

# Dean's Roundup

Friday, 10 January, 2014

**Roundup:** *Ceiling function*, the mathematical operation of rounding a number up to the next higher integer.

**Roundup:** a term in American English referring to the process of gathering animals into an area, known as a "Muster" in Australia.

**Rounding up:** when a helmsman cannot control a boat and it heads into the wind

**Roundup:** the plan for an invasion of northern France by Allied forces during World War II (Wikipedia)

**Dean's Roundup:** part blog, part bulletin; part honour roll, part curatorial [**cu'ra-to'ri-al** (ky'ōō'r'ē-tōr'ē-əl, -tōr'-)] n. nounised by the Dean from curator + editorial]

Dear all,

I have just come out of a meeting in town where I was offered space in the center of Nansha, a rapidly growing satellite town of Guangzhou identified by the Beijing and Guangdong governments as a strategic industrial growth point. It is 45 minutes away from Guangzhou and 60-90 minutes away from Hong Kong by either ferry or road.

The space would be offered to us free of rent on the understanding that we give it back in ten years or so when the buildings are redeveloped. The owner's vision is refreshingly inspiring and resonates with many conversations and plans gestating within the Faculty. He talked passionately about the search for authenticity in Chinese city building, lamenting both the stock high-density podium designs that characterize the industry and the artificiality of Shanghai's Thamestown genre. We discussed the rising demand for a different style of city building in China, subtleties of local architectural tradition, the uniqueness of Guangzhou's built form and so on.

I talked about Yan Gao's research, which has developed algorithms that capture, code and reproduce a vernacular DNA and converts this to layout plans following vernacular configurational patterns and extrudes a massing model, rendered from a library of vernacular materials and detailing. I talked also about the Faculty's interest in historical architectural research; architectural conservation; multi-scale planning and the economic geography of the Pearl River Delta.

We agreed to explore a plan that might have the following components:

1. Setting up HKUrbanLab/Nansha, a place for teaching, research, intellectual discussion and experimentation with a new style of urban design, architecture and city building that will become a beacon in China.
2. The location - in the geographical epicenter of the PRD agglomeration (equidistant from Guangzhou and Hong Kong) – makes this an attractive place for collaborative programmes with international partners as in Shanghai but with a different focus
3. Whole or partial location of the ACP materials and techniques lab at HKUrbanLab/Nansha
4. A satellite HKUrban i-Lab in Nansha, with multi-media facilities so that we can efficiently demo models and visualisations developed in the HKU i-Lab and have interactive workshops and dialogues with students and visitors to Nansha.

5. Students could study Nansha's development in depth, over time, developing longitudinal data and insights and case studies and novel and experimental studio projects mounted on permanent display in the Nansha centre.
6. The idea would be to locate in the centre of the PRD an internationally renowned intellectual hot-house laboratory for new and challenging ideas about the way Chinese cities are designed and built.
7. It is near enough to expect that a Nansha-based programme could quickly develop extensive links into our curricula at multiple levels and modes.
8. I have suggested that we might want to think about bringing together several aspects of our strategic research agenda as a focus in the Nansha lab:
  - a. Parametric design for analyzing and reproducing vernacular building, plan, massing and configuration DNA
  - b. Parametric approaches to varying standard design and industrial production
  - c. CAD-CAM BIM models for manufacturing hybrid (rationalized-traditional) designs that use authentic local materials and maybe even reproduce or interface with local craftsmanship
  - d. Spatial analysis for experimenting with and optimizing vernacular and walkable urban grids and layouts
  - e. Environmental modeling for experimenting with and optimising walkability to improve thermal comfort and long term health benefits
  - f. Historically-sensitive design and material strategies
  - g. PRD agglomeration, transport and economic geography analysis – placing Nansha in a holistic transportation, land-use, economic, political and ecological context.

This is my initial response to the idea of a PRD lab that emerged strongly from consultation with colleagues on strategic research themes last September. Please let me have your feedback. Nothing is set in stone or committed as yet.

Chris

## Department of Architecture

### I. Professor Lynne DiStefano

- has been invited to join the Yangon Heritage Trust International Advisory Group (YHT IAG).

"The trust was founded in 2011 as a response to the increasing development pressures on Yangon's historic fabric. YHT functions as an NGO with no statutory responsibility whose main objectives are to increase awareness for and proper conservation of the city's tangible and intangible heritage while also allowing the city to fully and sustainably modernise."

- has also been invited to join a working group within the YHT IAG that will form the advisory body to a European Union funded project to lay the foundations for the drafting of Yangon's first generation planning processes and guidelines. (The YHT is jointly implementing this project with Yangon City Development Committee [YCDC] and Myanmar Egress.)

### 2. Ms. Tris Kee

- participated in designing and building charity schools with the HKU and CUHK architectural students in Takeo Province of the South Cambodia, an area in dire need of basic necessities like water, hygiene, education and health care.



## Department of Real Estate and Construction

### I. Sr. Bay Wong

- was appointed by the Chairman of the Construction Industry Council on 6 December 2013 as a Director of the Hong Kong Green Building Council Limited (HKGBC) for the term of office from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015.
- was re-appointed by the Director of Buildings as a member of the Inspectors Registration Committee Panel and the Inspectors Registration Committee for a period of two years commencing 1 January 2014.
- chaired a Task Force meeting on the Feasibility of Adoption of the Dispute Resolution Advisor System to Domestic Subcontracts of the Construction Industry Council on 6 January 2014.