

# Dean's Roundup

Friday, 29 November, 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** (ky<sup>oo</sup>r<sup>o</sup>-t<sup>oh</sup>'**ē**-**əl**, -t<sup>oh</sup>'-)]  
*n. nounised by the Dean from curator + editorial]*

Dear all,

Last week was a busy one for me, first with REC colleagues at NUS for our first Ronald Coase Centre for Property Rights Research (RCCPRR) symposium, jointly organized with the Global Asia Institute, NUS; and then with Stephen Lau lining up the Faculty's 2014 studios in Yangon.

On the first of these, I was very proud of the HKU team at this small and highly charged intellectual forum. We demonstrably have a leading voice on matters of property rights, land economy, urban finance and planning in Asia; and also globally, indicated by the invitation to two of our number to give keynotes at the international conference of property rights, law and planning at Technion Israel Institute of Technology in February.

On the second, Stephen and I came away from Yangon with a three-fold commitment that I hope the whole Faculty will buy into.

1. We made a commitment on behalf of us all to help Yangon University of Technology Department of Architecture to upgrade. They are stuck in a time warp, with high calibre students and committed staff but few resources. I would like to help them organize a visiting lecturer program, anchored by our own teaching staff who are there with our students for studio work. I will also look for funds to support international speakers adding a visit on to their HK engagements. Stephen has already initiated a donation of architectural and urban planning books for their library. At some stage we shall put out a global appeal (when we've worked out a way of shipping books around the globe without undue expense).
2. Similarly, we made a commitment to work with the Ministry of Construction's Urban Research and Development Institute (URDI), a research and training agency in Yangon and home to a variety of urban initiatives and projects including UNCHS (HABITAT); and also with the Yangon Heritage Trust. In particular, URDI would benefit from public lectures and related training that we organize with Yangon University. Indeed, the two outreach programmes can be rolled into one, with our own teachers giving talks to trainers, academic teachers, professionals and senior students.
3. In talking to these various agencies, my pitch was that HKU has 5 or 6 teachers keen to run student studio projects in Yangon in 2014 and that it would be good to coordinate these around priority issue for the city. The response was unanimously positive (from the director of the national department for urban planning (which has just 30 trained planners); Yangon Heritage Trust; special advisor to the Minister of Construction; YCDC; UNCHS; and others); and overwhelmingly focused on the historic CBD along the Rangoon River.

This part of the city is rather like Shanghai 25 years ago when the Bund buildings were still in decline and faced ship yards and mud flats on the Pudong side of the river. One big difference is

that in Yangon, the historic Bund-style river frontage is separated from the river by a thin strip of shipyards. This is all set to be redeveloped into high density hotel, commerce and leisure as soon as the country has a basic set of internationally negotiable land, development, investment and joint venture laws (all currently in the drafting). No-one but the landowners of the shipyard areas wants this but all feel helpless to do anything to stop it (the land in question is owned by powerful interests).

What is needed, we were told, is an alternative plan that shows what can be made of this unique heritage site in a way that preserves the largest remaining collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial buildings in Asia and sets the city up for harmonious (I've been travelling to the Mainland too much) modern development that respects the city's past.

If we could produce such a plan and get the backing of influential architects, conservationists, planners and city leaders from around the world then in the words of the Minister of Construction's special advisor, "you can save our city".

Cue HKUrbanLab. I have offered the services of HKU colleagues, students and friends in creating this alternative plan and organizing worldwide support. I propose that we start with our 2014 studios and that they are coordinated to focus on the crucial historic strip of waterfront city, working up to a multi-scale spatial strategy for an area that I'm guessing is approximately 3-5 km<sup>2</sup>, set within a much larger area when the undeveloped side of the river is considered.

We have the following studios lined up: landscape (x2: regional scale and local scale), led by Ivan and colleagues; architecture (high-low density strategies?), led by Jason; conservation (conservation management of the historic area), led by ACP team; urban design and urban planning (land-use strategy for "Yangon's Bund?", led by Cecilia and Natalia; and architectural science (low-energy architectural conservation strategies?), led by Stephen.

Stephen Lau will be coordinating these. He will be calling a meeting to start the planning; identify data needs; schedule timings; and so on.

Interestingly enough, as I have implied above, the bottleneck to development in Myanmar is currently the lack of laws. The world's footloose capital will not truly start flowing until a clear system of property rights is in place. Not just clear, but also one that gives sufficient incentive for the different interests to contribute what they need to in developing the country's economy and cities. So for, example, the current law on joint ventures requires local partners to have a minimum of 51% holding and forbids foreign investors to have a part in any fixed assets (land, buildings). This will have to change. International capital is needed to develop the country and lift its 70 million people out of rural and urban backwardness and poverty. But it won't be attracted unless it has a share in the urban land value uplift that it will help create. A zero% cut in land rent (land development profit) is both inequitable and inefficient. So I predict this will change quickly. Then the money will start flowing and the skyline will start rising.

Perhaps the Ronald Coase Centre for Property Rights Research can have a part in shaping the land law reforms that are going to be necessary both to encourage and constrain this capital flow. The state owns much of the land. Perhaps a special zone could be created in the high growth potential areas of Yangon (such as the one subject to our alternative plan) to experiment with planning by leasehold? This will surely be a stronger institution to guide and control the city's re-development than a weak planning law that attempts to plan by edict and statutory zoning, land that is set to rise in value many hundred-fold.

Congratulations and thanks to all those mentioned below. Special congratulations to Dr. SHEN Yuzhong, Steve Rowlinson's PhD student, for his thesis prize and to Melissa and the Scapegoat team for the launch of this cleverly provocative publishing venture.

Chris

## Department of Architecture

### 1. Mr. Adam Bobbette

- Adam Bobbette and Geraldine Juarez's "Edible Excess" has been included in the X Architecture Biennale in São Paulo, 28 October to 1 December, 2013.

### 2. Mr. Jason Carlow

- delivered a lecture on his fabrication and housing research at the University of Washington in Seattle in mid-November 2013.
- visited the University of Oregon to discuss opportunities for collaboration and exchange in mid-November 2013.

### 3. Dr. Lynne DiStefano

- invited to give a series of lectures at Canada's *Willowbank* (Queenston, Ontario) on Thursday, 14 November, 2013. The institution positions heritage conservation as well as design and craft skills within the framework of the cultural landscape – and draws on the expertise of a wide range of Canadian and international practitioners. It's website is worth a visit!

### 4. Mr. David Erdman

- David Erdman's Corian and GFRC prototypes for the façade of Lunar House – designed with his firm *dauidclovers* first exhibited at SCI-Arc under the title *Immuring* – have recently been acquired by M+ for their permanent collection. M+ is the new Museum for Visual Culture and is part of the West Kowloon Cultural District of Hong Kong. It is slated to open in 2017.
- The Corian prototypes from David Erdman's *Lunar House* – designed with his firm *dauidclovers* - will be exhibited as part of *Building M+: The Museum and Architecture Collection* on display from 10 January to 9 February, 2014 at ArtisTree - 1/F, Cornwall House, Taikoo Place, Island East, Hong Kong. Open Daily 10am-8pm. Free admission.

### 5. Ms. Tris Kee

- has been invited by Chief Curator Ole Bouman to present her installation to local media at the Shenzhen Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture Exhibition. Tris' installation, entitled "Hong Kong Value Farm" is a collaboration with HK Kadoorie Institute and Chinese U exploring urban ecology, building technology and collaborative community participation.



- has been invited by the Development Bureau HKSAR and the Planning Department to join a research consortium to present harbourfront research findings to the Mayor of Barcelona on 22-27 November 2013.
- has been interviewed by local media, Pearl TV, on adaptive reuse industrial buildings in Kwun Tong.

#### 6. Mr. Stephen Lau

- co-authored with Eric Gou of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering of HKU on the following:

Gou Z, Lau S.S.Y, Qian F. Comparison of mood and task performance in naturally-lit and artificially-lit environments. [Indoor and Built Environment 2013: 1420326X13507792 (In Press)  
<http://ibe.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/10/20/1420326X13507792.abstract>]

- was invited by the Tianjin University to speak on Green Retrofitting : cases from Hong Kong at the 3rd International Conference on Architecture Heritage, Tianjin, 17– 18 November, 2013.
- Jun Wang and Stephen Lau, Hierarchical Production of Privacy: Gating in Compact Living in Hong Kong

Current Urban Studies 2013. Vol.1, No.2, 11-18 (<http://www.scirp.org/journal/cus>)  
 DOI:10.4236/cus.2013.12002

#### 7. Mr. John Lin and Olivier Ottevaere

- The KE project called “The Pinch” has been extremely successful with the local villagers and government. It is a two phase construction of a library and community center in Shuanghe Village, Yunnan Province. The project is part of a government led reconstruction effort after an earthquake in September 2012.



8. Dr. Cole Roskam

- I am presenting a paper entitled 'The International Hotel in Post-Revolutionary China, 1974-1989', at the conference 'Mobilities of Design: Transnational Transfers in Asian Architecture and Urban Planning, 1960-Present', organized by the ETH Zurich's Future Cities Laboratory and the Manchester Architecture Research Centre in Singapore, 20-22 November, 2013. More information can be found [here](#).

9. Mr. Tom Verebes

- served as a Reviewer of applications for the Marie Curie Post-doctoral Research Fellowship Programme at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland

10. Dr. Wong Wah Sang

- represented the Faculty of Architecture at the HKU Mentorship Inauguration Ceremony at Loke Yew Hall in the evening of 13 November, 2013. Some of our architectural students also joined the program and were taken good care of by experienced architecture mentors like Kyran Sze. A previous Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Cheng Yiu-chung, was also present at the ceremony as an alumni of Morrison Hall.

## Division of Landscape Architecture

I. Ms. Melissa Cate Christ

- contributor to the launch of Scapegoat's 6<sup>th</sup> issue – Excess

### EXCESS launch

Date: Wednesday, 27 November, 2013

Time: 6:30pm reception, 7-9pm discussion

Venue: Broadway Cinematheque (next to Kubrick Cafe and Bookstore), Foyer area on 1/F Prosperous Garden, 3 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

URL: <http://www.kubrick.com.hk/>



### EXCESS: Consuming Hong Kong / Scapegoat Launch

Lauded as a luxury capital, with the world's highest per capita consumption rate of luxury goods thanks to Mainland Chinese tourists, Hong Kong is exemplary of the paradoxical relationship of excess and restriction. Haunted by myths of perpetual land scarcity, the valorization of imported goods, and a leisure culture of obsessive consumption, in Hong Kong land redevelopment policy and practice have prioritized revenue generation, shopping mall tourism and outdated models of public housing construction at the expense of both cultural and environmental heritage, and the

potential for a more equitable, food-secure society.

In a discussion moderated by Hammad Nasar of the Asia Art Archive, Scapegoat editor Etienne Turpin will present the concept “excess” -- the theme of Issue 05 -- as a lens which we can use to observe and assess relations of confinement and consumption, and as a provocation to intervene in these processes through activism, design, and other public platforms. Scapegoat contributors Seth Denizen and Melissa Cate Christ will then discuss, respectively, the shopping mall as a model for the therapeutic transformation of the subject, and the extreme environmental and social effects of our out-of-season desire for imported vegetables on the landscape of Almeria, Spain. These presentations will be followed by a conversation with the audience about the reciprocal relations between architecture and its adjacencies, the rise of cultural tourism, and the role of independent counter-practices in the context of Hong Kong. With this presentation and discussion, we hope the launch of Scapegoat 05 will provoke further conversations about expenditure, consumption culture, and cultural politics.

From the editorial board:

SCAPEGOAT: Architecture | Landscape | Political Economy is an independent, not-for-profit, bi-annual journal designed to create a context for research and development regarding design practice, historical investigation, and theoretical inquiry. As a mytheme, the figure of the scapegoat carries the burden of the city and its sins. Walking in exile, the scapegoat was once freed from the constraints of civilization. Today, with no land left unmapped, and with processes of urbanization central to political economic struggles, SCAPEGOAT is exiled within the reality of global capital. The journal examines the relationship between capitalism and the built environment, confronting the coercive and violent organization of space, the exploitation of labour and resources, and the unequal distribution of environmental risks and benefits. Throughout our investigation of design and its promises, we return to the politics of making as a politics to be constructed. [www.scapegoatjournal.org](http://www.scapegoatjournal.org)

From the issue introduction:

SCAPEGOAT Issue 05 - Excess - Summer/Fall 2013 Ours is unquestionably a time of excess. While currencies and commodities continue to circulate and reify segregation and inequality throughout the global political economy, excess leaks out in all directions, sometimes fostering movements of resistance, at other times permitting improvisational opportunism among often neglected actors, and still at other moments irrevocably damaging ecologies and environments which we humans precariously but ruthlessly inhabit. The pleasures and perils of excess cross divisions of class, race, gender and sexuality, while also reinforcing aspects of these and other identities. Can we design for, or among, the excess of contemporary culture? How do practices of architecture and landscape architecture, as well as adjacent practices of art, installation, theory, typography, suggest ways to amplify, capture, or redirect excess?

Melissa Cate Christ is an Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Hong Kong and director of [transverse studio](http://transverse.studio).

Seth Denizen is a writer and landscape architect, currently teaching at the University of Hong Kong. Hammad Nasar is a writer, curator and the Head of Research and Programmes at the [Asia Art Archive](http://Asia Art Archive), Hong Kong.

Etienne Turpin is a writer and curator living and working in Jakarta, Indonesia. He is a founder and contributing editor of Scapegoat. His collected work can be found at [anexact.org](http://anexact.org).

As invited by the Hong Kong Construction Association (HKCA), the Department shall join its Training Collaboration for Construction Related Students on Experiential Learning on Site Safety, specially offering to the final year BSc(Surveying) student in 2014.

### 1. Professor K W Chau

**The Symposium: Institutions of Land Rights and Sustainable Asian Urbanization**, jointly organized by the Global Asia Institute of the National University of Singapore and the Ronald Coase Center for Property Rights Research of The University of Hong Kong was held on 18-19 November 2013 at the National University of Singapore. Professor Chris Webster, Professor K W Chau and Professor Lawrence Lai attended the Symposium. They presented papers and served as discussants.



- presented a paper entitled "Political institution and housing problems in China" at the *Symposium: Institutions of Land Rights and Sustainable Asian Urbanization*, 18-19 November 2013, Singapore.

### 2. Professor Chris Webster

- presented a paper entitled "How low can you go?: infinite rural migrant labour supply and the competing-away of living-space rights" at the *Symposium: Institutions of Land Rights and Sustainable Asian Urbanization*, 18-19 November 2013, Singapore.

### 3. Professor Lawrence W C Lai

- presented a paper entitled "Political Planning by contract: a re-presentation of the Hong Kong leasehold system" at the *Symposium: Institutions of Land Rights and Sustainable Asian Urbanization*, 18-19 November 2013, Singapore.

#### 4. Dr. Koh Tas Yong

- had been invited by the Hong Kong MTRC as a guest speaker at The MTRC 8th Contractors Safety Conference held on 19 November 2013. The topic of Dr Koh's presentation was "Construction Workers Safety Behaviours: Some Recent Observations"



#### 5. Dr. L H Li and Dr. Kelvin Wong

- have been awarded HK\$519,570 by the Central Policy Unit of the HKSAR government for the project "Granger Causality Analysis of Land Supply and Housing Market Performance - Implications for Long Term Urban Land Policy in Hong Kong" in the first round of the new Public Policy Research scheme.

#### 6. Professor Steve Rowlinson

- visited QUT, Brisbane as an Adjunct Professor and attended research presentations by Pauline TEO Poh Lian and AZMERI Raman and advised on the finalisation of their PhD theses. He met with Dr Adrian Bridge and drafted joint publications based on their ARC Grant "Explaining FDI decisions in Australia by overseas contractors" using Dunning's eclectic paradigm as a frame of reference.
- examined a PhD in the field of innovation in construction organisations for school of built environment, university of New South Wales

#### 7. Dr. Shen Yuzhong (Research Assistant, Class of 2013 PhD graduate)

- The PhD dissertation of Dr. SHEN Yuzhong under the supervision of Prof. Steve ROWLINSON was adjudicated as one of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Best Project Award 2013 winners under the category of Postgraduate Degree Programme. To encourage more university and post-secondary students to engage OSH-related research across the territory, the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) awards a maximum of ten projects annually based on the quality, originality and relevance of the project to the occupational safety and health. The winning dissertation, titled "An Investigation of Safety Climate on Hong Kong Construction Sites," focused on improving practitioners' perceptions and appraisals of safety measures on construction sites. The winner and his supervisor were invited to the OSH Best Project Award Prize Presentation Ceremony to be held on 18 February 2014 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre

## Department of Urban Planning and Design

### 1. Dr. Cecilia Chu

- was invited to give a seminar entitled "Narrating the Present Past: Activating the Role of History in the Study of the Built Environment," at the Department of Geography and Resource Management (GHM) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on 14 November 2013.

### 2. Professor Rebecca Chiu

- was invited to present a keynote speech in the *International Conference on Extended Mega Urban Regions* organized by the Institute for Environment and Development, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia, 15-21 November 2013.

### 3. Professor Bo-sing Tang

- was invited to give a presentation on transit-oriented development to a delegation from Qingdao Huangdao District on 14 November, 2013.
- was invited to give a presentation on land supply and land use planning in Hong Kong at the *Hong Kong Session of the Urban Planning Society of China (UPSC) Annual Conference 2013*, held in Qingdao, from 15 to 18 November, 2013.

### 4. Professor Anthony Yeh

- has presented a Key Note Paper on "Making Smart Cities Smarter – Connecting Cyberspace with Physical Space" in the *International Conference on Geospatial Information Science 2013* held at the Seoul Convention and Exhibition Center (COEX) on 14 November 2013.
- has been awarded Fellow of the Hong Kong Institute of Science in the *21st Annual Conference of Hong Kong Institution of Science* on 23 November 2013.

## Shanghai Study Centre

### 1. Nathan Melenbrink

- delivered a lecture on "Applied Parametric Thinking in Design Education and Practice" to the University of Nottingham Ningbo China, Department of Architecture and Built Environment, on 9 November, 2013.
- was selected to serve on the jury for the ongoing Next7 International Design Competition, sponsored by Arch2O. <http://www.arch2o.com/next7-arch2o-competition/>