

Firms seeking market attention mimic 3D printing projects that received regulatory approval. For instance, ICON's rapid receipt of an ICC-ES approval for its 3-beam wall system created a massive incentive for competitors to achieve the same legitimate status. Companies such as Buffalo Black 3D corporation had the ICC-ES revise its acceptance criteria to compete in the market by acquiring approval (ICC, 2025). Similarly, a pilot project called Grange Close social-housing pilot in Ireland constructed with the EN ISO 52939 3D concrete printing standards received much appraisal for its efficiency and sustainability which created a push for the initiation of the construction

social housing with modern construction methods such as additive manufacturing in a sustainable and waste reducing manner (Galway County Council, 2022). Moreover, another pilot project in the Netherlands called the Milestone, one of the first commercially leased 3D-printed homes, received approval from the municipality for its technical and regulatory feasibility. This validation from the city created a way for other developers to adopt similar strategies and mimic the innovative design of the Milestone (Boffey, 2021).

## **2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives**

The theoretical and conceptual perspectives section provides the necessary support to understand how 3D printing technology interacts with institutional and organizational dynamics. Theories such as Socio-Technical Systems (STS) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) can be used to analyze factors influencing the adoption and integration of additive construction technologies. These frameworks can clarify the way the technical capacity of 3D printing intertwines with users' perceptions, regulatory pressures, and expectations. This section will also highlight the gaps in existing research, acknowledging the lack of empirical evidence.

### **2.5.1 Socio-Technical Systems Theory**

The Socio-technical systems (STS) theory states that all workflows are made of mutual reliance between technical and social subsystems, which together optimize system performance. As the adoption of 3D printing rapidly increases in the industry, it has become increasingly clear that technology needs to be understood in terms more comprehensive than technical terms. The STS theory suggests that progress is achieved with more than just advanced machinery, but also involves workers, managers, and regulators. For instance, the rapid growth of 3D printing is driven by the acceptance of construction crews and building codes. According to the Tavistock Institute's work in the 1950s, the STS notes that optimal machine performance results from integrating social and technical design (Abbas & Michael, 2023). This perspective on construction 3D printing suggests that simultaneous changes in roles, skills, and organizational structure should accompany the adoption of technology.

## **Co-Design of Technical and Human Subsystems**

The primary concept of STS theory is that implementing technology within an organization should involve integrating the social environment to achieve sustainable change. This means that in terms of integrating 3D construction printing, retaining workers and redefining roles is necessary. As a result, using this method can positively impact how work is done and technical systems are used (Baxter & Sommerville, 2010).

## **Adaptive Capacity and Organizational Readiness**

STS also emphasizes the importance of an organization's adaptive capacity in successfully integrating technology. The company's capacities, such as openness to experimentation, leadership support, and the availability of cross-functional teams capable of absorbing disruption, impact adaptability. The organizations that are first to adapt 3D construction printing are those working on affordable and social housing, such as Germany's first publicly subsidized residential building, which rents for six euros per square meter (ZKG, 2024), disaster relief and emergency housing, and innovative residential developers.

## **Human-Machine Interfaces and Ergonomics**

According to Trist (1981), new technologies ensure flexibility and sophistication but also raise challenges. The study emphasizes the importance of designing systems with consideration for human needs and organizational context. The lack of optimization between technical systems and social systems leads to poor system effectiveness, reduced adaptability, increased user error, resistance to adoption, and ineffective organizational performance.

## **Feedback Loops and Continuous Learning**

Feedback loops and a continuous learning system are other strengths of STS theory. Unlike traditional construction, which uses a linear design-bid-build method, 3D printing involves constant refinement of both hardware and software. Data for every print activity, including print quality, material behavior, and environmental interactions, can be used to improve future prints and processes. The data provided by the printer can be

read and analyzed by engineers and site crews, leading to enhanced printing processes (Li, 2024).

### **Governance, Ethics, and Accountability**

Borras and Edler (2020) argue that governance must be reflexive, context-sensitive, and inclusive, as technological transformations impact a wide range of societal aspects. The government plays significant roles as observer, warner, mitigator, promoter, and watchdog. The state's involvement is substantial. It should not govern alone but in unity with all concerned parties since effective governance is crucial to guiding technological transformation towards societal goals.

In conclusion, the Socio-Technical Systems Theory provides a robust conceptual framework for understanding the integration of 3D printing. It highlights that successful 3D printing depends not only on print speed, strength, and deformation but also on an organization's ability to redesign roles, retrain staff, and embed feedback loops.

### **2.5.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

Davis (1986) developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical framework to analyze the perception and adoption of new technological inventions. PU and PEU, also known as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, respectively, are two constructs that determine an individual's intention to use a technology. This predicts the adoption and acceptance of technology (Davis, 1987). This model is accepted throughout many healthcare, education, and manufacturing industries. It has also been increasingly used to study construction innovations, such as Building Information Management (BIM) and 3D printing. In terms of 3D construction printing, this theory provides a significant framework for evaluating the responses of professionals and regulators to technology.

### **Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Integration Expectations**

In TAM, perceived usefulness refers to the belief that technology can improve job performance. A study by Mei et al. (2023) clearly states that when contractors and other construction workers observe clear benefits such as reduced labor hours, minimized material waste, and increased safety, it positively affects workers' attitudes, creating

enjoyment. Enjoyment is a significant determinant of PU, making it more likely for the workers to accept the technology.

### **Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) and Digital Literacy**

PEU refers to how easily workers think they can learn and operate 3D printing systems. Factors such as intuitive slicing software and the straightforward user interface of robotic arms increase the likelihood of technology adoption. Developers and management should solicit frequent feedback from workers to optimize and adjust the technology, thereby increasing its acceptance (Mei et al., 2023).

### **External Variables: Organizational Support and Experience**

Organizational support, including leadership commitment, budget allocation for training, and a company's experience with BIM, significantly influences a company's ability to adapt to 3D concrete printing. According to a study by Anane et al., (1970), the seamless integration of BIM and 3D concrete printing allows the realization of complex designs with modeling tools and simultaneously controls the trajectory of the extruder and model parameters.

### **Multi-Stakeholder Adaptations of TAM**

Several stakeholders, including contractors, architects, regulators, insurers, and clients, have distinct responsibilities in 3DCP. TAM includes social influence and facilitating conditions that can help reduce work complexities. According to a study by Besklubova et al. (2024), codes and regulations are among the most influential factors in the adoption of technology. Authorities' endorsement of codes and regulations leads to an increase in PU from construction firms, as regulatory acceptance reduces project risk.

### **2.5.3 Institutional Theory**

Institutional Theory explains the decisions of construction companies to adopt or avoid 3D construction printing. It emphasizes how regulations, professional norms, and peer behavior are considered, rather than focusing solely on technical and economic benefits.

Regulatory frameworks such as AC509 or the European version EN ISO 52939 establish formal requirements for construction firms to build printed structures legally. Such codes make firms feel compelled to follow them and develop printing capabilities to compete in projects (Copley, 2022).

At the same time, professional bodies such as the American Concrete Institute and the Institution of Civil Engineers, which issue guidelines for best practices, help promote digital fabrication and 3D printing in the construction industry. These associations integrate 3DCP topics into training and certification programs, leading to professional managers viewing the technology as part of their professional duties.

Peer influences are also significant when leading firms such as ICON from the U.S. or Winsun from China complete high-profile printed homes and gain regulatory approval. This creates mimetic behavior in other companies to follow and maintain such legitimacy and market relevance.

Finally, institutional infrastructure, such as testing labs, training centers, and certification bodies, validates new materials and processes for the successful adoption of 3D construction printing.

#### **2.5.4 Research Gaps**

3D concrete printing is a rapidly advancing, innovative technology. However, several critical areas have yet to be explored. First, material standardization lacks a unified testing framework, resulting in variations in rheological and mechanical properties across different studies. Although similar materials such as cement, sand, and geopolymers are used, the lack of a standard mix design across studies results in significant variation in quantities and proportions. Second, the absence of a unified testing and validation framework causes complications in assessing mixture performance (Strohle et al., 2022). Another gap occurs in the long-term performance of printed materials. While durability tests are conducted to assess the short-term performance of compressive strength, their long-term performance after multiple environmental loadings remains unknown (Ning et al., 2021). Placement of reinforcement with 3D concrete is another challenge. Unlike traditional construction

methods, where reinforcement can be installed before concrete pouring, reinforcement placement is complicated in 3D printing processes (AMIRFIROOZKOOHI et al., 2024).

Another gap concerning quality control methods requires further study. Although laser scanning can be used for geometric inspections, its cost-effectiveness and scalability for large projects are unclear (Mawas et al., 2025). From an organizational perspective, workforce transformation or upskilling traditional construction workers for robotic operations remains limited (Mogaji et al., 2023).

Regarding regulatory pathways, there is a lack of comparative analysis of standards such as AC509 and EN ISO/ASTM 52939 on their implementation across different world regions.

### 3 Methodology

Guiding the systematic investigation of 3D printing can be integrated into construction practice by adopting a three-dimensional conceptual model that highlights three key areas: functional performance, regulatory compliance, and process adaptation, thereby forming the basis for an integration framework (Figure 9). Using the three elements in a triangular relationship, this study acknowledges that a successful 3D printed project must comply with structural requirements, adhere to relevant building codes and approval processes, and fit coherently into construction workflows.

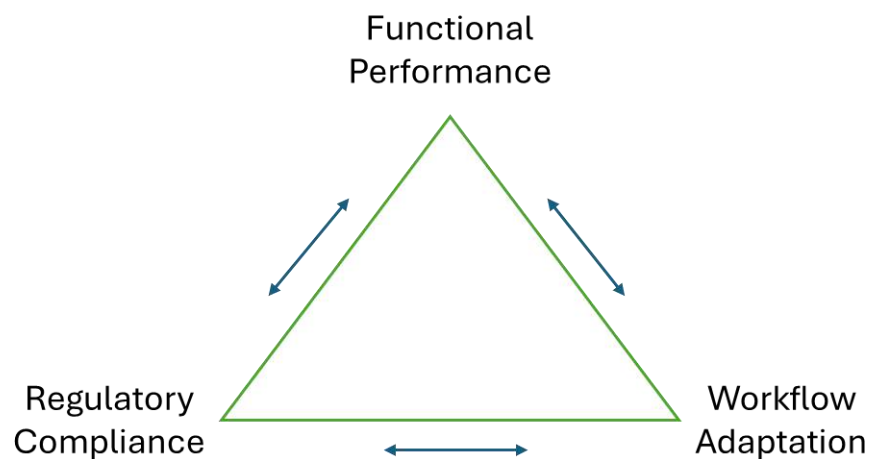


Figure 10: Conceptual model of Integration dimensions

This conceptual model serves two purposes: first, to provide a theoretical lens for relying on Socio-Technical Systems to theorize the evolution of both technical capabilities and organizational practices, and second, to utilize Institutional theory to demonstrate how codes shape the industry. Additionally, the Technical Acceptance Model acknowledges the importance of stakeholder perceptions in the decision to adopt the technology. The second is to act as a methodological compass, including case study selection and data collection, designed to examine the three dimensions in unison.

Basing on Yin's (2014) rationale for multiple-case designs, a set of secondary case studies has been selected that capture real-world projects that merge functional, regulatory, and workflow factors with an example such as, the material formulation of a printed wall (functional) should be tested and approved under ICC-ES AC509 or EN/ISO 52939 (regulatory) before site crews organize new roles such as print operators and BIM coordinators (workflow). In this way, each case can be treated as a holistic system by avoiding the division of issues and instead investigating how improvements or failures in one dimension ripple through the others.

To summarize, this research design is a specialized methodology that fully aligns with the conceptual model by making three dimensions explicit at the outset, structuring each following methodological step around the dimensions, and creating a clear pathway from empirical evidence to the development of a multi-dimensional integration framework by ensuring that the final recommendation will address how 3D printers perform technically while navigating regulatory landscapes and also reshaping construction workflows delivering a guide to adopting 3D printing in the built environment.

### **3.1 Reference Use Case**

As introduced in section 2.3.1, this study applies a gantry-based extrusion system that prints the exterior walls of a 50 square meter single-story residential unit, with fiber-reinforced concrete blend prepared by a mobile mixing station, which is then pumped through a progressive-cavity system to a 25 mm nozzle attached on a gantry frame with layers of 20 mm thickness deposited in continuous eight-hour shifts with environmental enclosure fixed at 20 °C with laser-based sensors monitoring bead geometry to ensure dimensional tolerances of  $\pm 5$  mm.

This reference scenario includes all three dimensions critical to the integration framework, through functionality, it needs precise material with machine compatibility and structural performance, not less than conventional masonry, whereas, regulatively, the approval should be acquired through the submission of compressive strength and durability data under ICC-ES AC509 and EN ISO 52939 and from workflow perspective,

traditional construction roles must transform into new roles such as print operator, BIM coordinators, and quality-control technicians which is necessary to revise scheduling and coordination.

Ultimately, by establishing this methodology with the example, the case study selection, data collection, and analysis remain closely tied to the real-world challenges of 3D printing in construction.

### **3.2 Case Selection and Mapping to Research Questions**

Four published 3D-printed construction projects are selected to provide a well-balanced insight into the three research questions, by finding their documented strengths un functional performance, regulatory engagement, and workflow adaptation with two residential projects such as the ICON House Zero in the United States and Winsun’s villa in China selected for their material formulations, print parameters, and structural test results making them well suited to illuminate functional performance. At the same time, Winsun’s project also provides an example of first national pilot regulations along with the Dutch COBOD/Van Wijnen providing regulatory contact under EN ISO 52939 and finally the Office of the Future in Dubai along with COBOD/Van Wijnen addressing workflow innovation questions through geographic and organizational lenses.

The following table maps each research question to four real projects across the globe, allowing for comparison between cases and building a strong foundation for developing an integration framework.

Table 2: Research questions mapped with real-world examples.

Case	Functional Performance	Regulatory Pathway	Workflow innovations
ICON House Zero (USA)	✓	✓	✓
Winsun Villa Complex (China)	✗	✓	✗
COBOD/ Van Winjen Home (Netherlands)	✓	✓	✓
Office of the Future (Dubai)	✓	✓	✓

The comparative table shows that all four case studies demonstrate at least one key aspect of integration and highlight the comprehensive benchmarks of integrating technology.

### 3.3 Data Collection Protocol

As stated earlier, this study gathers data in three separate categories to ensure evidence aligns with the conceptual model. Specific document types are identified and reviewed for each integration dimension. This enables the research to maintain consistency in data extraction and minimize researcher bias, while ensuring that all relevant metrics and narratives are captured for subsequent analysis.

Firstly, for the functional performance dimension, primary data sources will be collected from published material specifications and structural test reports. Peer-reviewed proceedings also provide strength tests such as compressive strength curves, interlayer bond-shear values, and flexural strength measurements.

Second, since the regulatory compliance dimension relies on official documents and certification records, Evaluation Service Reports (ESRs) issued under ICC-ES AC509 and EN ISO 52939 reports were collected from code-authority repositories, where jurisdictions publish code amendments, government gazettes, and municipal filings

were retrieved and annotated. Approval timelines and required test protocols were extracted to review regulatory artifacts and capture details across both the U.S. and Europe, mapping how different regulatory bodies validate 3D-printed elements.

Third, digital design artifacts and site narratives were examined to document the dimension of workflow adaptation. On-site process reports, such as daily construction logs, shift schedules, and crew role descriptions, were collected from industry case studies and detailed how traditional tasks such as formwork installation were reconfigured around continuous printing operations.

By adhering to this protocol, the study ensures that each case contributes consistent and relevant evidence by grouping data sources and extracting a predefined set of metrics and narratives.

### **3.4 Thematic Analysis and Framework Development**

Thematic analysis proceeded in two sequential stages to distill cross-case insights into actionable framework components.

#### **Stage 1 – Dimensional Coding**

All extracted data, such as quantitative observations (e.g., compressive strength, layer adhesion) and qualitative records (e.g., operator narratives, permit correspondence), were systematically labeled using three predefined dimensions aligned with the research questions:

- **Functional Performance:** material specifications and sensor logs
- **Regulatory Compliance:** ICC-ES/EN ISO approval steps, submission timelines, and audit findings
- **Workflow Adaptation:** BIM-to-print logs, on-site coordination, and contingency reports

Each datum retained its original case identifier and source reference, ensuring traceability. This organization facilitated the transformation of heterogeneous case material into structured clusters, clarifying the distribution of evidence per research question.

## **Stage 2 – Theme Extraction:**

Within each dimension, related codes were aggregated into candidate themes based on frequency and cross-case support. For instance, codes like "pump pressure fluctuations," "admixture dosing," and "real-time flow feedback" coalesced into the *Material–Machine Alignment* theme.

1. Material–Machine Alignment (Functional)
2. Structured Permit Pathway (Regulatory)
3. Digital–Field Coordination (Workflow)

These themes encapsulate critical integration factors: optimizing rheology for structural integrity; defining clear lab testing, documentation, and approval sequences; and embedding digital checkpoints within site operations.

**From Themes to Framework:** Each theme directly informed a corresponding pillar of the integration framework:

- **Functional Pillar:** Recommends sensor-driven controls for dimensional/strength targets.
- **Regulatory Pillar:** Provides checklists for key approvals, submission requirements, and monitoring intervals aligned with ICC-ES AC509 and EN/ISO 52939.
- **Workflow Pillar:** Defines digital-to-field handoff procedures, site protocols, and error-remediation routines.

Anchoring each pillar in these empirically supported case themes ensures that the framework focuses on the factors most critical for scaling extrusion-based 3D concrete printing from proof of concept to certified construction practice.

## **4 Integrated Findings**

This chapter compiles and analyzes evidence from key case studies—including ICON's House Zero, Winsun's Villas, COBOD/Van Wijnen's Home, and Dubai's Office of the Future. By systematically organizing these findings, it lays the groundwork for later analysis.

### **4.1 Functional Integration**

This section examines the functional performance dimension of 3D-printed construction, while focusing on material and machine compatibility, structural behavior, and dimensional accuracy by drawing upon the four case studies in Chapter 3 and the reference use case introduced earlier, it outlines key empirical findings that inform the requirements for integrating extrusion-based systems into mainstream construction. The question addressed in this section is: “What are the key functional parameters required for integrating 3D printing into construction?”

#### **4.1.1 Structural Performance Outcomes**

To integrate 3D-printed components into traditional construction, it is essential to ensure satisfactory structural performance. This section evaluates compressive strength and interlayer bond strength based on documented results from extrusion-based case studies.

The compressive strength of ordinary Portland cement-based concrete mixes used in 3D printing ranges between 31 and 55 MPa (Colyn et al., 2024), which aligns with the standard structural thresholds widely used in construction mandates, typically 30-35 MPa at 28 days. High-performance mixtures incorporating superplasticizers have achieved strengths over 100 MPa, although these specialized formulations remain less common due to their higher cost and complexity.

Specific to extrusion-scale applications, ICON's Lavacrete has demonstrated high performance when printed using their Vulcan system; early-age strengths of 13.8-24.1 MPa (2,000-3,500 psi) are routinely achieved on-site (ICON, 2024). These published

data, supported by technical briefs and case reports, demonstrate that proper mix formulation and machine control yield compressive strength outcomes comparable to traditional poured concrete.

Interlayer bond strength is also vital in additive manufacturing. Studies consistently report interlayer bond strengths between 1.8 and 4.5 MPa, with typical values ranging from 2 to 3 MPa, and these remain above the minimum shear strength required by structural codes, which is 2 MPa. Direct-shear experiments reveal that despite reductions in bond strength due to time gaps between layers, bonds retain up to 80% of the bulk material's strength if deposition occurs within 30 minutes and prints use bonding-enhancing admixtures.

Additionally, studies demonstrate that modifications to material composition, such as improved admixture mixes incorporating polycarboxylate superplasticizers and bentonite, can enhance bond retention by up to 60% after 30 minutes, ensuring sufficient structural continuity even under ideal conditions.

The data confirms that extrusion-based 3D-printed calls can achieve structural performance comparable to conventionally reinforced concrete when carefully controlled material design, layer timing, and admixture use are employed. For the integration framework:

- 28-day compressive strength benchmarks should aim for > 31 MPa.
- Interlayer bond strength targets should be set at > 2 MPa, with attention to time-gap influence and bond-enhancing measures.
- Material formulation and print timing protocols are essential process controls for maintaining reliable structural performance.

Using these structural requirements, the study establishes a solid foundation for the functional dimension of its integration framework, utilizing validated and real-world data.

#### **4.1.2 Dimensional Accuracy and Tolerance Control**

For 3D-printed components, achieving precise accuracy and tight tolerances is fundamental to ensure a reliable interface with conventional structures and structural

integrity. 3D concrete printing relies on layer-by-layer execution and feedback systems to achieve the required precision, unlike traditional formwork-based construction, which imposes geometrical constraints. This section examines key studies and project reports documenting geometric performance and discusses their implications for dimensional requirements within the integration framework.

The accuracy expectations and standards for small components in industrial 3D printing fields, such as metal and polymer extrusion systems, typically range between  $\pm 0.05$  and  $\pm 0.2$  mm. For large-format printing, yields tolerances are 0.1-0.5% of part size (Unionfab, 2024). Translating these benchmarks into large-scale concrete extrusion, even minor deviations become significant. For instance, on a 10 m-long wall, a tolerance of 0.2% equates to  $\pm 20$  mm, which is above acceptable construction norms. The range that aligns with modular construction standards corresponds roughly to 0.05% tolerance on a 10 m wall, translating to  $\pm 5$  mm on a 10 m wall.

COBOD's BOD2 gantry printer, used in the Netherlands for a single-family house, has layer height control up to 40 mm (Printerra, 2025). Although detailed post-print deviation statistics are not publicly released, field deployments include on-site laser scanning of exterior panels to verify core flatness and edge alignment. These scans typically showed maximum geometric deviations within  $\pm 5$  mm (Buswell et al., 2022).

Although outside the gantry's scope, the robotic arm-printed office of the future offers valuable comparative insights into dimensional control. A camera monitoring feedback system produced mean deviations of  $\pm 5$  mm with spikes up to 7 mm, highlighting the importance of active sensor feedback even when using gantry systems.

Studies also confirm that integrating 2D laser scanners for real-time process monitoring greatly enhances dimensional accuracy. A special laser measurement system was used to quickly spot shape changes during polymer extrusion, with a precision of 1 mm in small parts. In large-scale concrete 3D printing, laser scanners are placed on stable stands or platforms since they can measure with an accuracy of 0.8-1 mm (Faes et al., 2016).

Factors affecting dimensional precision during printing include:

- Layer Height vs. Nozzle Width: If the layer height becomes too large compared to the nozzle width, deposition errors accumulate quickly. To keep dimensional accuracy, layer heights should be kept under 40 mm (Zuza, 2021).
- Printhead Speed and Flow Control: The concrete printhead operates at speeds of 300-500 mm/s, and sensor-controlled flow rates ensure a consistent bead shape. Slower or faster extrusion speeds lead to uneven layering or geometric distortion (Silva et al., 2024).
- Environmental Stability: Temperature swings greater than 5 °C during printing can cause deformation of 2-3 mm due to uneven cooling or material shrinkage, indicating that controlling temperature variation is crucial for reducing dimensional drift in large-scale prints (Faes et al., 2016).

The evidence supports the following dimensional accuracy requirements for gantry-based extrusion systems for framework benchmarks:

1. Laser scans of printed panels often show that the average error from the intended digital model remains under 3 mm, ensuring the overall shape remains accurate to the design.
2. Scans of whole wall or panel surfaces rarely exceed 5 mm of deviation at any point, ensuring elements will fit together correctly on-site.
3. Maintaining a stable temperature (within  $\pm 2$  °C during printing) and minimizing wind help prevent material shrinkage or cooling issues, which can result in errors of up to 3 mm.

These four guidelines provide clear, evidence-based checks for any construction-scale gantry 3D printer, ensuring that printed parts meet dimensional quality standards.

## **4.2 Regulatory Integration**

Framed by the question “How do existing building codes, certification standards, and approval processes facilitate or hinder 3D-printed concrete structures?”, this section

explores the regulatory dimension of integrating extrusion-based 3D printing into conventional standards and outlines the key regulatory frameworks in different regions worldwide, as well as select pilot jurisdictions. This section also examines how ICON's House Zero, Winsun's Villa Complex, Dubai's Office of the Future, and the COBOD/Van Winjen home navigate their respective approval pathways, then synthesizes cross-case insights on testing requirements and innovative sandbox approaches, and finally concludes by translating these findings into clear, actionable elements for the regulatory part of the integration framework.

#### **4.2.1 Overview of Regulatory Landscape**

The integration of extrusion-based 3D printing in construction is governed by a growing regulatory landscape, which is shaped by formal standards in North America and Europe, as well as innovative pilot programs in Asia and the Middle East. This section reviews the major regulatory frameworks, highlighting their shared principles and notable distinctions.

As stated in the literature chapter, the ICC-ES has developed Acceptance Criteria AC509 for 3D printed concrete walls in the U.S., which is rooted in the International Building Code's alternate methods provision (IBC § 104.11). AC509 requires rigorous testing of material properties, structural performance, and fire resistance. Each mix design must be independently verified, and the results are compiled into an Evaluation Service Report (ESR), which local building officials use for approvals (Building Safety Journal, 2019). However, recent updates have extended AC509's scope to multi-story load-bearing structures, reflecting growing confidence in the technology's safety, as evidenced by the 2023 ESR-4652 approval for ICON's Vulcan wall system, which features built-in horizontal reinforcement and Lavacrete material, demonstrating full compliance with AC509's established parameters.

Additionally, the European ISO/ASTM 52939:2023 standard marks the first joint international criteria for certifying structural and infrastructure elements produced via additive manufacturing in construction. Although binding levels vary by country, the 52939 specifies essential domains, including material characterization, process control, and documentation, for allowable material types and designs.

Beyond the above formal codes, both China and the UAE instituted pilot frameworks that accelerate 3D-printed structures for specific project types; for instance, China's Ministry of Housing allows geopolymers and cementitious printed walls in experimental zones, provided performance data such as material tests and structural assessments accompany permit applications while in Dubai, authorities set up a special "sandbox" program that the 3D-printed building like a test project. Instead of following all the usual long-term rules, developers get a temporary, limited permit for just that one structure, and during its design and construction, inspectors keep a close watch to check safety, materials, and performance to move forward with carefully controlled environment leading the team build the "Office of the Future" fast while ensuring it meets basic safety and quality standard.

This overview reveals a maturing framework that utilizes performance-based testing, documentation, and limited pilot projects to support innovation and safety. While differences remain across several world regions, the standards highlight essential ingredients for an integrated regulatory strategy.

#### **4.2.2 Case Narratives**

Winsun completed a batch of five 1,100 m<sup>2</sup> villas using large-format wall panels printed offline. Although formal regulations for additive construction were lacking, Winsun used existing reinforced masonry and concrete codes to demonstrate compliance using material specifications and structural testing. Case study reports from Harvard indicate that Winsun printed 10 homes within 24 hours, costing approximately \$ 4,800 each (ST, 2018), and the company has collaborated with China's Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to incorporate circular-concrete and fiber-reinforced mixes into official standards.

The Van Winjen Home project in the Netherlands, constructed with COBOD's BOD2 gantry printer, was among the first to seek explicit certification via Europe's new ISO/ASTM 52939 standard. The project's permit application included:

- Independent labs performed lab tests to verify the strength and durability of printed concrete, as required by ISO/ASTM 52939.

- Laser scans were done and compared to verify that finished panels match the digital design's intended shapes and dimensions.

ICON secured an ICC-ESR-4652 for its House Zero project's Vulcan gantry system under AC509, which provides a pioneering permit for residential use in the U.S. The submission included:

- Laboratory test results confirm that Lavacrete achieves a compressive strength of 41 MPa.
- Fire-resistance test reports demonstrate that the wall assemblies can withstand fire for two hours.
- Records of print settings, sensors, and quality checks.

Even with the differences in regulatory environments and printer types, these cases share a common approval path:

- Technical Proof: Each project included lab tests that demonstrated the materials were sufficiently strong.
- Process Evidence: They provided printer logs and scans to prove everything was built correctly.
- Regulatory Engagement: Helped get approvals faster by working closely with regulators in the test programs.

The following table summarizes the key regulatory pathways for each project.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of each case navigated by the regulatory context

Case	Permit Route	Key Requirements	Approval Outcome
Winsun Villas (China)	Building code/relaxed rules	Structural test reports	Local permit approval
COBOD Home (Netherlands)	ISO/ASTM 52939	Certified materials	Standard permit
ICON House Zero (USA)	ICC-ES AC509	Lab tests, fire resilience, sensor-based logs	ESR 4652 approval

These case narratives highlight the best practices in obtaining regulatory approval:

- 1- Early coordination with national or regional bodies can clarify expectations while helping to gain political support.
- 2- Comprehensive documentation, including laboratory data and logs, is essential.
- 3- Judgment provides legitimacy and predictable pathways under established standards, such as AC509 and 52939.

#### 4.2.3 Cross-Case Synthesis

This sub-section refines insights from the case studies, highlights shared regulatory strategies, and identifies key variations across several contexts.

When discussing shared regulatory strategies, it is evident that all cases prioritized performance-based testing, especially for compressive strength above 36 MPa. While ICON achieved 41 MPa for Lavacrete under ICC-ES AC509, COBOD reached approximately 47 MPa to comply with ISO/ASTM 52939. However, Winsun met the required strength benchmarks through local structural testing, thereby meeting the building code expectations in China.

Detailed documentation emerged as another critical theme, as demonstrated by ICON's submission of ESR-4652, which included laboratory reports, sensor data, and structural details. COBOD's approach, on the other hand, involved material certifications and laser scans in line with ISO/ASTM standards. At the same time, Winsun maintained thorough records of structural tests and on-site process logs to satisfy regulatory scrutiny.

Regulatory engagement patterns reveal that proactive collaboration with authorities helped all three projects streamline the approval process, as demonstrated by ICON's mapping of its pathway to AC509 and the subsequent quick attainment of ESR approval. Additionally, while COBOD aligned with ISO/ASTM and EU codes to secure acceptance through local building departments, Winsun leveraged China's pilot-zone regulations and built collaborative relationships with regulators to reassure safety and structural compliance.

The main differences stem from the flexibility and complexity of the approval processes, while the U.S. and Europe followed standardized pathways, such as AC509 and ISO/ASTM 52939. In contrast, China operated under a pilot scheme with tailored structural validation. Additionally, documentation was stricter in official systems, while experimental programs faced more flexible regulators that accepted simpler proof.

Some ongoing gaps include the absence of uniform testing protocols for interlayer bond strength, limited guidance for multi-story printing, and a lack of global alignment in layer-time and durability standards.

#### **4.2.4 Regulatory Pillar of the Framework**

The regulatory pillar provides a structured roadmap to secure approval of extrusion-based 3D-printed structures, and drawing on case evidence, it outlines four modules to help guide practitioners from testing to post-construction assurance.

##### **4.2.4.1 Technical Validation**

Approval always begins with proving that printed materials meet critical safety and structural benchmarks: In the U.S., ICON's ESR-4652 under AC509 certifies Lavacrete at > 17.2 MPa on-site, which later validated to approximately 41 MPa in standardized lab tests, while European COBOD projects based on ISO/ASTM 52939 implement lab

procedures, achieving approximately 47 MPa compressive strength in 3D-printed walls. At the same time, in China's pilot zones, Winsun secured local permits after demonstrating structural test reports and their geopolymer panels that meet national strength code criteria. To satisfy relevant standards, the tests should also address durability, fire resistance, and layer bonding.

#### **4.2.4.2 Documentation and Reporting**

The complete transparency of the print process and results by ICON and other 3D printing companies provides regulatory trust. ICON's ICC-ESR 4652 compiles technical data and extrusion logs, while European teams create ISO/ASTM-compliant files, including material certificates. Even pilot schemes require structured documentation; for instance, Winsun submits structural and on-site process reports to meet the needs and requirements of local regulators, as precise record-keeping supports informed review and accelerates the approval process.

In addition to compiling Engineering Services Reports and material certifications, two of the studied cases implemented advanced digital traceability and scan metadata auditing, which reinforces the documentation module with real-time data control:

- **ICON's BuildOS Archiving:** ICON utilizes its proprietary BuildOS platform to capture and archive every stage of the print workflow, from G-code (Printer command language) slices and environmental logs to pump pressures and scan data. This digital has become a key compliance asset, allowing the company to demonstrate complete process transparency and rapidly trace any anomalies back to their origin in the case of regulatory oversight.
- **COBOD Laser-Scan Metadata:** In a European residential pilot, printed using COBOD's gantry system, CAD-to-print scan outputs were logged and timestamped alongside positional data from the printer. This allowed auditors to verify layer-by-layer dimensional accuracy post-build, enabling metadata-driven validation of conformity to design specifications.

These measures extend beyond static dossier components, embedding dynamic audit capabilities that enhance both quality assurance and regulatory oversight.

#### **4.2.4.3 Regulatory Coordination**

Companies such as ICON utilize active collaboration with authorities to ensure smoother permit outcomes and leverage AC509 to align innovation with existing legal frameworks (Bauguess, 2023). In contrast, COBOD's adherence to the ISO/ASTM rules has established a clear compliance pathway that is accepted across Ireland and the Netherlands. At the same time, Winsun engaged with local housing bodies to tailor performance criteria to national regulations.

#### **4.2.4.4 Post-Approval Monitoring**

Trust in field verification is maintained through continued compliance, as approval is only the beginning. For instance, ICON's BuildOS logs parameters such as mix temperature, sensor data, and print speeds, which ICC-ES periodically audits to ensure on-site consistency. Meanwhile, COBOD utilizes laser scanning to fulfill ISO/ASTM requirements. While pilot zone enforcement may not require ongoing monitoring, regulators can establish a routine of field auditing using Winsun's detailed process logs to ensure that printed structures remain safe and compliant over time.

By integrating these four modules, the regulatory pillar provides a clear, replicable path that adapts to formal frameworks, such as AC509 and ISO/ASTM 52939, as well as flexible pilot-scheme environments, ensuring that 3D-printed structures can gain timely approval without compromising safety and compliance.

### **4.3 Workflow Integration**

The research question, "What process changes are needed in traditional construction workflows to incorporate extrusion-based 3D printing successfully?" is addressed in this section, examining how digital design tools, on-site coordination, and real-time quality controls converge when integrating 3D printers within established construction practices. The section examines the conversion of BIM models into printer model instructions and calibration routines. It then investigates revised team structures, communication protocols, and training requirements to accommodate continuous printing alongside conventional trades, drawing on case evidence from ICON's Vulcan deployment, the COBOD/Van Winjen home, and the Dubai Office of the Future project.

It finally reviews sensor-driven monitoring and error-remediation strategies that ensure each printed layer meets design specifications, informing the Workflow Pillar of the Integration framework by guiding seamless embedding of 3D printing into construction operations.

#### **4.3.1 Digital Workflow from BIM to Print**

In this subsection, the methods for building models are outlined, along with the on-site configuration required to ensure reliable outcomes. Efficient translation from digital design to physical print is crucial for successful 3D printing.

##### **4.3.1.1 BIM Model Preparation**

Building Information Modeling (BIM) is a digital process that involves creating and managing detailed digital representations of a building's physical and functional characteristics and effective 3D printed construction begins with an innovative digital model that automatically adjusts to meet the building's strength needs and the printer's capabilities. In large-scale gantry printing, teams use Revit, a digital design tool, and special automation scripts to break down the 3D model into step-by-step instructions. These prints automatically recognize walls, hollow spaces, and openings, such as doors and windows, and then plan the printer's exact route to ensure the material is laid smoothly in unbroken layers, avoiding interruptions and errors during printing (Li, 2021).

Once the 3D model is divided into horizontal layers, or slices, the printer's movement path is refined to minimize material waste and maintain the structure's strength. According to recent study reviews, toolpath planning takes into account the printer's nozzle size and the flow of concrete to minimize waste and ensure stable prints (Zhuang et al., 2024).

##### **4.3.1.2 Data Transfer and Printer Configuration**

After slicing, the digital model is converted into printable layers, and the design is then converted into instructions that the printer can understand. 3D printers generate G-code, a universal printer language, using software such as Slic3r and Cura, which control all the printer's actions, including speed, extrusion amount, and the start and stop of the flow, to ensure precise printing (Vantghem et al., 2020).

Before printing, engineers test the toolpaths using computer simulations and then run models to identify potential problems, such as weak overhangs or unstable layers. Then, the digital twins of the printer are used to detect potential nozzle crashes or material flow issues, helping to catch errors promptly and ensure a smooth printing process (Vantuyghem et al., 2020).

The printer is finally calibrated on-site, where operators test the extrusion system using reference line prints, adjusting the nozzle height to match the printed bead width and layer thickness. Calibration records, including pressure settings and test paths, are then documented as part of the process control documentation and submitted for regulatory review.

#### **4.3.2 On-Site Coordination and Roles**

When a 3D printer is introduced into a conventional construction site, new roles must be defined, and workflows should be carefully structured to ensure efficiency and quality. Based on field reports from ICON, COBOD, and Dubai's Office of the Future, this section outlines how teams adapt to integrate continuous printing with traditional construction.

Traditional construction crews must include roles such as print operators, digital coordinators, and quality technicians. Print operators manage the mechanical operation of the printer, including monitoring feed rates, nozzle function, and printer movement. Meanwhile, digital coordinators bridge the physical and virtual worlds by tracking printer data and comparing real-time outputs to the original Building Information Modelling (BIM) model. At the same time, quality technicians are responsible for sampling fresh concrete and conducting compressive tests.

Since these roles require specialized training programs, ICON trains its operators in BuildOS, sensor dashboards, and print diagnostics. Meanwhile, COBOD provides certifications in 3D concrete printing operations and BIM interfacing. Additionally, organizations such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development advocate for integrated training.

Integrating clear routines, such as task sequencing and collaborative communication, is a crucial process for continuous 3D printing. Daily stand-up meetings help highlight any defects or print delays, and detailed shift handover records, such as recent layer metrics and deviations, can prevent data loss and miscommunication across operator changes.

#### **4.3.3 Process Monitoring and Quality Assurance**

Since maintaining consistent quality during the layer-by-layer construction of 3D-printed concrete is crucial, this section outlines the strategies and tools, including real-time sensor integration and error correction mechanisms, employed during printing to ensure that each print meets the design intent and structural requirements.

Real-time sensor integration, as demonstrated in recent research, involves the use of laser scanners positioned near the nozzle to measure the geometry of printed material immediately after extrusion, thereby continuously monitoring fidelity (Zhao et al., 2024). These laser scanners capture the height and width of the beads, sending that data to the control unit to adjust the nozzle speed or material flow in the event of deviations. Some field deployments utilize camera-based computer vision, combined with depth cameras, to build digital twins and detect distortions. In parallel, environmental sensors that measure temperature, humidity, and wind inform how curing conditions affect print quality.

Error detection and remediation are crucial, as errors can still occur despite advanced monitoring. Cutting-edge systems employ a method called automated visual anomaly detection, which utilizes a fixed camera to compare it with the original toolpath.

#### **4.3.4 Unplanned Stoppages & Contingency Management**

Despite planning, the cases experienced unexpected interruptions, such as equipment issues to environmental factors, and each team adapted quickly to avoid project delays and maintain print integrity; for instance, Dubai's Office of the Future's print sessions were interrupted by sandstorms and extreme temperature spikes. Crews adapted by pausing until conditions subsided, then conducting post-pause recalibration of the printer calibration. Shade tents and misting resumed immediately to restore environmental stability before layers resumed.

#### **4.3.5 Case Evidence of Workflow Innovations**

ICON's deployment at House Zero introduced BuildOS, a centralized dashboard that monitors pump pressures, nozzle pressures, and print speeds in real time. This dashboard enables feedback loops; for instance, the system auto-adjusts pump rates to maintain material flow within target thresholds in case mixture consistency varies (ICON, 2024). ICON's operators utilize BuildOS for both live monitoring and reporting.

During the COBOD and Van Winjen project, the team utilized BIM-driven slicing to convert the design model into a layer-by-layer toolpath. After each print session, technicians performed laser scans to compare them against the virtual model and logged any deviations. These errors were then corrected on-site before proceeding to the subsequent layers, ensuring geometric accuracy and providing documentation for later regulatory purposes.

For Dubai's Office of the Future project, a robotic-arm printing system was utilized for careful coordination, scheduling, and specialized teams, including machine operators, architects, and finishing crews. These teams organized work in sequenced blocks, allowing electrical and plumbing installations to integrate within the printed walls as they were built.

#### **4.3.6 Implications for the Workflow Pillar of the Framework**

Based on the case evidence and insights developed in this section, the study outlines the key workflow requirements that should form the third pillar of the integration framework, ensuring the practical and efficient integration of 3D printing in construction.

The first significant element of process integration is digital integration checkpoints. BIM models must be prepared with slicing logic, such as layer heights and toolpaths, optimized for both material savings and print stability. Later, the design outputs need to be seamlessly converted into printer-readable code, known as G-code, and the structural integrity should be verified through simulation tools. These models and toolpaths are later validated after being saved in the project's documentation system, which supports traceability and regulatory review.

The second significant element is defining roles that support effective site operations, meaning construction teams should include a print operator to manage mechanical control, a digital coordinator to compare outputs with BIM models and fix any mismatches, and a quality technician to test material consistency and monitor integrity. Such roles require formal training that is aligned with machine operation, digital modelling, and quality assurance.

The third element is embedding real-time process monitoring and remediation mechanisms, as demonstrated systems must use sensors such as laser scanners or camera vision to measure bead geometry and environmental conditions.

The last element is the significance of structured communication protocols in merging 3D operations with conventional trades, such as daily stand-ups, shift-handover logs with the latest metrics, and digital dashboards, which help synchronize activities. Clear snapshot interfaces also enable trade teams to integrate their tasks without interruption.

The workflow pillar can serve as a practical guide for technology adoption by embedding these four workflow elements, which directly contribute to the reliable and efficient use of extrusion-based 3D printing.

Table 4: Mapping research questions to pillar modules

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Relevant Pillar</b>	<b>Associated Modules</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>RQ1: What are the key functional parameters required for integrating 3D printing into construction?</b>	Functional Integration	Performance Metrics & Tolerance Control; Environmental Adaptability	This mapping indicates that RQ1 is addressed by modules that ensure pumpability, layer precision, and site condition

			control during extrusion.
<b>RQ2: What validation and documentation practices enable regulatory approval for extrusion-based 3D concrete construction?</b>	Regulatory Integration	Technical Validation, Documentation & Reporting, Post Approval Monitoring	RQ2 is covered through modules that compile lab test data, compliance documentation, permit engagement procedures, and long-term monitoring.
<b>RQ3: What process changes are needed in construction workflows to incorporate extrusion-based 3D printing successfully?</b>	Workflow Integration	Digital Coordination Checkpoints, On-Site Protocols, Quality Assurance & Error Remediation	RQ3 is mapped to the modules that define operational procedures, sensor-driven quality checks, and team organization to ensure execution.

This mapping framework clearly shows how each research question translates into practical investigation through dedicated modules by emphasizing the links between functional performance, regulatory compliance, and workflow adaptation in 3D-printed construction.

## 5 Integrated Framework

This chapter presents the core contribution of the thesis: an empirically grounded, three-pillar integration framework designed to facilitate the routine adoption of extrusion-based 3D concrete printing. Derived from a systematic analysis of four secondary case studies and a detailed reference use case, this framework synthesizes functional, regulatory, and workflow dimensions into a unified roadmap.

The chapter distills cross-case findings into three pillars: functional Integration (machine-material fit and performance benchmarks), Regulatory Integration (Validation, documentation, and stakeholder engagement), and Workflow Integration (digital field coordination and on-site protocols). It creates a coherent model that guides practitioners from material selection through permitting and into on-site execution.

This chapter also describes the high-level framework architecture, details each pillar's constituent modules, and provides actionable checklists to support implementation. It later demonstrates the framework's application to a gantry-printed use case and finally presents phased implementation guidelines, including governance and scalability considerations. This system guides the reader systematically from conceptual rationale to practical application.

### 5.1 Framework Architecture

As stated, the integration framework for extrusion-based 3D concrete printing is centered on the three pillars, organized around a central hub that embodies the unified roadmap (see Figure 7). This architecture illustrates both the structured progression of tasks and continuous feedback loops, ensuring that lessons from one domain inform adaptation in the others.

The following figure visually represents the core structure of the integration Framework, illustrating how the functional, Regulatory, and Workflow pillars converge in a central hub, enhancing iterative refinement across all domains.

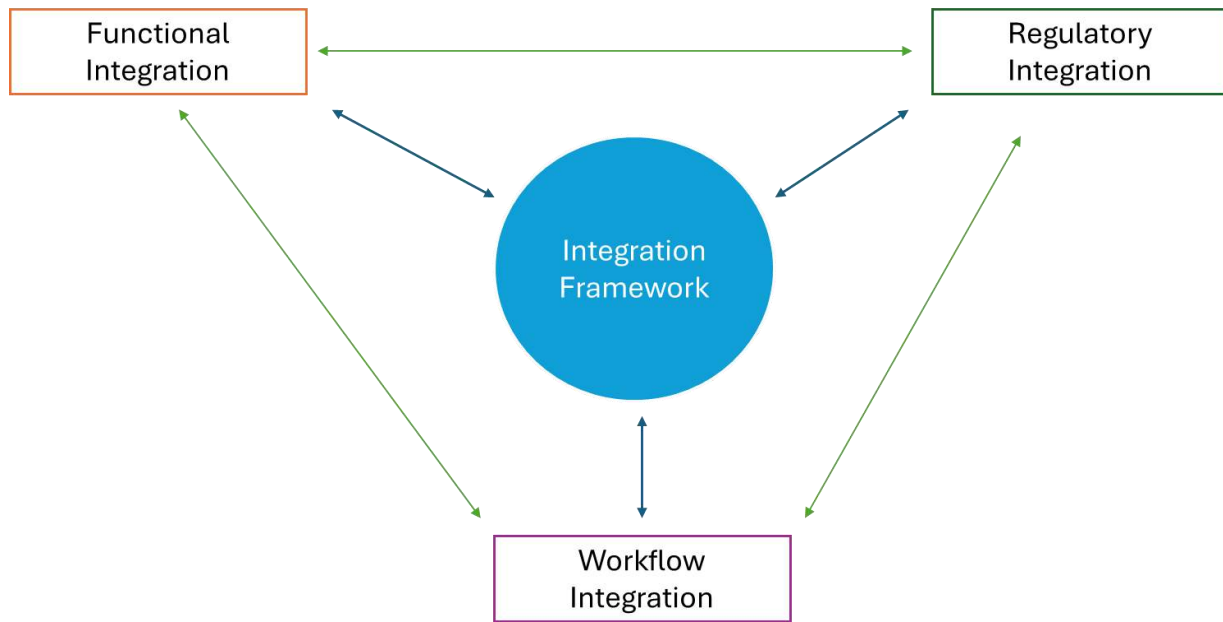


Figure 11: Architecture of the Integration Framework

The narrative walk-through looks as follows:

- Functional → Regulatory: Functional testing outputs, such as strength data, provide essential inputs for regulatory validation, supporting permit dossiers and documentation.
- Regulatory → Workflow: Permit timelines and approval conditions shape the on-site workflows, including requirements for as-built scans or third-party inspections, and mandated coordination points during construction.
- Workflow → Functional: On-site observations and real-time sensor data may identify performance deviations, prompting recalibration of mix design or mechanical settings.
- Workflow → Regulatory: Field-based documentation of non-conformities feeds back into regulatory modules as post-approval monitoring, bridging into continuous compliance cycles.

## 5.2 Pillar 1: Functional Integration

This pillar defines the three core functional requirements, such as Performance Outcomes, Dimensional Accuracy, and Tolerance Control, that a gantry-based extrusion system must satisfy to produce code-compliant, structurally sound, and precise building elements.

### 5.2.1 Structural Performance Outcomes

Printed elements must meet conventional code thresholds for compressive and interlayer bond strength:

**Compressive Strength:** Target a 28-day strength  $\geq 31$  MPa. Case studies report OPC-based mixes achieving 31–55 MPa in lab tests, while ICON's on-site Lavacrete consistently exceeds 41 MPa after complete cure.

**Interlayer Bond Strength:** Maintain shear resistance  $\geq 2$  MPa. Field measurements indicate typical bond strengths of 2–3 MPa if successive layers are deposited within 30 minutes. Admixtures (polycarboxylate superplasticizers, bentonite) can preserve up to 80% of bulk strength after delays.

**Process Controls:** Enforce strict layer timing protocols and include bond-enhancing agents in mixes. Regular cylinder and direct-shear tests during printing validate ongoing compliance.

### 5.2.2 Dimensional Accuracy & Tolerance Control

Precise geometry ensures fit-up with prefabricated elements and adjacent structures. Key benchmarks are:

**Absolute Tolerances:** Large-format prints should achieve  $\leq \pm 5$  mm deviation over 10 m spans (0.05% of length). Laser scans of COBOD panels and robotic-arm office modules confirm maximum deviations of  $\pm 5$  mm.

Control Mechanisms: Integrate laser scanners or depth cameras at the nozzle to measure bead width and layer height in real time, adjusting speed or flow to correct errors < 1 mm.

Environmental Stability: Maintain ambient temperature within  $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$  and shield prints from wind and rain. Temperature swings exceeding  $5^{\circ}\text{C}$  have been shown to induce 2–3 mm distortions, underscoring the need for tents or misting during desert-site operations.

Additionally, the usage of admixtures plays a crucial role in improving the performance of 3D-printed structures.

- Polycarboxylate Ether (PCE) Superplasticizers: Reduce water demand and fluidize the mix to ensure consistent pumping through high-pressure hoses, while preventing segregation during slow print head movements.
- Viscosity-Modifying Agents (VMAs): Enhance yield stress, allowing each bead to retain its shape immediately upon deposition, thereby minimizing slump and ensuring layer stability.
- Shrinkage-Reducing Admixtures (SRAs): Mitigate early-age shrinkage to prevent micro-cracking at layer interfaces, particularly under rapid build schedules.

By rigorously applying these two modules, Structural Performance Outcomes, Dimensional Accuracy & Tolerance Control, practitioners can ensure that extrusion-based 3D printing systems meet the necessary functional criteria for safe, reliable, and precise integration into mainstream construction.

### **5.3 Pillar 2: Regulatory Integration**

This pillar serves to translate functional performance outcomes into structured permit pathways, ensuring that extrusion-based 3D concrete printing can progress from prototype to certified construction. It compiles four interlocking modules:

1- Technical Validation Module: Implements standardized laboratory testing for structural and material performance, including compressive strength, durability, and fire resistance, following protocols such as ICC-ES AC509 and ISO/ASTM 52939:2023.

2- Documentation & Reporting Module: Compiles a comprehensive dossier containing ESRs, FEM analyses, and material certification. Together with audit trails for key decisions and quality-relevant steps, following ISO/ASTM 52939 guidance, it also includes submission to ICC-ES under AC509, which includes mix designs, pump and print parameters, lab results, and machine configuration. Another requirement is a digital audit trail, where immutable logs of batch numbers, sensor data, print schedules, and quality control (QC) checks are stored in the cloud or blockchain to ensure transparency.

3- Post-Approval Monitoring Module: Mandates periodic field inspections and digital traceability of construction data, while ensuring that operational feedback loops enable regulatory and workflow adjustments to maintain long-term compliance, including:

- Periodic Field Inspections: Quarterly visual and instrumentation checks, crack mapping, moisture probes, and point-load tests on witness blocks.
- Sensor-Based Condition Monitoring: Embedded strain gauges and temperature/humidity sensors relay real-time data to a central dashboard, triggering alerts that initiate maintenance or retesting.
- Regulatory Feedback Loop: Semi-annual reports to authorities summarizing deviations, corrective actions, and any change requests—fueling iterative updates to both technical protocols and local code provisions.

#### **5.4 Pillar 3: Workflow Integration**

The workflow integration pillar operationalizes the framework by embedding structured procedures, coordination mechanisms, and quality-control protocols into on-site execution. It comprises four modules:

1- Digital Coordination Checkpoints:

- BIM-to-Print Preparation: Models are authoritatively sliced into toolpaths that recognize structural elements (walls, openings) and generate G-code via software such as Cura or Slic3r, ensuring continuous extrusion without interruption.

- Simulation & Calibration: Before any material is extruded, digital twins of both the printer and the structure are run to detect potential crashes or unstable overhangs; on-site calibration prints confirm nozzle height and layer thickness, with all settings logged for traceability.

## 2- On-Site Process Protocols:

- Role Definition: Projects introduced dedicated Print Operators (mechanical control), Digital Coordinators (virtual-to-physical alignment), and Quality Technicians (material sampling and testing), each trained in BuildOS or COBOD's BIM interfaces.
- Daily Stand-Ups and Shift Handover: Teams begin each working day with stand-up meetings to align on print schedules, material readiness, and environmental constraints. Shift handovers include a printed job summary (status, anomalies, sensor logs) to maintain continuity.
- Site Preparation & Safety Checks: Following UL 3401 guidelines, the site must be clear of debris, properly leveled, have adequate lighting and ventilation, and comply with safety protocols, including emergency plans.

## 3- Quality Assurance & Error Remediation

- Inline Geometric Quality Control: Continuous geometric accuracy scanning enables wall geometry validation during the build process.
- Sensor-Driven Pause/Remediation Protocol: Real-time monitoring of flow rate, nozzle pressure, and deposition width triggers automatic halts when thresholds are exceeded.
- Quality Control (QC) testing Regimen: Offline tests, such as compressive tests, are scheduled at pre-defined intervals.

## Cross-Pillar Feedback

- Workflow→Functional: Operational data and QC metrics prompt adjustments in mix design or printer configuration.

- Workflow→Regulatory: Recorded deviations are fed into the Post-Approval Monitoring module under Regulatory Integration, enabling continuous compliance.

## 5.5 Reference Use-Case Application

This use case involves using a gantry-based 3D concrete printer to construct a 50 m<sup>2</sup> exterior wall in a low-rise residential context. The aim is to demonstrate how the Integration Framework operates in a real-world scenario, from performance requirements through permitting, and then to on-site execution. The use case is designed to highlight how the framework’s Functional, Regulatory (validation, documentation), and Workflow (team coordination, error handling, scalability) elements integrate seamlessly. This overview sets the stage for a step-by-step walkthrough in Section 5.5.1, which demonstrates how each module operates in practice and how real-time feedback loops enhance performance and compliance.

### 5.5.1 Application of Pillar Modules

The following table illustrates the implementation of the Functional, Regulatory, and Workflow modules in the gantry-printed 50 m<sup>2</sup> wall case.

Table 5: Integration framework

Pillar	Module	Key Activities / Requirements
<b>1. Functional Integration</b>	Structural Performance Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compressive Strength: <math>\geq 31</math> MPa (28-day) through OPC or Lavacrete mixes- Interlayer Bond: <math>\geq 2</math> MPa shear resistance if layers within 30 min.</li> <li>- Fire Resistance: Expose sample wall sections to 2-hour furnace test</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Admixtures: PCE superplasticizer for pumpability; bentonite or VMAs for shape retention; SRAs to reduce early shrinkage</li> <li>- Process Controls: Enforce layer-timing protocol; regular cylinder &amp; direct-shear tests on-site</li> </ul>
	Dimensional Accuracy & Tolerance Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absolute Tolerances: <math>\leq \pm 5</math> mm over 10 m spans</li> <li>- Real-Time Sensing: Laser scanner or depth camera at nozzle to measure bead width &amp; layer height (correct &lt; 1 mm deviations instantly)</li> <li>- Environmental Stability: Maintain ambient <math>\pm 2</math> °C; shield from wind/rain (use tents or misting) to prevent 2–3 mm distortions</li> </ul>
<b>2. Regulatory Integration</b>	Technical Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lab Testing: Compressive, durability, fire resistance per ICC-ES AC509, ISO/ASTM 52939:2023</li> <li>- Standard Protocols: Follow AC509 test methods and extract ESRs</li> </ul>
	Documentation & Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permit Dossier: Submit ESRs, FEM analyses, mix designs, pump/print parameters, lab results, machine configs</li> <li>- Digital Audit Trail: Immutable logs of batch numbers, sensor data, print schedules, QC checks (cloud or blockchain)</li> </ul>

	Post-Approval Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Field Inspections: Quarterly crack mapping, moisture probes, point-load tests on witness blocks</li> <li>- Sensor Monitoring: Embedded strain, temperature/humidity sensors with dashboard alerts</li> <li>- Regulatory Feedback: Semiannual reports to authorities on deviations &amp; corrective actions</li> </ul>
<b>3. Workflow Integration</b>	Digital Coordination Checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BIM-to-Print Handoff: Slice models into G-code, recognize walls/openings (Cura/Slic3r)</li> <li>- Simulation &amp; Calibration: Run digital twins; conduct onsite calibration prints; log all settings</li> </ul>
	On-Site Process Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role Definition: Print Operators, Digital Coordinators, Quality Technicians trained in BuildOS/COBOD BIM tools</li> <li>- Daily Stand-Ups &amp; Handover: Share status, anomalies, sensor logs each shift</li> <li>- Site Prep &amp; Safety: UL 3401 compliance; clear, leveled, ventilated, emergency plans</li> </ul>
	Quality Assurance & Error Remediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inline QA: Continuous geometry scanning for wall validation</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pause/Remediation: Automated halts when flow rate, nozzle pressure, or bead width exceed thresholds</li> <li>- QC Regimen: Scheduled offline compressive &amp; bond-strength tests</li> </ul>
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This table confirms the effectiveness and operational coherence of the Integration Framework in a real-world project.

### 5.6 Implementation Guidelines

To successfully implement this framework, teams should adopt a **step-by-step approach**, starting with a small-scale pilot. Gather experts—material scientists, machine operators, quality control, and regulators—to test each component on a trial structure (like a single 10 m<sup>2</sup> wall). Focus on optimizing the concrete mix (adjusting admixtures, slump), fine-tuning printer settings, preparing compliance documents (ESR reports, simulation data), and ensuring seamless digital-to-construction workflows. Document insights (e.g., temperature impacts on layer accuracy or sensor calibration quirks) in a pilot report to refine protocols and templates before full-site rollout.

Following a successful pilot, where quality targets are met and approvals secured, the project can be expanded to full-scale deployment. This stage rolls out the framework across larger areas or multiple structures, requiring adjustments in staffing, equipment, and oversight. Teams must align with industry standards by establishing clear roles, for example, an Integration Manager to coordinate workflows, and scaling responsibilities to match the project’s size. Resource plans should include added printers, training, and governance to maintain consistency.

To maintain quality, teams should establish a feedback loop across all phases. Regular reviews—prompted by sensor data, quality checks, or audits—help refine concrete mixes, adjust processes, and update site protocols. Document all changes

systematically, especially those impacting permits, and share revisions with regulators as needed.

Training and standardization are essential. Teams should complete certification in digital tools, quality control, and regulations—reflecting Dubai’s developing standards—to guarantee consistent, high-quality printing.

The process culminates when these methods become standard practice, routine workflows, and are integrated into monitoring and governance. At this point, teams should join industry efforts to share real-world data and help refine broader standards. By systematically progressing through pilot testing, scaling, continuous improvement, and training, companies can move from experimental 3D printing to reliable, code-approved construction.

This Integration Framework proves practical, not just theoretical, providing a flexible, real-world roadmap to implement 3D concrete printing safely, efficiently, and within regulations.

## 6 Conclusion

By restating the three central research questions, which encompass three key pillars, this chapter summarizes the study's key outcomes without introducing new data, thereby highlighting its theoretical and practical contributions. Drawing on best practices in academic writing, the conclusion emphasizes the main findings, their broader implications, and acknowledges limitations.

Following this, the chapter offers concrete recommendations for practitioners, regulators, and educators, grounded in empirical evidence. It then identifies current limitations, particularly the reliance on secondary case studies and a focus on extrusion-based systems. It suggests targeted directions for future research, such as conducting live field trials, extending climate validation, and engaging with standard-setting bodies.

Ultimately, this chapter concludes the thesis by demonstrating how it achieves its objectives, makes meaningful contributions to knowledge and practice, and provides a clear path forward for advancing the field of 3D concrete printing.

### 6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study explored three main research questions using an integrated, three-pillar framework that was repeatedly refined based on findings from four real-world cases. The main results are summarized below.

RQ1: What are the key functional parameters required for integrating 3D printing into construction?

For successful 3D concrete printing, four key factors must work together: strength ( $\geq 31$  MPa after 28 days, with layers bonding  $\geq 2$  MPa within 30 minutes), precision (keeping within  $\pm 5$  mm over 10-meter spans using laser/depth sensors), environmental control (stable temperature  $\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$  to prevent warping), and optimized admixtures (for shape retention and smooth pumping).

RQ2: What validation and documentation practices enable regulatory approval for extrusion-based 3D concrete construction?

The cases showcased coherent strategies for achieving regulatory acceptance, including standardized lab tests (AC509, ISO/ASTM 52939) that validated material performance, and a comprehensive dossier compilation enhanced by ICON's BuildOS log and COBOD's laser-scan auditing, which confirmed traceable and transparent processes. The inclusion of pilot-zone qualifications, milestone inspections, and post-approval sensor monitoring enabled full regulatory compliance and checklist satisfaction.

RQ3: What process changes are needed in construction workflows to incorporate extrusion-based 3D printing successfully?

Operational coherence is achieved through structured digital handoffs, daily team routines, inline QA protocols, and responsive error control, such as pauses triggered by scanning. Real-world interruptions such as heat waves or nozzle deviations are managed efficiently within the established framework, highlighting their resilience.

Together, these findings show that the Integration Framework effectively connects structural requirements, regulatory standards, and field practices into a unified system. This interconnected structure creates an environment where field observations directly influence material changes and regulatory updates, and the resulting model provides a strong, adaptable pathway for applying extrusion-based 3D printing from lab to construction sites.

## **6.2 Practical Implications & Recommendations**

The implementation of the Integration Framework provides clear, actionable insights for three primary stakeholder groups: practitioners, regulators, and educators. Each set of recommendations is based on empirical evidence and directly reflects the findings of this study.

### **For Practitioners**

Operational teams should ensure the printed component meets the required compressive strength. Continuous monitoring, such as laser scanning, should be integrated into daily routines to detect deviations early and enable automatic

adjustments. Environmental controls, including misting, shading, and curing blankets, are essential when working in variable climates, resulting in decreases in cracking and bond failures in high-temperature conditions. Formalizing these protocols into operational checklists helps ensure repeatable results across projects.

### **For Regulators**

The advanced documentation practices exhibited in this study, specifically, ICON's BuildOS logging and COBOD's laser-scan metadata, should be encouraged or required as part of permit submissions. Regulators may also benefit from adopting pilot-zone approaches that allow controlled experimentation before full code inclusion, thus reducing technological barriers while maintaining public safety. Furthermore, routine post-approval monitoring, supported by embedded sensors and condition-triggered reporting, ensures ongoing compliance and facilitates institutional learning.

### **For Educators and Training Bodies**

Curricula should include modular training programs that cover mix design calibration, sensor-based quality control, environmental conditioning, and regulatory reporting. These educational efforts should align with emerging standards to ensure academic preparation matches industry requirements.

By aligning practice, policy, and training, these recommendations enable a holistic adoption of extrusion-based 3D concrete printing. They ensure that the technical, regulatory, and process dimensions of the process are addressed in concert, transforming experimental prints into certified, repeatable, and scalable construction techniques.

## **6.3 Limitations**

While the Integration Framework marks a significant step toward systematically managing 3D concrete printing, several limitations need to be acknowledged to provide context and justify its application.

### **6.3.1 Reliance on Secondary Data**

This thesis relies entirely on secondary case analyses, utilizing documented reports and publications, such as Dubai's Office of the Future, ICON's House Zero, and COBOD. While these sources offer valuable insights, they may lack transparency regarding operational challenges or minor deviations. Without direct observational data or internal project logs, certain assumptions, such as precise pump pressures or misting effectiveness, are based on inference. To strengthen the framework's empirical validity, future studies should include primary data collection, ideally via pilot or demonstration projects where real-time metrics and decision rationales are logged and verified.

### **6.3.2 Focus on Extrusion Process**

The scope of this thesis is limited to extrusion-based concrete printing. Other methods, such as binder-jetting, shotcrete, or slip-forming, exhibit different material behaviors. For instance, extrusion mixes rely heavily on rheological properties tailored for pumpability and buildability, whereas binder-jetting may use coarser aggregates or polymer binders. Further work is required to test and expand the model across non-extrusion 3D printing techniques.

### **6.3.3 Scale and Structural Limits**

3D concrete printing is primarily applied at low-rise residential scales, with current deployments rarely exceeding two stories or foundational elements. High-rise structures introduce complexity, including the integration of reinforcement and stability under load. While the framework includes performance and monitoring modules, it lacks validated protocols for reinforcement systems and tall-wall stability.

To summarize, these limitations do not diminish the contributions of the Integration Frameworks; they merely define their current domain of applicability. By recognizing the constraints associated with secondary data, extrusion specificity, scale challenges, and environmental impact, the thesis establishes a transparent foundation.

## **6.4 Future Research Directions**

This section outlines strategic avenues to build on the current research, addressing limitations identified in section 6.3 and advancing the field of extrusion-based 3D concrete printing in both scope and scale.

### **6.4.1 Field-Based Pilot Projects**

While this thesis relies on secondary datasets, validating the Integration Framework through in-situ pilot projects is critical. Future studies should implement the complete three-pillar model in diverse environments and construction contexts. Real-time data logs, environmental, and construction contexts. Real-time data logs, environmental measurements, and QC records collected during these pilots can enable precise performance assessments and strengthen the framework's empirical foundation.

### **6.4.2 Expansion to Non-Extrusion Techniques**

Emerging 3D printing modalities, such as binder-jetting, shotcrete, and cementitious inkjetting, operate under different operational constraints and regulatory frameworks. Research should explore how the framework's modules, such as Technical Validation, Interlayer Bonding, and Regulatory Monitoring, adapt when materials and deposition mechanisms differ fundamentally, ensuring broader applicability across the additive construction spectrum.

### **6.4.3 High-rise and Reinforced Structures**

The current implementation of 3DCP is primarily limited to low-rise and non-reinforced or minimally reinforced walls. However, high-rise construction and the integration of structural reinforcement present significant engineering challenges, especially regarding anisotropic behavior, load transfer across layers, and the embedment of reinforcement.

Future research should focus on:

- Structural experiments on tall, printed elements
- Automated or robotic reinforcement placement
- New performance metrics addressing stability and durability at scale.

#### **6.4.4 Environmental Impact Assessments**

The framework includes environmental control during printing, but a comprehensive life cycle analysis (LCA), covering carbon footprint, energy consumption, material sourcing, and waste management, would provide a clearer picture of 3DCP's broader sustainability credentials. Incorporating LCA into future pilot evaluations will enable evidence-based claims about ecological benefits.

By executing these research directions, the Integration Framework can evolve from a proof of concept into a comprehensive, scalable, and sustainable solution. This roadmap not only bridges crucial gaps identified in this study but also sets a research agenda that could position extrusion-based 3D concrete printing at the forefront of sustainable, automated construction innovation.

At this concluding act, the thesis has demonstrated the transformative potential of an Integration Framework that harmoniously aligns technical, regulatory, and operational domains in extrusion-based 3D concrete printing. The partnership between engineered materials, digital traceability, and structured workflows supports this claim as an operational reality validated through empirical case studies.

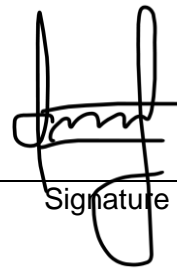
The combination of the pillars offers a promising path forward—a future where extrusion-based 3D concrete printing is safe, regulated, and sustainable, deeply integrated into mainstream construction practices. This thesis charts a roadmap for that transition, inviting stakeholders to embark on a collaborative journey toward reimagining how to build.

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