

Mass timber: Improving on-site productivity for multi-storey construction.

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under the supervision of
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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Richard Brisland, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Masters by Research degree in the School of Built Environment, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

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List of Publications

1. Forsythe, P., **Brisland, R.** and Sepasgozar, S. (2016) “Measuring Installation Productivity on Panelised and Long Span Timber Construction”, published by Forest and Wood Products Australia.

The author captured prefabricated timber panel installation of four projects by time-based digital video camera and manual sampling. From the video files the author recorded and analysed each of the four project’s panel crane cycles and productivity, included in the paper.

2. **Brisland, R.**, Forsythe, P. and Fini, A.A.F (2019) “Mass timber productivity: the significance of the reduction in non-value-add activities during on-site installation sequence”, presented at and published by Modular and Offsite Construction Conference, Banff, Canada May 2019.

Table of Contents

Certificate of Original Authorship	i
Acknowledgments	ii
List of Publications	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	ix
Abstract	xi
Key Definitions	xiii
Key Abbreviations	xiv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 The importance of construction productivity	1
1.2 Improving productivity by industrialisation	6
1.3 The importance of Mass timber as an industrialised form	10
1.4 Off-site versus on-site efficiency	13
1.5 Identifying gap in literature restricting uptake of mass timber	14
1.6 The research problem, aims and objectives	17
1.7 Thesis structure.....	18
Chapter 2 Productivity Concepts	20
2.1 Definition selection	20
2.2 Clarification of models for measuring productivity.....	23
2.3 On-site industrialised work process considerations.....	32
2.4 Factors affecting productivity	37
2.5 Summary.....	44
Chapter 3 Industrialisation, Prefabricated Mass Timber and its Benefits	47
3.1 Industrialised Building Systems.....	47
3.2 Prefabrication	50
3.3 Timber in a prefabricated form	57
3.4 Progression in timber prefabrication technology	62
3.5 Benefits of mass timber.....	72
3.6 Resistance, obstacles and barriers to mass timber adoption	78
3.7 Conclusion and research propositions	84
Chapter 4 Methodology	86
4.1 Philosophical position of the research.....	87
4.2 Pilot study.	91
4.3 Case study approach.....	95
4.4 Data collection methodology	95
4.5 “High” and “intermediate” level analysis.....	118
4.6 Activity level analyses methodology	119
4.7 Summary.....	128
Chapter 5 Results and findings (Part 1): High and intermediate analysis	129
5.1 High Level review	129
5.2 Sequence of work.....	132
5.3 Intermediate level review	134
5.4 Intermediate level analysis of value-added and non-value-added time.....	137
5.5 Summary.....	142
Chapter 6 Results and findings (Part 2): Activity (micro) level baseline findings	144
6.1 Determine single or a multi-case study approach	144
6.2 Panel sample sets' normality test findings	145

6.3 Cross case analysis: Similarity of panel type analyses findings.....	167
6.4 Cross case analysis: Similarity of panel size categories	170
6.5 Baseline (multi-case) analysis for panel categories.....	175
6.6 Conclusion.....	193
Chapter 7 Results and findings (Part 3): Propositions #1-5 analysis	196
7.1. Proposition #1 – the crane is the primary construction input resource	196
7.2. Proposition #2 – productivity is similar by floor level.....	203
7.3 Proposition #3 – larger panels improve productivity	210
7.4 Proposition #4 – weather affects productivity	219
7.5 Proposition #5 – proposed equations to predict daily CLT productivity	222
7.6 Summary.....	227
Chapter 8 Discussion.....	230
8.1 Non-value-added waste	230
8.2 Construction Attributes.....	235
8.3 Baseline productivity and crane cycle times.....	242
8.4 Key proposition findings.....	245
8.5 Design attributes.....	247
8.6 Design Approach	251
8.7 Summary.....	256
Chapter 9 Conclusion	260
9.1 General.....	260
9.2 Literature review	261
9.3 The research question	262
9.4 Propositions #1-5	263
9.5 Merged model.....	265
9.6 Practical commercialisation of study's findings	267
9.7 Limitations & recommendations for future research	268
References	271
Appendices	289
Appendix 1: Pilot Study Projects	289
Appendix 2: Ethics Compliance	291
Appendix 3: Case Studies High Level Review Summary	293
Appendix 4: Case Studies Intermediate Level Review Worksheets	294
Appendix 5: Questionnaire for Interview with Project Manager	298

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 OECD productivity growth 1971-2005(Abdel-Wahab and Vogl, 2011).....	2
Figure 1.2 Impact of content and spatial integration (CIB Task Group 57, 2010).....	8
Figure 1.3 Chart of CLT volume (M ³) used in Australia 2012-19 (Dunn, 2020a).....	12
Figure 2.1 Flowchart to determine criteria to measure mass timber productivity	20
Figure 2.2 Thomas' factor model of construction productivity (Thomas, H.R. ; et al., 1987)	38
Figure 2.3 Basic control chart structure (Gulezian and Sumelian, 2003).....	42
Figure 2.4 Monitored flowchart for measuring mass timber productivity.....	46
Figure 3.1 Cost reduction potentials: Use of work time for building works (Boenert and Blömeke, 2003)	48
Figure 3.2 Benefits of prefabrication (Shahzad, W. M. et al., 2013), adapted from (Cooperative Research Centre for Construction Innovation, 2007a)	55
Figure 3.3 The “Marshall Effect” (Anderson et al., 2020)	61
Figure 3.4 Example of glulam beam and columns.....	63
Figure 3.5 Layers of boards making up CLT (extract from Timber Development Association (NSW), 2011)	64
Figure 3.6 Long CLT panel with pre-cut openings craned into position	65
Figure 3.7 Example of a cellular design floor and wall layout (Woodard and Jones, 2019).....	66
Figure 3.8 Floor Layouts with loadbearing walls (Zumbrunnen et al., 2012).....	67
Figure 3.9 Structural layout isometric © EURBAN Ltd. (Zumbrunnen et al., 2012).....	67
Figure 3.10 Brock Common: example of a post and plate design (Kasbar, 2017)	68
Figure 3.11 Example of a post, beam and plate design.....	69
Figure 3.12 Indicative CLT band beam structure (X-Lam).....	70
Figure 4.1 Research Procedure Framework.....	86
Figure 4.2 Site plan of case study project with camera locations	96
Figure 4.3 Case study data collection methodology framework.....	98
Figure 4.4 Crane cycle sub-activities	103
Figure 4.5 Installation of wall panel.....	104
Figure 4.6 Panel ID labels attached to CLT.....	106
Figure 4.7 Flow chart of capture process for productivity.....	108
Figure 4.8 Screenshot of VLC playback speed adjustment bar.....	111
Figure 4.9 Extract from case study daily worksheet.....	112
Figure 4.10 Single-stage and 2-stage crane cycle.....	113
Figure 4.11 Flow chart of analyses steps for baseline findings.....	124
Figure 4.12 Basic control chart structure (adapted from Gulezian & Sumelian, 2003	126
Figure 5.1 Program schedule of timber installation and crane types used.....	133
Figure 5.2 Pie charts of the logged activity break up for Towers A, B and C.....	140
Figure 6.1 Tower B- floor panel box plot	148
Figure 6.2 Tower A's control chart for floor panel cycle times	148
Figure 6.3 Tower B's control chart for floor panel cycle times	149
Figure 6.4 Tower C's control chart for floor panel cycle times	149
Figure 6.5 Set up point floor panel	152
Figure 6.6 Atypical shaped (floor) panel.....	152
Figure 6.7 Tower A's control chart wall panels.....	154
Figure 6.8 Tower B's control chart wall panels.....	154
Figure 6.9 Tower C's control chart wall panels.....	155
Figure 6.10 Tower A's control chart beam panels	158
Figure 6.11 Tower B's control chart beam panels	159
Figure 6.12 Tower C's control chart beam panels	159
Figure 6.13 Tower A's control chart column panels	163
Figure 6.14 Tower B's control chart column panels	163
Figure 6.15 Tower C's control chart column panels	164
Figure 6.16 Towers A and B floor large panel crane cycle time baseline control chart	176
Figure 6.17 Tower A floor medium panel crane cycle time baseline control chart	176
Figure 6.18 Tower B floor medium panel crane cycle time baseline control chart.....	176
Figure 6.19 Towers A and B floor small panel crane cycle time baseline control chart	177
Figure 6.20 Towers A and B wall large panel crane cycle time baseline control chart	177
Figure 6.21 Towers A and B wall medium panel crane cycle time baseline control chart.....	177

Figure 6.22 Towers A and B wall small panel crane cycle time baseline control chart.....	178
Figure 6.23 Towers A and B beam panel crane cycle time baseline control chart	178
Figure 6.24 Towers A and B column panel crane cycle time baseline control chart	178
Figure 6.25 Towers A and B floor large panel productivity baseline control chart.....	179
Figure 6.26 Tower A floor medium panel productivity baseline control chart	179
Figure 6.27 Tower B floor medium panel productivity baseline control chart	180
Figure 6.28 Towers A and B floor small panel productivity baseline control chart	180
Figure 6.29 Towers A and B wall large panel productivity baseline control chart	180
Figure 6.30 Towers A and B wall medium panel productivity baseline control chart.....	181
Figure 6.31 Towers A and B wall small panel productivity baseline control chart.....	181
Figure 6.32 Towers A and B beam productivity baseline control chart.....	181
Figure 6.33 Towers A and B column panel productivity baseline control chart	182
Figure 6.34 Tower C floor large panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart	186
Figure 6.35 Tower C floor medium panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart	186
Figure 6.36 Tower C floor small panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart.....	186
Figure 6.37 Tower C wall large panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart	187
Figure 6.38 Tower C wall medium panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart.....	187
Figure 6.39 Tower C wall small panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart.....	187
Figure 6.40 Tower C beam panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart	188
Figure 6.41 Tower C column panel: baseline crane cycle time control chart	188
Figure 6.42 Tower C floor large panel productivity baseline control chart	189
Figure 6.43 Tower C floor medium panel productivity baseline control chart.....	189
Figure 6.44 Tower C floor small panel productivity baseline control chart.....	189
Figure 6.45 Tower C wall large panel productivity baseline control chart.....	190
Figure 6.46 Tower C wall medium panel productivity baseline control chart.....	190
Figure 6.47 Tower C wall small panel productivity baseline control chart.....	190
Figure 6.48 Tower C beam panel productivity baseline control chart	191
Figure 6.49 Tower C column panel productivity baseline control chart	191
Figure 7.1 Plan of Tower C illustrating two methods of installation	196
Figure 7.2 Means plot of Tower B floor level to floor panel productivity	209
Figure 7.3 Means plot of Tower A floor panel size to crane cycle time	213
Figure 7.4 Means plot of Tower C wall panel size to crane cycle time.....	214
Figure 7.5 Means plots of all towers floor panel size and crane cycle time.....	215
Figure 7.6 Means plot of all towers wall, beam and column panel size and crane cycle time	216
Figure 7.7 Means plot of all towers floor panels mean productivity	218
Figure 7.8 Means plot of all towers wall, beam and column panels mean productivity	218
Figure 8.1 “Just in time” Tower A sample daily flow chart	231
Figure 8.2 Tower A sample daily flow chart.....	232
Figure 8.3 Tower B sample daily flow chart.....	232
Figure 8.4 Tower C sample mobile crane daily flow chart.....	233
Figure 8.5 Tower A limited CLT storage area	236
Figure 8.6 Tower C limited CLT storage area.....	237
Figure 8.7 Openings by multiple panels	248
Figure 8.8 Single large panel with openings.....	248
Figure 8.9 Conventional beam end configuration.....	250
Figure 8.10 Proposed wedge-shaped beam connection.....	251
Figure 8.11 Typical project design process	254
Figure 8.12 Merged design model for productivity efficiency.....	257
Figure 8.13 Merged construction model for productivity efficiency	258

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Examples of definitions of productivity (extract from Tangen, 2005)	22
Table 3.1 Prefabrication Categories	52
Table 3.2 Examples of timber buildings' longevity	58
Table 3.3 Examples of benefits of mass timber (Lehmann, 2012a, b; Lehmann and Crocker, 2015; Shahzad, W. et al., 2014)	73
Table 3.4 Examples of time savings on mass timber projects	74
Table 3.5 Perceived obstacles to timber prefabrication in Australia (Xia et al., 2014)	79
Table 4.1 Pilot study-sample sites	92
Table 4.2 Panel size categories	107
Table 4.3 Example of productivity calculations for daily worksheets	109
Table 4.4 Summary of required collected data	110
Table 4.5 Example single and two-stage crane cycle calculation	114
Table 4.6 Example crane cycle stage 1 and 2 combination worksheet	115
Table 4.7 Example of outlier identification on the summary worksheet	116
Table 4.8 Summary of crane cycle classification	117
Table 5.1 Panel quantity and area measured per tower	130
Table 5.2 High-level: Towers A, B and C	131
Table 5.3 Summary of statistics for three case study towers	134
Table 5.4 Intermediate level productivity analysis for the three towers	136
Table 5.5 Intermediate to high-level productivity comparison across three tower cases	137
Table 5.6 Summary of workdays lost	138
Table 5.7 CLT crane cycles logged for Towers A, B and C	139
Table 6.1 ANOVA test for crane cycle times between three towers	144
Table 6.2 ANOVA test for productivity output between three towers	145
Table 6.3 Floor panel cycle time normality test results per tower	147
Table 6.4 Number of floor-panel outliers via normality tests	151
Table 6.5 Wall panel cycle time normality test results	153
Table 6.6 Number of wall-panel outliers via normality tests	156
Table 6.7 Beam panel cycle time normality test findings	158
Table 6.8 Number of beam-panel outliers via normality tests	161
Table 6.9 Column panel cycle time normality test results	162
Table 6.10 Number of column-panel outliers via normality tests	166
Table 6.11 One-way ANOVA: all panel crane cycle times	167
Table 6.12 One-way ANOVA: all panel productivity rates (m ² /hr)	168
Table 6.13 Post hoc test: multi comparison findings: crane cycles	168
Table 6.14 Post hoc test: multi comparison findings: productivity	169
Table 6.15 Crane cycle time One-way ANOVA test results	171
Table 6.16 Crane cycle time post hoc multiple comparisons	172
Table 6.17 ANOVA Productivity panel category findings for Towers A, B and C	173
Table 6.18 Productivity post hoc multiple comparisons	173
Table 6.19. 6-Storey building (Towers A & B) baseline crane cycle (input) matrix	183
Table 6.20 Towers A and B medium floor panel cycle times	183
Table 6.21- 6-Storey Building (Tower A & B) baseline productivity values matrix	184
Table 6.22 Towers A and B medium floor panel productivity matrix	185
Table 6.23 Tower C baseline crane cycle time (input) matrix	192
Table 6.24 Tower C baseline productivity values matrix	193
Table 6.25- 6 and 3 storey baseline productivity and crane cycle values matrixes	194
Table 7.1 Panel installation sample sets of the three crew sizes	197
Table 7.2 ANOVA test results for variance in the three crew size outputs	198
Table 7.3 Regression analysis findings crane cycle times to crew size	198
Table 7.4 Crane cycle t-test results for the tower and mobile cranes variance	199
Table 7.5 Linear regression test crane type to a) crane cycle and b) productivity	200
Table 7.6 Pearson r and 95% correlation test results for crane types	201
Table 7.7 Multivariate regression analysis: crane time, crew time to productivity	202
Table 7.8 Crane and crew cycle time multivariate regression coefficient analysis	202
Table 7.9 ANOVA test results for the variance of crane cycle time to floor level	204

Table 7.10 Crane cycle multi comparison Scheffe's post hoc test.....	206
Table 7.11 ANOVA test results for the variance of productivity (m ² /hr) to floor level.....	207
Table 7.12 Productivity multi comparison Scheffe's post hoc test.....	208
Table 7.13 ANOVA test results: productivity to different panel size.....	211
Table 7.14 ANOVA test results: variance of mean productivity in panel size.....	211
Table 7.15 ANOVA findings: variance of crane cycle time to panel size.....	212
Table 7.16 One-way ANOVA descriptives table: all towers, floor panel cycles time.....	215
Table 7.17 Descriptives table: all towers: wall, beam and column panel crane cycles.....	216
Table 7.18 ANOVA: "Wall" panel productivity (wall, beam and column), all towers.....	217
Table 7.19 ANOVA: Floor panel productivity, all towers.....	217
Table 7.20 Increment weather to value-add CLT time per floor level.....	220
Table 7.21 Wind & rain combined multivariate regression analysis.....	221
Table 7.22 Wind & rain multivariate regression coefficient analysis.....	221
Table 7.23 Selected factors' measurement criteria.....	224
Table 7.24 Proposition 5: multivariate regression analyses findings.....	224
Table 8.1 Proposed Crane Allocation example.....	241
Table 8.2 Baseline crane cycle and productivity comparisons.....	243
Table 8.3 Percentage of outliers removed.....	244

Abstract

Mass timber is a prefabricated, panelised form of building with many benefits such as faster construction and a reduction in both process waste and environmental impact. With worldwide population forecast to increase to 10 billion by 2055 and buildings using 40% of global energy and contributing over 33% of greenhouse gas emissions, mass timber can improve construction and increase industry's productivity.

However, the uptake of mass timber by Australia's general construction industry has been slow, partly because insufficient quantitative productivity data is available to help contractors and developers forecast cost, time or resources for timber projects. The knowledge gap results in risk-averse pricing by contractors and clients and increased contingency pricing behaviour, which penalises mass timber's uptake.

This study focuses on mass timber on-site productivity in multi-storey construction to develop a method to forecast and identify the significant factors affecting its on-site productivity.

A quantitative research case study approach was adopted. A method to measure installation data in multi-storey construction was designed to develop an indicative baseline productivity matrix and identify significant determinants, including materials handling and resourcing.

Mass timber installation time and motion studies using a time-lapse digital video recording camera were conducted on three multi-storey residential buildings to understand on-site mass timber installation processes. This study included an analysis of repetitive work cycles and productivity factors, including crane cycle times and installation crew sizes.

A mass timber productivity baseline matrix was established to categorise panel type and size for productivity improvement potential and identify a leading input resource.

Five potential areas of process improvement, both in construction and design, were assessed. Larger size panels were found to provide significantly improved productivity over smaller panels. The crane, not labour, was found to be the primary input resource. Wind had the most significant adverse inclement weather effect on productivity. Floor level height did not statistically significantly affect productivity. Mass timber productivity models were developed from the above factors to forecast CLT panels' and mean daily productivity. A merged model is presented with the relevant steps in the design and pre-construction stages to provide maximum efficiencies in mass timber projects. The model identifies the critical factors to address during the design and pre-construction stages.

The findings and the empirical and quantitative models presented extend current theoretical knowledge. It provides tools to improve and forecast on-site productivity for mass timber multi-storey construction and enhance overall productivity for the construction industry.

Key Definitions

Component is a product, which is produced for a specified place or function, in a building or a building system that dictates its design.

Context is the surrounding physical or theoretical conditions of something, through which an object or issue can be understood, by which it can be influenced and on which it can have influence.

Cross-laminated timber (CLT) is a component built up by layers of boards glued together in two or more directions.

Glulam is a composite of timber and glue. It denotes laminated timber of four or more boards/lamellas glued together. The most common elements are columns and beams.

High rise building refers to a building comprising over seven stories above ground level

Light timber construction denotes stud-framed timber structures, commonly in the range of the widespread “two by four” system. The structure then minimises material volume and is built up by several layers with specific functions.

Mass timber (or “massive timber,” i.e. *massive timber construction*) is broadly defined as layers of wood that have been joined together to create more significant timber elements that are both stronger and more behaviourally predictable than sawn timber (rethink Wood 2014). Mass timber has several meanings and definitions, depending on trademark-registered principles of production. Other terms are “solid wood”, “heavy timber” and “laminated timber”. “Massivträ” is the proposed Swedish term. In German the term “Massivholz” is common, but “Brettsperholz” is also used for plate-like elements.

Medium-rise building refers to a building from three to seven stories above ground level.

Module is an independent part or unit, which can be combined with others to form a structure or building.

Multi-storey building is a building with three or more stories.

Non-value-added is an activity carried out that is not critical or is superfluous to the productivity of the product installed.

Prefabrication (construction) is “a process involving the fabrication or assembly of systems and components off-site, which, when complete, are transported to the job site for installation at the required time. It is an innovative process aiming to minimise on-site fabrication activities more efficiently, in a controlled environment, to achieve gains in quality, costs and time on-site” (Committee on Advancing the Competitiveness and Productivity of U.S. Construction Industry CACPUCI (2009).

Productivity is the effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Sub-system is a group of parts related to each other on a specific level. The group is related to other groups as well as to governing systems on a higher level.

Surface element is an element with its main extension in two dimensions.

System is a group of related parts, which work together as a whole. System effect can be noted when relations between different parts of a group get developed to work well.

Value-added is an activity critical to the productivity of the product installed.

Webcam is a video camera connected to a computer, allowing its images to be seen by authorised internet users.

Key Abbreviations

ANOVA = Analysis of Variance

CLT = Cross Laminated Timber.

CD = completion date

CL = Centre Line.

DfMA = Designed for Manufacture and Assembly

Glulam = Glued laminated (bonded) timber

HLP = High Level Productivity

IBS = Industrialised Building Systems.

LCL = Lower Control Line.

LVL: Laminated Veneered Lumber

OSM = Off-site Manufacture

SD = start date

TQC = Total Quality Control

UCL = Upper Control Line.

U.K. = United Kingdom