

Dean's Roundup (Friday, 3 October, 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.

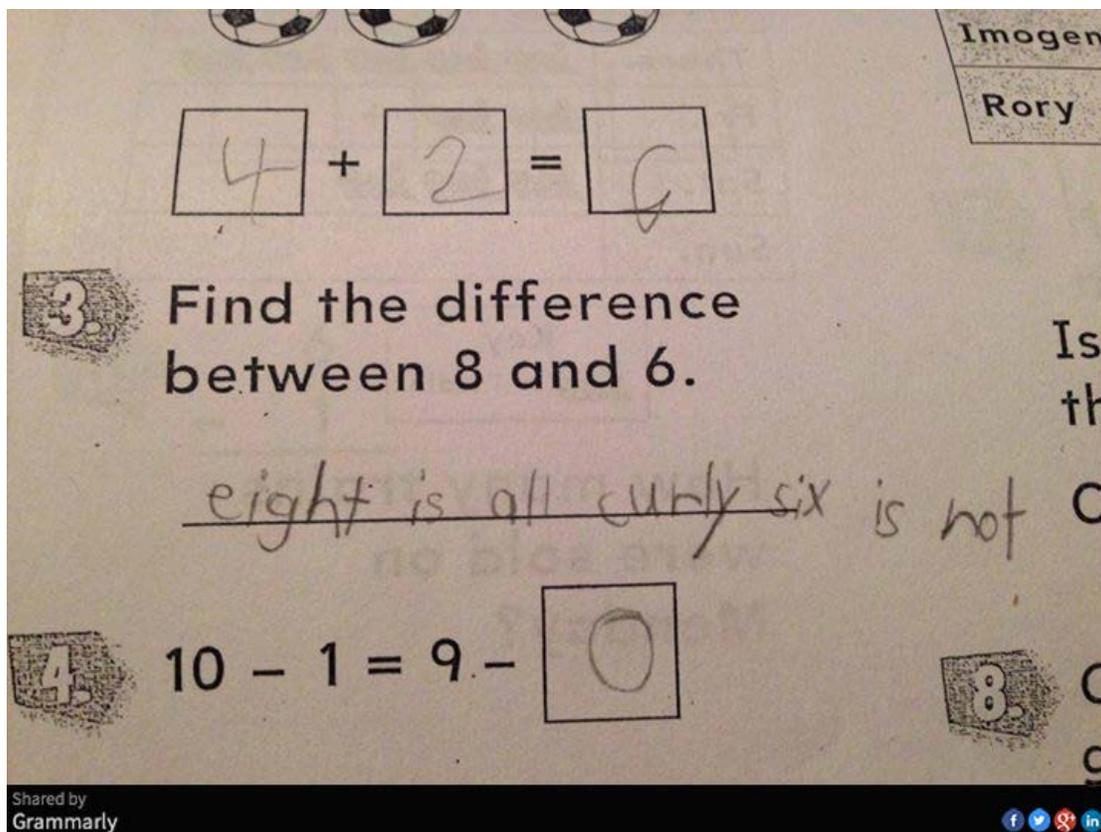
Rounding up: when a helmsman cannot control a boat and it heads into the wind

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

Dear all,

First, a lighthearted reminder that we don't all see things through the same lens:



Second, in recognition of the serious issues facing HK and our students this week, some thoughts on democracy. Next week moving on to relationship between democracy and built form.

Consider a simple political economy model. Immediately after the traumas of the first half of the 20th century, it was common to polarize communism and fascism at either ends of a political continuum. A more meaningful spectrum places total government control (N Korea) at one end and total individual control (Somalia ten years ago) at the other. You could think of it as:

[G=1]-----[G=N]

G= number of governors, N = number of governed. At the left end, 1 person governs N people. This is an extreme totalitarian state like medieval kingdoms and empires. At the other end, N people govern N people. This is extreme anarchy in which every individual governs her or himself.

Now make this into a 2D graph (below), adding an axis that represents the welfare of the population of N people. Let's draw from Amartya Sen and define 'development as freedom' and put freedom on a vertical axis, where freedom comprises at least three parts (more if you want): political, economic, religious. Political freedom rises with more power to determine one's leaders; economic freedom rises with personal income and wealth; religious freedom rises with the separation of state and religion and with social and ideological tolerance of others (I add this because of what's happening in the Middle East at the moment).

As well as representing the number of people in government, the horizontal axis might also represent, more technically, the dispersion of property rights in society (and here, if you'll bear with me, I write as a member of HKU's Ronald Coase Centre for Property Rights Research). At the extreme left of the graph, all rights over income, collective decision-making and religious thought and practice remain with a single person. At the extreme right (geometrically), rights over these matters are completely distributed to N individuals, who have the right to choose what job they want and where; what religion to follow; and what view to hold about how to organize any collective action they might want to engage in (the model ignores the real constraints on people's ability to earn – this is not an economics blog).

Now, to the current big issue. Both extremes of the model yield poor results for society for many and varied reasons, some common to both ends of the spectrum, some specific to one or other. Because this is so, neither end is stable and there will inevitably be a move towards a middle ground.

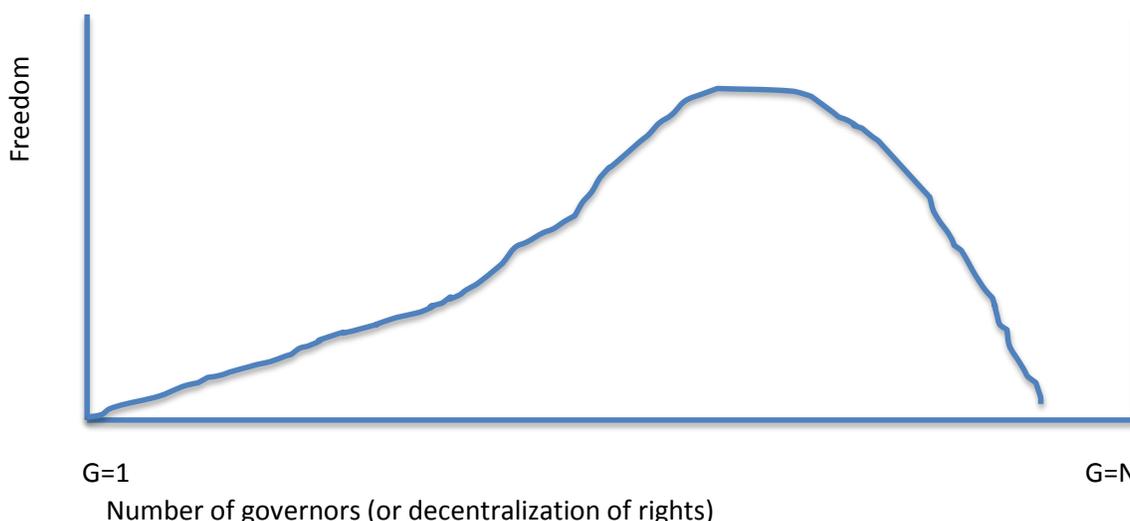
Pure anarchy cannot long survive. Populations quickly invent rules to make life bearable. These rules inevitably reduce individual rights, but in the end, yield greater individual freedom. Like the child deciding to abide by his parents rulings and finding that life works better with certain well-designed constraints. So from an initially anarchic society, the distribution of individual rights is likely to centralize somewhat, moving to the left.

Pure totalitarian autocracy cannot survive long either, especially in modern times with good communications. It is too costly. Empires eventually implode from the edges as well as the centre. So Soviet communism crashed in 1989. Deng Xiaoping opened up the Chinese economy ten years earlier. The process at work in transitional economies that are moving away from central planning is not dissimilar to that operating in transitional economies moving away

from anarchy. It involves decisions about more appropriate (more fair and more efficient) collectivization of rights. One state moves from the right, aggregating more and more individual rights. The other state moves from the left, disaggregating more and more rights.

On July 1st 2010, the PRC promulgated China's first modern law of Tort. This had the effect of decentralizing decisions about liability disputes to law-makers, moving away from central control over individual decisions by creating a framework of unambiguous rules. The same movement towards the right (geometrically and ideologically) has happened in many spheres of Mainland government affairs – land laws, compensation laws, labour laws and so on are decentralizing the power of government. It is a dynamic process and it takes time for a transitional state to move from one extreme in the model to a more workable and acceptable middle ground. Sometimes, an expression of political voice (or political exit for a small country) helps a government made bigger steps than it otherwise might; or to make them more quickly (note that reform in the smaller Baltic states was very quick and very thorough, partly, one presumes because of the ease with which footloose people, entrepreneurs and capital could relocate somewhere else nearby).

Back to the diagram. At the left extreme (which includes the fascism of ISIL and similar), freedom suffers severely. I have drawn the graph to suggest that even a move from a single dictator to a small group of cadres, may not be sufficient to create true freedom for the people. I have drawn the peak in freedom (the optimal political model) nearer to the right end than the left end because experience seems to show that generally, 'there is wisdom in many counselors' (or put another way, decisions are best made by the people they effect – with adequate safeguards for the greater good, for dispersed demand, and for the poor, the sick and otherwise disempowered). But too great a decentralization of rights risks moving from democracy to anarchy. Some would say that India is too far to the right in this diagram (but I won't go there). If you were to break down the graph into two types of freedom and draw a separate line for economic freedom (indicated perhaps by GDP per capita) and political freedom (indicated by some index of democracy), then you would see that the two trade-off at some parts of the graph – as with the case of India – and that the peak for the economic freedom curve lies to the left of the peak for the political freedom curve, at least at some stages of economic development. This is Beijing's argument of course. Then if you threw in time, perhaps as a third dimension, you could conjecture on the likely trajectory of different states over time – towards convergence, or perhaps towards different models of capitalism. A detailed political-economic study of this might also be able to spot where political voice might be necessary to oil the wheels of institutional evolution...



That's a few ideas in place for next week's thoughts of the relationships between democracy and built form.

(For outside readers: the ideas stated are purely my own and in no way claim to represent the views of the Faculty of Architecture or HKU.)

Thanks to those mentioned below for their contributions and achievements, especially two papers in great journals by one of our new DLA recruits (joining us in January 2015).

Chris

Department of Architecture

1. Dr. Eunice Seng

- presented a paper titled "The City in a Building, Hong Kong c.1956-" and was a discussant at the Roundtable Session for the 13th DOCOMOMO International Conference in Seoul on September 25 to 27, 2014.
- together with H. Koon Wee, SKEW Collaborative had two built architectural projects shortlisted for the 2014 Blueprint Awards. The awards ceremony will be held on Oct 14, 2014 at the Village Underground in East London. Ten projects were shortlisted in six categories from around 300 international entries. The shortlisted projects were the Jia Little Exhibition Center for the "Best Sustainable Project" category, and the Wulumuqi Road Roof House for the "Best Small Project" category. Shortlisted architects include Andrew Bromberg / Aedas, Asif Khan, Julian de Smedt, Mecanoo, Zaha Hadid Architects, and others. <http://www.blueprintawards.com/shortlist-2014>
- together with H. Koon Wee, SKEW Collaborative was nominated to be included in a new publication "50 under 50: Innovators of the 21st Century" scheduled to be published in 2015. The distinguished international jury includes Stanley Tigerman, Jeanne Gang, Ralph Johnson, Qingyun Ma, and Marion Weiss.

2. Mr. Koon Wee

- presented the activities and accomplishments of the DOCOMOMO HK Chapter to the 13th DOCOMOMO Council Meeting in Seoul on Sep 26, 2014. The HK Chapter was approved as a formal working party, eligible for representation in the Council. DOCOMOMO HK is an NGO founded by a number of academics and practitioners, including members from our faculty, Dr. Cecilia Chu, Dr. Lynne DiStefano, Dr. Hoyin Lee, Dr. Cole Roskam, Dr. Eunice Seng, and H. Koon Wee. <http://docomomo.hk>
- invited to serve on the competition jury for the Hillhurst United Church "Space for Social Actualization" design competition in Calgary, Canada. Jury includes Catherine Venart, Diane Lewis, Dr. Graham Livesey, Tara Nelson and Dr. Marie Delorme, and judging will take place on Oct 9, 2014.

http://www.bustler.net/index.php/competition/space_for_social_actualization/

Division of Landscape Architecture

1. Dr. Bin Jiang

- published two new articles:

- (i) A Dose-Response Curve Describing the Relationship Between Urban Tree Cover Density and Self-Reported Stress Recovery

Bin Jiang, Dongying Li, Linda Larsen and William C. Sullivan
Environment and Behavior published online 25 September 2014
DOI: 10.1177/0013916514552321

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://eab.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/09/24/0013916514552321>

- (ii) A dose of nature: Tree cover, stress reduction, and gender differences

Bin Jiang^{a,1}, Chun-Yen Chang^{b,2}, William C. Sullivan^c,
Landscape and Urban Planning 132 (2014) 26-36

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b Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, National Taiwan University, Taiwan

c Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 611 E. Taft Drive, 101 Buell Hall, Champaign, IL 61820, USA

Department of Real Estate and Construction

1. Ir Bay Wong

- Attended a Board Meeting of the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) on 16 September 2014.
- Attended a Board of Directors Meeting of the Hong Kong Green Building Council (HKGBC) on 17 September 2014 and its Waste Reduction Press Launch Ceremony on 26 September 2014.
- Attended a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Water Resources and Quality of Water Supplies on 18 September 2014.
- Attended the Annual General Meeting of the Hong Kong Housing Society on 24 September 2014.
- Attended a lunch meeting on 25 September 2014 with the Young Members Society of the Hong Kong Contractors Association to share the vision of the development of the Construction Industry of Hong Kong.
- Will attend a Closed Door Meeting of the AAB on 30 September.
- Will attend a Green Tenancy Driver Launching Ceremony of the HKGBC on 6 October 2014.
- Will attend a China Light & Power Green Building Symposium on 9 October 2014.
- Will give a talk on the topic "Interdisciplinary Design and Management" in the Building Surveyors Conference of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors on 11 October 2014.

Department of Urban Planning and Design

1. Professor Rebecca Chiu

- Re-appointed as a member of the Appeal Board Panel (Town Planning) for a term of two years from 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2016.