

**MODELING A DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR
BUILDABLE DESIGNS**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING
SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**

2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Low Sui Pheng, without whose support and motivation this thesis would not have been possible nor would my Ph.D. study be successful. Needless to say, all his guidance goes beyond my Ph.D. candidature and will benefit me for the rest of my life.

I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to Dr Wang Shou Qing for his inspiring guidance, timely encouragement, and providing ingenious ideas and exemplary suggestions. It was a great pleasure and precious experience working with him.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr Goh Bee Hua and Dr Mohammad Dulaimi for their excellent guidance, valuable comments, and time.

My earnest gratitude also goes to Dr Tham Kwok Wai, Dr Zhong Qi, Dr George Zhou, and Ms. Ge Yumin for their suggestions and assistance. I would also like to thank my friends – Mao Zhi, Wang Yong, Yu Tao, Lui Yin Sheng, Leung Nga-Na, Lin Chao, Gao Xia, Dong Bing and Li Yan, who have been a great help throughout my research study.

This thesis is dedicated specially to my dear family members for their endless love and support.

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SUMMARY

The construction industry is fragmented in nature. Buildable designs have been regarded as an important strategy to enhance overall performance in the fragmented industry. However, this objective has been difficult to realize due to the lack of buildability knowledge and the shortcomings of formal decision-making methods in the early design process.

The purpose of this study is to develop an integrated design approach to decision-making in buildable designs based on the principles and methods of concurrent engineering.

To develop such an approach, the House of Quality for Buildable Designs (HOQBD) was constructed to support the integrated decision-making of buildable designs by adapting matrices of the conventional HOQ. The algorithms and inference mechanisms of the HOQBD were then developed by fuzzy set theories. In the fuzzy HOQBD, triangular fuzzy numbers were used to intuitively represent the linguistic and imprecise nature of decisions and judgments of buildable designs so as to objectively and realistically reflect the process of buildable design decision-making. Fuzzy inference mechanisms and algorithms were established to automatically process the design-relevant QFD information. To further extend the fuzzy HOQBD for buildable designs, a hybrid QFD system was proposed by incorporating the knowledge-based system into the fuzzy HOQBD. In the hybrid QFD system, three knowledge bases, namely, knowledge of buildability attributes, knowledge of buildable design features and knowledge of relationships between

buildability attributes and buildable design features, were integrated into the process of HOQBD implementation to facilitate the transfer of design-relevant construction knowledge and experience. The Linguistic Order Weighted Average (LOWA) operator was used to process design-relevant buildability information.

A prototype software, named a Decision Support System for Buildable Designs (the BD-DSS), was developed to demonstrate and test the proposed concurrent design approach in Singapore. The system analysis of the BD-DSS was carried out by the unified modeling language (UML). The BD-DSS was developed using Microsoft Visual Basic (Professional version 6.0) for Windows. The prototype was implemented and tested by two real-life cases, namely, an industrial project and a residential project. The BD-DSS has demonstrated its ability in quantitative buildability evaluation through a cooperative multi-functional project team in two aspects. Feedback from practitioners also showed that the proposed approach is a viable decision-support tool for buildable designs.

The BD-DSS developed based on the fuzzy HOQBD advanced the traditional QFD for buildable designs in two aspects. Firstly, it can provide a structured and systematic way to support the decision-making process of buildable designs. Secondly, it can create an information-centered environment to aid the transfer, acquisition and utilization of buildability knowledge and relevant information. The possible directions for future research include provision of a supportive environment, assessment and improvement of the concurrent information representation model, automated acquisition of the integrated design and

construction knowledge, development of intelligent software tools, and extension and combination of QFD with research efforts.