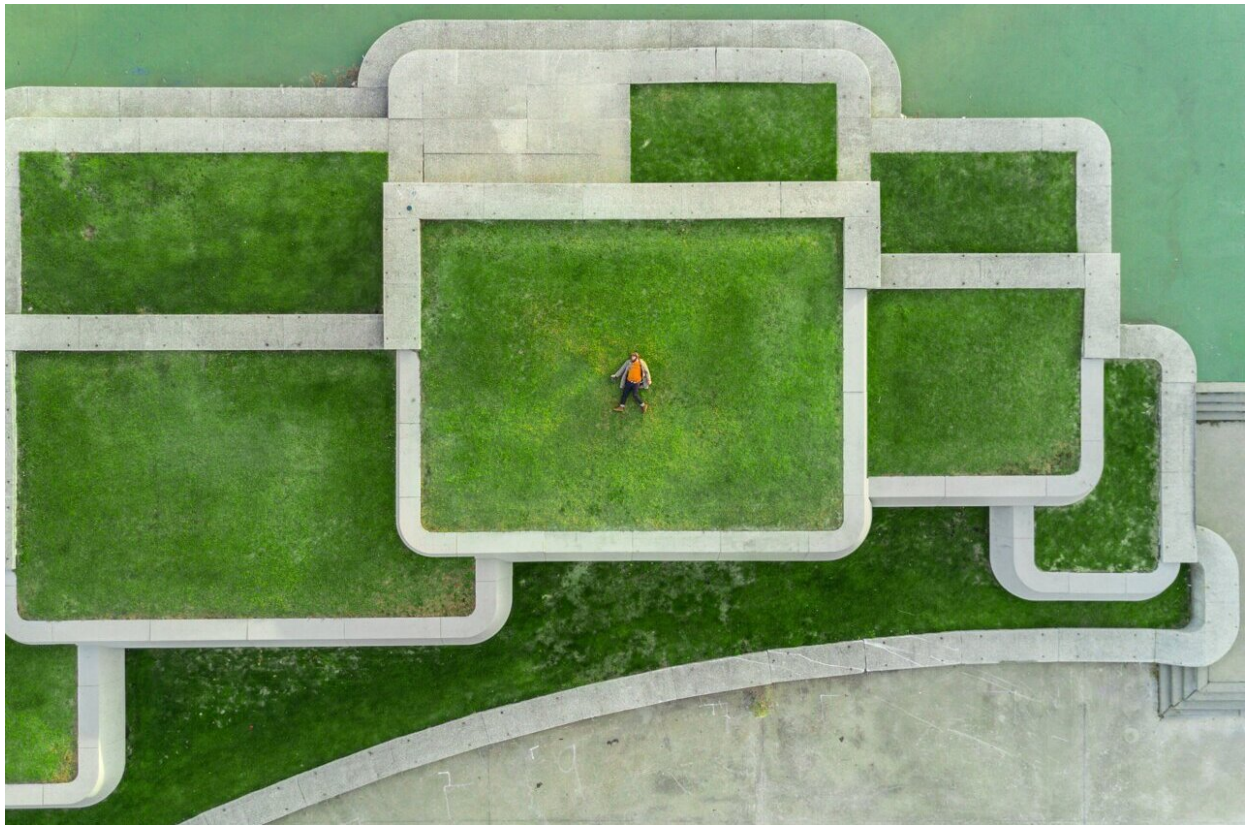


We need a global policy to encourage low-carbon construction, researcher says

December 5 2023, by Matti Kuittinen



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International collaboration to create standards and policies for the construction industry is vital to bring down the industry's carbon footprint, argues Professor Matti Kuittinen of Aalto University in a

[paper published in *Buildings & Cities*.](#)

Construction is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Although the IPCC warned in 2018 that emissions from construction need to go down by 80-90% by 2050, the intervening years have seen resource use for construction continue growing. This is partly because the economics of the industry make companies wary of taking risks—so Kuittinen says that [government support](#) and intervention are needed to reverse the trend.

Rather than policies being set piecemeal by [individual countries](#), Kuittinen advocates for neighboring countries to collaborate if their industries operate in similar contexts. For instance, in 2019, the Nordic countries set a joint goal of becoming a global example of low-carbon construction, and they have since collaborated to harmonize climate regulations in their construction industries.

Part of this process was agreeing on a standardized life cycle assessment (LCA) to determine the greenhouse gas emissions of a building. While an LCA has to be scientifically rigorous, precision needs to be balanced against factors such as the administrative burden and robust applicability in different contexts.

By taking into account the needs of different stakeholders, the Nordics have developed a standard that is robust but can be readily applied at different scales and in different contexts. This guidance has made it easier for construction companies to plan their work and reduce costs while meeting environmental goals.

Kuittinen calls for a coordinated climate policy to reduce emissions in the [construction industry](#). "Technically, there's nothing that would prevent a global effort for setting climate mitigation and adaptation policies for the built environment in a decade. It is a question of

commitment and determination," he says. By creating policies and standards that can be readily adapted to local contexts and cultures, an international program would provide pathways to a decarbonized built environment.

More information: [Climate Regulations for Buildings: International Policy Collaborations](#), *Buildings and Cities* (2023).

Provided by Aalto University

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