

## Dean's Roundup

Friday August 9<sup>th</sup>, 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

Dear colleagues,

Last week I touched upon Architectural Heritage issues. This week, let me dip into Landscape. I am travelling back to the UK every 3 months or so for the next 18 months to run an Economic and Social Research Council funded project on healthy cities. I've mentioned this before but to summarize, my team at Cardiff and Cambridge is creating a large set of morphological indices for each of the half million members of the UK's flagship epidemiology study. So with measures of how well they are connected to shops (of different types), health services, green space, other land uses, other people (of different kinds) and so on, we measure the impact of urban design and planning on their personal health, *caeteris paribus*. The large numbers means that we can capture, for the first time, small but never-the-less significant effects. One of the indices is the mean NDVI (normalized difference vegetation index) in the immediate vicinity of each cohort member's house. NDVI is a crude but efficient measure of greenness, measured in this instance from a 5m resolution French SPOT satellite image. Talking to Matthew Prior about this led to the idea of measuring the affects not just of 'greenness' on health (mental health and obesity in the first analysis) but type of landscape. Using the same satellite data it would be relatively straight forward to compute indices of landscape typology, for example shape, size of landscape patch, entropy (how broken up the greenery is), linearity and so on. Classify urban greenery in landscape typologies and give cohort members a nominal data value according to the landscape neighbourhood they live in and test this out as an explanatory variable in a health model. Because of the scale of the study and quality of data, this would be publishable in the very best landscape, planning, environmental policy, remote-sensing etc journals. It would also provide a definitive test of the objective association between landscape design and individual health.

If anyone in addition to Matthew is interested in joining such a project and using it as a basis for a GRF application in the next round, please let me know and we'll arrange a project meeting. Do we have any remote sensors in the Faculty? Lest our more humanities-oriented or qualitative social science –oriented colleagues be tempted to scoff at the idea of statistically testing the association between the shape of urban green spaces and medically-measured health, I'll pass on the citation for an about-to-be published paper by a colleague of mine in Cardiff Medical School. It measured local neighbourhood environmental quality using 60 items in a composite scale (rated 1-5 by a surveyor). He clustered them using factor analysis into 5 relatively independent dimensions. He then added the dimension that picked out the vegetation-related aspects of neighbourhood quality to an epidemiological model of mental health and discovered that the green quality of a neighbourhood explained 30% of the variation in mental health in a sample of about 2000 adults, controlling for socio-economic class and other variables.

Ok, the cynical may still scoff (or correctly say that association does not imply causality). But at least the science of cities has been advanced, new hypotheses created and existing ones tested. I challenge our urban and landscape design colleagues to consider exposing their heuristics and design doctrines to

objective testing by other disciplines. Design will never (hopefully) be driven by science. But designers will of course agree that their designs produce effects (otherwise why design?). And in the aggregate, some of those effects build up to patterns. Some of those patterns are discernible through statistical analysis if we have good enough data and good enough urban morphological metrics. So to the Landscape Architects: from the body of existing landscape theory, environmental psychology etc, what landscape morphologies might be expected to have an impact on mental health?

Discuss.

As ever, congratulations and thanks to those mentioned below for their valuable contributions to the Faculty. Special congratulations to Eric Schuldenfrei on being awarded tenure by HKU!

Chris

## Department of Architecture

### 1. Dr. K P Cheung

- submitted two entries to the Chinese National Photographic Competition 2013 "MY DREAM FOR CHINA", jointly organized by the Chinese Central Government.  
<http://www.xinhuanet.com/forum/zt2013/zgmsy/index.htm>

Entry 1: "The Oriental Pearl loves the Ocean", the harmony of Oriental Pearl Tower and Shanghai Ocean Aquarium, submitted on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Entry 2: "The Oriental Pearl Decrees Peace on China", the harmony of Oriental Pearl Tower and The China-Peace Insurance Building, Shanghai, submitted on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

### 2. Ms. Melissa Christ

- gave a lecture "Stair Culture: Redefining pedestrian infrastructure in Hong Kong" to 30 students in the 2013 Career Discovery program in Landscape Architecture July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.
- put up the exhibition of DLA student work 'environment, community and design' at the DLA Gallery, 6/F Knowles Building from June 21<sup>st</sup> to Sept 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

### 3. Dr Hoyin Lee

- led the first training workshop with 5 ACP graduates for 21 HKU undergraduate students in the *Volunteer Mentors for the Cultural Heritage Ambassador Programme (CHAP)*, jointly organized by the HKU Architectural Conservation Programmes (ACP), HKU General Education Unit and the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Group on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013.
- appointed by the Chairman of the University Museum and Art Gallery Management Committee as the Acting Director of the University Museum and Art Gallery (UMAG) from August 7<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 (temporary appointment while the UMAG Director Dr. Florian Knothe goes on leave) on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

### 4. Dr. Eric Schuldenfrei

- a paper on 'Atlas' has been officially accepted to the peer-reviewed Cinematic Urban Geographies Conference to be held at Cambridge University on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013.

## Department of Real Estate and Construction

### 1. Sr. Bay Wong

- attended a Closed-door meeting between the AAB and Legislative Councilors on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013
- attended briefing sessions by Planning Department and Buildings Department for AAB on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013
- attended a meeting for CIC Staff Education Fund for Children on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013

## Department of Urban Planning and Design

### 1. Dr. Roger Chan

- published a paper jointly with a doctoral student Mr. Yi Sun with details as below:

*Hu, Y., Sun, Y., and Chan, R. C. K. (2013), "Collaborative Governance in NIMBY Facility Planning: Lessons from Site Selection of Two Incineration Power Plants in Guangzhou (鄰避設施規劃的協作管治問題——以廣州兩座垃圾焚燒發電廠選址為例)", City Planning Review, 37:6, pp. 16-19 (in Chinese).*

### 2. Professor Rebecca Chiu

- invited by SD Advocate (a non-political think tank) to give a dinner speech on "Hong Kong's next Long Term Housing Strategy", on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

### 3. Dr. Weifeng Li

- published a paper with details as below:

*Wu, J., He S., Peng, J., Li, W and Zhong, X. (2013), "Intercalibration of DMSP-OLS Night-time Light Data by the Invariant Region Method", International Journal of Remote Sensing, 34:20, pp. 7356-7368.*

### 4. Professor Chris Webster

- the product-page for the Dean's new co-edited Routledge book "Rural Migrants in Urban China" has just gone live: <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415534550>

