Dear All,

I have just returned from a very productive, if exhausting, visit to Sichuan. The first part took me to Rural Urban Framework’s (RUF) earthquake reconstruction village project in the hills north of Guangyuan city, where Dorothy Tang was troubleshooting after the heaviest rains in 80 years three weeks ago changed villagers’ minds about the drainage design. RUF, for those unfamiliar with the Faculty’s research groups is a design unit operating across architecture and landscape departments that specializes in architectural projects in villages. It has a challenging two-fold research agenda: to explore new housing and settlement morphologies that improve on the stock designs used in current rural (re-)construction projects and to use design at building, settlement and landscape scales to facilitate strategic (Framework) rural development goals. John Lin’s design for a cluster of about 20 village houses perched on a hill is a fascinating experiment in introducing architecture to a rural community twice-hit by a natural disaster and addressing organizational, financial, logistical, materials, functional and aesthetic issues in reducing the vulnerability of these 20 or so agricultural households. It is an amazing and worthwhile project and agenda.

Five to six hours drive to the south of Jintai village, I met with the Chengdu-based Director of one of China’s two experimental Rural Equity Exchanges (the other one being in Chongqing). The object of my visit (accompanied by Zhao Lu, new PhD student starting in September) was to establish a working relationship with the Exchange as a basis for collaborative work with HKU’s Coase Centre for Property Rights Research (CCPRR). The projects we have in mind are not unrelated to the problem being addressed by RUF further north in Sichuan. One of the successes in the RUF project is to bring together multi-level government stakeholders with government and private donor funders and to use this project basis to explore the advantages of an ecologically and economically sustainable architectural approach. The Chengdu Rural Equity Exchange is charged by the national government with something of a similar task: to broker between villages that have rural development project ideas and investors looking for rural projects. Technically, the Exchange exists under special laws to increase the flow of capital into the countryside for development projects and to do this by creating a market in transferable development rights.

The presence of a HKU team in the region and visiting both the design-research focused RUF project and the institutional research focused RCCPRR was
fortuitous. I see a gap in the work of the Equity Exchange that we can help fill following the RUF model. The partnerships between villages and investors brokered by the Exchange are very ambitious, variable in their success and not all characterized by good design. The Exchange director is keen to explore collaboration with our designers as well as our institutional researchers.

Congratulations on the achievements listed below.

Chris
1. Dr. Chinmoy Sarkar

- presented “Healthy Cities: Public Health through Urban Planning Chinmoy Sarkar & Chris Webster” at the 11th World Congress on Design and Health, 15-19th July 2015, Hong Kong
1. Ms. Tris Kee

- Published a single-authored article, entitled "Cultivating a Participatory Design Practice in Architecture – A Case Study of Hong Kong Housing Authority," in *The International Journal of Architectonic, Spatial, and Environmental Design*.


Abstract: Participatory design and architecture can be traced back to ideologies from the 1960s, an era when concepts of advocacy, equity, transactive planning, and diverse city planning were most prominent. Not all local grassroots planning practices result in participatory utopia, and current practices are subject to criticisms such as predetermined result, fake consultation, institutionalization and narrowly-defined boundaries. This paper examines how a particular form of collaboration between the authorities and district stakeholders of a housing project was used to bridge the design gap between government and residents. The redevelopment case of Lam Tin Estate demonstrates that participatory planning can offer a platform for open communication that cultivates active a reciprocal design practice with a continuous evaluation and feedback mechanism.

- Moderated a Professional Round Table Discussion on “Public Spaces and Urban Design" in the capacity of the member of Public Affairs Committee of the HK Institute of Urban Design, 30 July 2015
1. Dr. Hoyin Lee

1. Ms. Vincci Mak


2. Scott Jennings Melbourne

- Delivered a paper, “Urban Transitions: Streetscape as Expression of Change in Yangon, Myanmar”, at the International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies. The event was held at Chiang Mai University from 24-26 July 2015 and was co-hosted by the Centre for ASEAN Studies (CAS), Chiang Mai University, the Regional Centre for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD): Myanmar Studies Centre, the University of Mandalay and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, The Netherlands.

Abstract: The urban experience of today’s Yangon is defined by a distinct vibrancy, with commercial and social activities spreading throughout the city’s historic core. A particular mix of opportunity and demand helps propel this active street culture, with limited interior spaces and relatively expensive rents pushing sellers outdoors even as the minimal capital costs required for vending offers a valued means of income. From book selling to food preparation, the typically generous widths of the colonial-era sidewalks have previously been able to accommodate these activities in addition to allowing for pedestrian movement and shading street trees. Increased economic activity and eased rules for automobile imports have, however, triggered a dramatic increase in vehicular traffic and with it demands for parking. As a result these streetscapes are an increasingly contested space, with historic sidewalks torn out in an often ad-hoc fashion to make space for cars. This sometimes results in damage or removal of street trees, and necessarily impacts the adjacent activities. Meanwhile the overtaxed storm and wastewater infrastructure that typically is located beneath these sidewalks (as opposed to the center of the street) is undergoing a process of expansion to support increased building massing. With each block of replaced trenches there is need and possibility for defining the new physical conditions that will support street activities during the next phase of Yangon’s development. This paper utilizes the streetscape as a point of entry for identifying the interrelated forces of change reshaping the urban fabric of Yangon’s historic core.

- Had accepted for publication in Topos (The International Review of Landscape Architecture) his article, “Finding the Heart of Landscape in Eastern Tibet”. The piece concerns his masterplanning contributions on the Chacken Ling Monastery currently under construction in Qinghai Provence.
1. Dr. Wilson Lu

- With supervision from Dr. Wilson Lu, a group of year 3 (4-year curriculum) BSc(Surveying) students (Fung Sai Lung Mark, Lee Wing Yan Michelle, Leung Yue Ting Annette, Wong Ka Long Kelvin) entered the finals of the CIOB Global Student Challenge (GSC) and won the second runner-up after rounds of tough competition.

GSC (for more info: [http://www.ciob.org/global-student-challenge](http://www.ciob.org/global-student-challenge)) is a competition based on simulation game on a system called MERIT. Teams from CIOB accredited universities all around the world compete in a simulated construction market, bidding, doing construction, or investing. After each round, the system will calculate the score of each team. The points they achieved and the stock share would be calculated on a weekly basis. More than twenty teams from universities in Australia, Hong Kong, China, the UK and the US have signed up for the challenge and the top six best-performing teams during the competition competed in a two-day intensive Grand Final.
Dr. Wilson Lu led two student teams to join the 8th Innovation Competition in Construction Engineering and Management (ICCEM) held in Beijing on 1 July 2015. With supervision from Dr Lu, the teams entered the finals and both won the 2nd Prize. The two teams are respectively comprised of a group of year 3 (4-year curriculum) BSc (Surveying) students (Hui Put, To Wing Cheong, Kuang Kai Shan, Chan Ka Him, and Chan Shing Hin), and 4 PhD students from the Dept. of Real Estate and Construction (Leo Chan, Nina Niu, Megan ye, and Diandian Liu) with 1 post-doctoral fellow from Dept. of Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering (Yang Huibin).

The ICCEM is a competition jointly organized by Tsinghua University and Gammon Construction Ltd. This year, the competition attracted 49 teams from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Penn State, USA. Their project was “Auto-In: An SCO-based Autonomous Installation System for Prefabrication Construction”. The innovation was highly regarded by judges formed by senior management from Gammon and professors from University of Southern California. The Managing Director of Gammon, Mr. Gilbert Tsang, particularly highlighted that the idea, if fully applied, can help relief the severe labour shortage in Hong Kong’s construction industry. Mr. Tsang also invited the team to share their work on Gammon Fellowship Ceremony 2015 in late August in Hong Kong.
Dr. Wilson Lu (PI) won a bid for the 34th Round Post-doctoral Fellow/Research Assistant Professor Scheme, University Research Committee, The University of Hong Kong, July 2015. They will launch a research project entitled "BIM-and IoTs-oriented Smart Construction Objects (SCOs): The Elementary Particles of Future Construction" with the support from the grant to recruit a post-doctoral fellow for the next three years.
The following staff and students of the department have attended and presented papers and posters in the 14th International Conference on Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management (CUPUM) that was held at MIT, USA, from 7-10 July 2015:

Dr. Weifeng Li and Mr. Jiansheng Wu presented a paper titled “Linking Urban Structure and Air Quality: A Geographically Weighted Regression Model for PM2.5 Concentrations in Beijing”

Mr. Xingang Zhou, Prof. Anthony G.O. Yeh and Dr. Yang Yue presented a poster on “Understanding Employment Activity Compactness from Mobile Phone Positioning Data”

Mr. Yu Ye and Prof. Anthony G.O. Yeh presented a poster on “An attempt to Introduce Geodesign Thinking into Urban Design Practices – Form Syntax Method”

Mr. Teng Zhong, Dr. Xiaohu Zhang and Prof. Anthony G.O. Yeh presented a poster on “Automatic Transformation of Road Marking Data into Lane-level Ribbon Network for Navigation”

Mr. Tian Lan and Prof. Anthony G.O. Yeh presented a poster on “Spatial and Temporal Regularized Matrix Factorization for Urban Traffic Monitoring”

Dr. Yang Yue is coming from Shenzhen Key Laboratory of Spatial Smart Sensing and Services of the Shenzhen University.
2. Professor Anthony Yeh

- was invited to be one of the panel members in the Panel Discussion of ICT Impacts on Urban Planning Education and Practice in the CUPUM Conference on Thursday, 9 July 2015 together with Prof. Stan Geertman, Utrecht University, the Netherlands, Prof. Andrew Allan, University of South Australia, Australia, and Prof. Richard Klosterman, University of Akron, USA.

- There were over 200 paper and 40 poster presentations in 39 sessions in the CUPUM Conference with two keynote speeches – one from Prof. Michael Batty, Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA), University College London (UCL), UK, on "Sketch Planning With Simplified Land Use Transportation Models" and Assaf Biderman, Associate Director of the Senseable City Lab, MIT, USA, on "The Senseable City".

3. Professor Anthony Yeh and Dr. Li Weifeng

- were the Chairs of the Track on Urban Modeling of the CUPUM Conference and Prof. Yeh is also a member of the CUPUM Board of Directors.

4. Dr. Li Weifeng

- Delivered an invited talk on 'Integrating Urban Modelling in Land Use, Transportation and Environmental Interactions' in the Research Center of Intelligent Transportation System at Sun Yat-sen University on 4 July, 2015.
5. Professor Rebecca Chiu


- Delivered an invited plenary presentation on “Who decides, what’re provided, and how socially sustainable? The case of high-density & high-rise Hong Kong” at the plenary session of Social and Associative Involvement in Housing, 2015 European Network for Housing Research, Lisbon, 28 June – 1 July 2015.

- Delivered an invited presentation on “The integration of the housing markets of Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta” at the Forum on the Real Estate Development of Chinese Cities cum the Second International Conference on China’s (Shenzhen’s) Housing Policy, organized by the Shenzhen Real Estate Research Centre and the China Real Estate Research Association, 10-11 July 2015.

- Interviewed by Radio Hong Kong on the history of Hong Kong's public housing policy on 8 July 2015 for a documentary to be broadcasted in late August.

- Appointed by the government as a member of the Expert Advisory Panel for “Hong Kong 2030: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030”.

6. Dr. Cecilia Chu

- Published a review article, entitled “Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou,” in the journal Planning Perspective


- Published an article, Spectacular Macau: Visioning Futures for a World Heritage City (Geoforum, 2015), has been referenced in the Macau Business Daily on July 3, 2015.

7. Dr. Shengjing He

- Dr. Shengjing He (PI), Professor Chris Webster and Professor K W Chau (Co-Is) jointly won a bid for the 34th Round Post-doctoral Fellow/Research Assistant Professor Scheme, University Research Committee, The University of Hong Kong, in July 2015. They will launch a research project entitled "Small Property Right Housing Development in China" with the support from the grant to recruit a post-doctoral fellow for the next three years.

8. Dr. Mandy Lau

- Presented a paper entitled “Effective governance of recreational open space? Insights from a case study in Hong Kong" at the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) Congress, in Prague, Czech Republic, from 13 – 16 July 2015.