Dear all,

This Thursday is our Faculty’s Research Retreat where I’ve been asked by architecture colleagues to say something about research methodology, an issue that often presents problems for design-oriented researchers when bidding for academic research funds. I thought I would throw out a few prior thoughts to warm up the discussion.

Here’s my starter. You may choose to disagree with the following propositions. They are non-scientific observations and only a trigger for discussion.

- Scientific academics become famous for their ability to develop generalizable insights and replicable solutions. Architectural design academics become famous for their ability to create specific insights and unique solutions.

- Scientific academics tend to want their methods copied. Architectural academics tend to want to keep their methods secret.

- Scientific academics see their responsibility as adding to an ever-evolving stock of codified knowledge, built on past efforts and pursuing ever finer-grained distinctions of understanding. Architectural academics see their responsibility as using existing knowledge to create new 3D configurational, functional and artistic solutions (or if you prefer, new works of livable art).

- When asked what body of knowledge a teacher and researcher first draws from and then contributes to, a scientist will cite a list of studies and identify a gap that she or he is trying to fill. A designer architect may find it difficult to identify with the question and will cite a non-exhaustive and non-systematic list of precedent designs within a class of building or a genre of design, for example, and will contribute to this stock of knowledge by producing more case studies for future designers to use as precedents.

I am happy for these provocative propositions to be demolished, embellished or added to.

So what can we start to say, *a priori*, about research methods in architecture? One thing is reasonably clear in my view: architectural designers make less use of codified knowledge than almost any other discipline I can think of. Consider medicine or law, the other two great vocational subjects parents queue up to get their children into. Both have a strong...
tradition of theory. Jurisprudence is the theory of law and has a centuries-old history. There are academic journals for all major branches of law, including probably ten top ranked journals focusing on jurisprudence alone. Interestingly, in the more practice-focused law journals, there is not a strong tradition of academic citations and this sense, there is a similarity to architecture: as they codify knowledge, authors of practice-focused law journal papers tend to cite legal cases, rulings and precedents, with relatively thin attention paid to who said what in previous academic commentary. That said, the innovations that do arise in the academic study of law are, indeed, codified and subject to rigorous academic scrutiny, philosophically, empirically and practically.

Let me give a brief example. When I was once doing some research on the influence of transactions costs on the spatial pattern of cities in a national urban system, I came across a paper by a Korean lawyer at Yale. He had been chasing a very practical question: how long do common-law rulings tend to last as dominant precedents in court decisions and is there any regularity. Fascinatingly, he found that the size-distribution of what are termed 'common-law cascades' tends to follow a specific kind of power-law function such that the first longest running legal precedent lasts almost exactly twice as long as the second longest, three times as long as the third etc. This is the same mathematical size distribution that is often found in respect to the size of cities in a country. Why? That’s what the paper was about.

Where do academic architects tend to take the puzzling, problematic or just down right intriguing questions arising from their designing?

One idea arising from these initial thoughts that I would like to discuss on Thursday is the proposition that there are two kinds of research in vocational academic fields. There is (A) the research required to solve complex one-off practical problems (designing a complex building, designing a complex heart operation, designing a complex legal prosecution case – like the one currently in theater in South Africa); and there is (B) the research that builds formalized, codified, reliable and verifiable knowledge. The second kind either arises as a by-product from one-off problem solving (by generalization and/or further study) or is specifically undertaken as an academic research program. The ‘design as research’ or ‘research as design’ that we talk about these days and is codified as an idea in our Faculty paper on subject is, I think, mistakenly too focused on (A).

The link to methodology is simple. Knowledge-type (A) is transitory and for a specific purpose. Where you require rigorously tested knowledge for a complex design, you source knowledge of type B (in architectural design, for example, relating to energy, structural and economic matters – usually this is knowledge relating to building performance). Other knowledge collected in (A) does not have to be guided by rigorous methods. The rule in this kind of knowledge collection is that of sufficiency, efficacy and cost-effectiveness. It is the kind of information sourcing carried out by professionals in all fields. It is the kind of knowledge found in consultancy reports rather than academic journals.

Where an architectural researcher is trying to create knowledge type (B), my contention is that all the rigor of research methods in the science, social sciences, arts and humanities and engineering apply. This is, I think, one of the big challenges for architectural scholarship at current time. I shall explore this in more detail on Thursday drawing on illustrations arising from last weekend’s excellent final studio reviews.

Congratulations to colleagues for the achievements mentioned below and to all those who have received funding under the HKU-China 1,000 Exchange Scheme first round (2014).
The Faculty of Architecture had the highest number of funded projects (11) out of all faculties.

Chris
1. HKU-China 1,000 Exchange Scheme 2014 First Round Application Results

The result of first round applications was released by the Ministry of Education in March 2014, below is a list of approved projects of the Faculty of Architecture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Partner University</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peking University</td>
<td>香港大學 - 北京大學城市產業空間佈局研究交流計劃</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>香港大學城市規劃及設計系研究生項目</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tianjin University</td>
<td>建築交流及聯合教學</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tsinghua University</td>
<td>香港大學城市規劃及設計系本科生赴清華大學交流學習</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>清華 - 港大民族地區村鎮發展研究</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fudan University</td>
<td>香港大學建築學院建築學文學士課程(春季)</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>香港大學建築學院建築學文學士課程(秋季)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Shanghai University of Finance and Economics</td>
<td>2014 年度香港大學房地產與建築管理系學習實踐</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Harbin Institute of Technology</td>
<td>&quot;夢圓中秋、濱港之夜&quot;兩地建築設計研習營</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Shenzhen University</td>
<td>深圳市基於手機資料的居民出行模式合作研究</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hunan University</td>
<td>2014 香港與內地暑期聯合建築設計工作營</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HKU-CIB Student Chapter has successfully organized a research post-graduate students' Seminar on Apr 29, 2014 (Tue). Attached herewith are the report and images of the seminar which we would like to share with you.

There were more than twenty RPgs from Dept. of Architecture as well as Dept. of real estate and construction participated in this seminar. We really enjoyed the experiences of exchanging knowledge and communication among students whom from different research fields. HKU-CIB Student Chapter will surely organize more similar events in the future and we welcome you all to join us. If you have any inquires or advice, please send us email by hkucib@gmail.com.
Architectural Conservation Programmes

1. Dr. Hoyin Lee

- appointed Chairman of the Working Party on Student Residences at Mui Fong Street, Hospital Road and Wong Chuk Hang, by Dr. Steven Cannon, HKU Executive Vice-President (Administration and Finance) / Chairman of the HKU Accommodation Committee.

- Supporting Organizer for the exhibition *Anecdotes from the Peak: a Walk through the Rich Heritage and Natural Beauty of the Peak*, organized by Wheelock Properties, Wharf and Nanfung Group, and supported by the Royal Geographical Society and HKU Architectural Conservation Programmes, held at the Wheelock Gallery, Queensway Plaza, from 30 April to 1 June 2014. Website: [http://www.anecdotesfromthepeak.com/about_the_exhibition_en.html](http://www.anecdotesfromthepeak.com/about_the_exhibition_en.html)


1. Mr. David Erdman

- served as the External Examiner for the Master of Architecture program at the Chinese University School of Architecture

2. Mr. Yan Gao

- has been awarded by Perspective Magazine as one of the 40 Under 40 Design Stars. Every year, Perspective selects 40 creative stars under the age of 40 from the fields of art, architecture, interior design, graphic design and new media, product design, and fashion and accessories, whom are believed to shape the design world in the decades to come. The past awardees include Bjarke Ingels and Sou Fujimoto in 2010, and Ma Yan Song in 2013.

http://www.perspectiveglobal.com/40-under-40
深圳“万家人”保障房设计竞赛-综合类第一名
A Thousand Families - Shenzhen Social House International Competition - the First Prize

断桥藏龙—龙津桥湛崖赛第一名
BROKEN BRIDGE HIDDEN DRAGON - The First Prize, Lung Tsung Bridge Competition, HK

童梦世界—儿童体验主题公园及植物园游客中心
KIDS DREAM - EXPERIENCE THEME INDOOR PARK & TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER OF BAODING BOTANIC GARDEN
3. Ms. Tris Kee

- The Barcelona - Hong Kong Urban Exchange Symposium which the Faculty of Architecture, DUPAD and Department of Architecture supported was featured in the Hong Kong Green Building Council Magazine. Rocco Yim, Stephen Lau and Tris Kee were present in the 22 February 2014 Symposium at HKU Centenary Campus. The event was organized by HKIP, HKIUD and HKGBC and was attended by 500 participants.

- DUPAD students and graduates from DUPAD attended the 8 March 2014 exhibition and lecture held outside HKU Main Library.

4. Dr. Wong Wah Sang

- Appointed as a member of the editorial board for two journals – the International Journal “The New ARCH” and the Universal Journal of Psychology.

- His paper titled "Architecture in the Education of Senior High School Students" has been accepted for publication in The International Journal of Design Education.

- Gave a talk on “Architecture of the Pavilion” 亭的建築 in the Education Bureau on 8th March 2014.

- Gave a talk on “Introduction to Architecture and Buddhism” 淺談佛學與建築學 in the Vajrayana Buddhism Association on 26th April and 3rd May 2014.
1. Dr. Koh Tas Yong

- had visited the Faculty of Urban Construction and Environmental Engineering, the University of Chongqing (CQU) between 14 to 18 Apr 2014 as a visiting scholar. During the visit, Dr Koh had presented a research seminar to the graduate students and advised the students on research methods and recent developments in Hong Kong construction industry in the areas of construction safety and Building Information Modeling (BIM). Dr Koh’s visit also marked the commencement of the research project funded by the Mainland MoE through the Faculty of Urban Construction and Environmental Engineering, CQU in the domain of environmental management system of construction firms in China.


2. Dr. Wilson Lu


3. Dr. Wilson Lu, Prof. K.W. Chau, and Mr. Kevin Wang (A PhD student jointly supervised by Dr. Lu and Prof. Chau)

4. Prof Steve Rowlinson, Dr Koh Tas Yong, and Dr John Shen

have participated and contributed, once again, in the MTRC Worker Health and Well-being Month May 2014 which commenced on the 2 May 2014 and will last through the month of May 2014. With the participation of a new partner this year from the School of Public Health, University of Hong Kong led by Prof Richard Fielding, this year programme promises a more detailed health check and counselling for the workers throughout the MTRC construction sites across the territory. The Department of Real Estate and Construction team (RECO), together with the student volunteers, help administer the health and drinking pattern questionnaires in the event. The aims of the event and survey are to profile the demographic, physical health, dietary and drinking patterns of the construction workers thereby raising their awareness on the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. The data gathered this year can be used to compare against the benchmark collected and analysed by the RECO team last year so that the effectiveness of the MTRC’s initiatives can be assessed.
1. Dr. Roger Chan
   - Member of the Editorial Advisory Panel *Proceedings of the ICE - Urban Design and Planning Journal*
   - Appointed as member of the Central and Western District Advisory Committee, Urban Renewal Authority (2014-16)

2. Miss Xiaoxia Xu (a PhD student)
   - attended “The 2014 NASA(National Aeronautics and Space Administration) LCLUC (Land-Cover/ Land-Use Change) Annual Spring Science Team meeting (Focus-Urban LCLUC)” in Rockville, Maryland, USA from 23–25 April 2014 and discussed China’s urban land use and development issues with US scholars such as Prof. Karen Seto from Yale University and Prof. Peilei Fan from Michigan State University.

3. Professor Anthony Yeh
   - attended the Public Forum on the “Study on the Action Plan for Livable Bay Area of the Pearl River Estuary” organized by the Development Bureau in the City Gallery, Central, on 26 April 2014. He was one of the panel speakers in the Public Forum in the capacity of one of the Expert Advisors of the Study.

4. Miss Yingxuan Zhang (a PhD student)
   - published the following journal article: