

Dean's Roundup

Friday, September 27th, 2013

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 (kyŏŕ'ə-tŏr'ē-əl, -tŏr'-)] *n. nounised by the Dean from curator + editorial*

Dear All,

Following on from last week's Dean's Roundup, I would be interested to hear from anyone working on the general theme of 'ageing cities' (as in cities for the elderly rather than cities past their prime). The Faculty has a chance to make an input into what may well become one of China's lasting legacies of philanthropic new towns (see last week's Roundup for details). The conditions for this kind of development will not last for long. It depends on the existence of a local village leader made wealthy by China's transitional land development system, the sense of an impending elderly housing and welfare crisis, a weak planning control system, absence of property tax, a window of opportunity for large green-field development in tertiary cities and below, enthusiasm amongst local governments for what they regard as culture-led real estate entrepreneurship and so on.

The master plan is not yet completed for this project and there is scope for colleagues and students to make an input. As well as ideas for designing homes and public spaces for the retired, what the project urgently needs is a business model for an elderly people's neighbourhood. The community may have up to 30,000 people, with 5000 in bespoke elderly people 'supported' accommodation with the remainder including a large proportion of soon-to-be retired, buying-in to what will be marketed as a welfare package. Indeed, such projects are often referred to in translation in the Mainland as *pensions*. A *pension* in the West is an annuity that turns a capital sum into a monthly dividend, post retirement (unless you are in Greece and some other European countries, where a *pension* is a small hotel). For reasons of translation, but also due to the fact that elderly welfare support in the centrally planned era came from the work unit (*danwei*) via directly supplied accommodation, services and living subsidy (food, money, health care), the new genre of retirement developments are regarded as an innovative model of retirement pension. Indeed at the Yinli forum last week, one of the themes was pension models in other countries, with discussion ranging from the merits and demerits of free housing to the economics of cross-subsidy, car ownership, building design, health-care arrangements and links to the city's transport systems.

Someone needs to do an analysis of service-population thresholds as an input to the master plan design and subsequent town management plan, with a view to specifying alternative social, spatial, institutional and organizational designs. As is typical with Chinese master plans, the town is likely to be designed on a drawing board (CAD screen) purely from imagination and guesswork. It needs economists informed by health professionals to make a really good plan.

Green space planning is another issue. On the basis of my own research I suggested to the planning team and land owner (pro bono, therefore not greatly considered) a circular green-walk edging the site (almost

2km square) so that elderly people have to walk to reach green space (evidence shows that the 'commute' to green space is the most (physically) health-benefiting part of an elderly-persons use of green infrastructure. This might be supplemented by other rings of green, maximising distance to walked-to recreational destinations for groups with successively less mobility.

A riddle: How would you design a town in such a way that elderly people (a) have a choice of green destinations to walk to each day at different distances, (b) have, at each destination, the choice of going for a walk within the green space for as long as they want without retracing their steps, and (c) have the guarantee that the walk home is no longer than the outward walk to the green area?

Answer: design a set of concentric green spaces around a central elderly residential area. (There's a thought for Britain's ailing town centres, which need to find a new economic function as retail shrinks by about 30% in a long-needed structural adjustment).

A geometric design problem (publishable and patentable if you solve it): how would you design a town on the above principles, or similar, in which you maximize residents' choice of destinations (green and shopping), for a given population, say in three different mobility categories and a given quantity of green space? Would you put everyone in the centre and have one thick peripheral green belt? Or several concentric belts? How would this design perform compared to the more traditional sub-divided neighbourhood model, for example, dividing the town into 3 non-overlapping circular neighbourhoods separated by green belts (typical of British post-war newtowns)? What about a small number of overlapping neighbourhoods; or many small residential blocks each with its own green space (moving towards a US style grid system)? My guess is that the grid system would maximize accessibility based purely on geometry. But if time is used to measure accessibility, a grid is not good because of the intersections and a single centre model might win.

That would give you a Corbusier townscape. Add the other big design parameter for an elderly town that I've already mentioned – economies of scale in service provision – and you are definitely talking about centrally clustered high density residential surrounded by greenery. Then throw in what scientific studies tell us about the walk-inducing effect of mixed use and you have a town that mixes residential, retail and services at sufficiently high density to create green destinations at a distance.

Voila - Corbusier's Paris, Abercromby's London and Yinli's Holy Paradise from first principles.

Congratulations to those listed below, especially to students Humphrey Keung, Chan Chi Him, Choy Chun Yin, Kwok Chin Hei, Yan Kin Lok and Yau Ho Kiu Kenneth. What could be more rewarding than seeing our students take prizes?

Chris

Department of Architecture

1. Lynne DiStefano
 - was one of four jurors for the 2013 AIA Hong Kong Honors and Awards adjudication, held on September 13th, 2013. The other jurors included: George T. Kunihiro (Professor, Kokushikan University); George H. Miller (Partner, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners); and Mohsen Mostafavi (Dean, Harvard Graduate School of design).”
2. Mr. Humphrey Keung (BAAS graduate, Class of 2013)
 - Humphrey’s design has been selected as one of the three winners of the ARCASIA Students' Design Competition-2013. The details of the exact prize (i.e. the Gold Medal Winner, Second Winner and Third Winner) would be announced at the ARCASIA Forum-17 which will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on October 8th and 9th. Humphrey is cordially invited to join the ARCASIA Forum-17 as honored guest. For more information about the ARCASIA Forum-17, please refer to the official website at <http://arcasianepal2013.com/a/>.

Department of Real Estate and Construction

1. Dr Koh Tas Yong
 - invited by the Hong Kong MTRC as a guest speaker at The MTRC 6th Safety Practitioners Conference held on 17 September 2013. The topic of Dr Koh's presentation was "Worker Health and Wellbeing Month 2013: A Review of Some Results"
2. Dr. Wilson Lu
 - a group of year three BSc Surveying students (3-year curriculum) Chan Chi Him, Choy Chun Yin, Kwok Chin Hei, Yan Kin Lok, Yau Ho Kiu Kenneth won the Bronze Award in the U-21 RFID Awards 2013, organized by GSI Hong Kong. Their project is “A Danger Zones Identification and Alert System - The Application of RFID in Construction Safety”. This is the fifth big prize that has been achieved based on Wilson’s year-two studio project – “digital technologies in construction”.
 - attended a small group workshop at HKHA on “BIM-enabled Just-In-Time (JIT) logistic and supply chain management (LSCM) in commercial building construction”. The workshop is to define the specifications of BIM and RFID technologies that can be sufficiently implemented in LSCM in real-life projects.
 - attended the Logistic and Supply Chain Management (LSCM) Summit 2013 at Hong Kong Science Park, on September 24th, 2013.

Department of Urban Planning and Design

I. Dr. Roger Chan

- gave a panel presentation entitled “Cooperation and Governance of the Pearl River Delta Region: Qianhai, Hengqin and Nansha” at the International Symposium “New Vision of Urban Development City Planning” organised by the Macao Urban Planning Institute on September 18th, 2013. Fellow panelists include Professor Mohsen Mostafavi, Dean, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University and Mr. Sean Chiao, Chief Executive, China, AECOM.



- published a new paper with details as below:

Zheng, J. and **Chan R.C.K.** (2013), “A Property-led Approach to Cluster Development: ‘Creative Industry Clusters’ and Creative Industry Networks in Shanghai”, *Town Planning Review*, 84:5, pp. 606-632.

2. Professor Chris Webster

- gave an invited talk: Webster CJ (2013) **Evidence and theory for the physical and institutional design of elderly neighbourhoods**, at the *International summit meeting forum of cultural town, healthy aging and urban complex development*, held in Linyi, Shandong Province, China, 14-15 September 2013. Organised by the World Association of Chinese Architects and China Cultural Industry Investment and Financing Centre.
- was re-appointed as co-editor, Journal of Education in the Built Environment (JEBE): <http://cebe.cf.ac.uk/jebe/index.php>