Dear colleagues,

It is good to be back at work in the Faculty office this morning, even if jet lag did force me into a 5am start. I have had cause to investigate two UNESCO heritage sites over the last week, one established, the other proposed: separated by a few miles of Aegean sea and by the Greece-Turkey national border. I found myself wondering if anyone has studied the impact of UNESCO heritage designation on land values. Measuring value in a surrogate market is one of three basic methods of giving a monetary valuation to what economists call public goods (resources co-consumed by many people simultaneously) – the other two methods being stated preference (‘how much would you pay for…’) and using travel expenditure as an indication of how much people value a visited resource. As well as being of intrinsic academic interest, a study of UNESCO heritage honey-pot values through land value comparisons would help inform the design of novel policy and financial instruments to put the management plans of designated sites on a sustainable financial footing. Does anyone know of any such studies? This would make a good joint project between ACP and REC. There are also interesting theoretical questions to be explored, such as what type of value is being measured? If the land market is restricted to domestic buyers as it is in some countries where UNESCO heritage sites exist, then house price premiums in the designated area may correspond more to use value than existence or reservation value (peoples’ value of the heritage resource irrespective of how frequently they actually visit it). In a country with a land/housing market very open to global demand, the house premiums may capture a greater degree of existence/reservation value. In the extreme, you have wealthy Americans and Russians purchasing property in Venice and Patmos, purely as an investment and never using or visiting it. Arguably, the price they pay is a measure of pure existence value. Not so in the other extreme, for example a country like Turkey, which until a few years ago had an extremely underdeveloped mortgage industry such that property prices around heritage sites didn’t even reflect the existence value of Turkish nationals. So we have a relationship between the state of development of national mortgage market and the state of development of house prices as an index of public goods valuation. Anyone interested in following this up?

Next week I’ll be writing up a plan for the proposed new GIS Lab and hope to send something round for comment by the end of August.

Congratulations to those mentioned below. Keep up the good work.

A research ‘thought for the day’: Impact Factors (IF) of journals are important because they indicate how widely and rapidly your work is read and used by others. However, the size of IF follows the size of the research field, with IFs in some of the most popular journals in economics and medicine, for example, rising to 6+. Architecture journal IFs are very low because the research culture in this highly applied and normative field is still relatively underdeveloped. They are low in construction management and property also because of a relatively young research culture in those (equally applied but less normative) fields. In urban studies and planning, you find the highest IFs in the Built Environment, but 2 is very high and I only know or two or three journals hovering around 3. A good strategy, therefore, for disseminating your work more widely is to team up with scholars working in another field. You would not, perhaps, want to load your publishing portfolio too much towards these boundary intellectual projects but my advise to younger colleagues is that it is a smart move to do some of this type of work. Aim high – team up with someone who touches on your specialism and who is publishing in the top journals in their field (there are sociology journals with IFs >2). Also environmental psychology, history, political science etc. You might be surprised how eager well-established scholars in other fields are to apply their ideas in your field.

Chris
1. Mr. Adam Bobbette


- co-authored an essay with Meredith Miller and Etienne Turpin on “Architecture, Adaptive Capacities, and the Futures of Hypercomplexity” in Kerb: Journal of Landscape Architecture #21, (Melbourne: RMIT University, 2013). The essay has been accepted for publication.

- co-edited a book and co-authored an introductory chapter with Etienne Turpin, Meredith Miller and editors at the Jakarta: Architecture + Adaptation. The book has been accepted for publication with the Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press.


2. Dr. B S Jia

- appointed as a member of the Review Panel for The 25th International Union of Architects World Congress, UIA 2014 Durban. The UIA (International Union of Architects) is a non-governmental organization accredited by the United Nations, it represents professional associations of architects in 124 countries and approximately 1.3 million architects worldwide. It organizes the World Congress every three years.

3. Dr. Hoyin Lee

- inaugurated 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 July 20th, 2013.

- joint-organizer of a summer programme for 30 to 35 students from HKU and other universities or secondary schools to promote the conservation and revitalisation of the graded historic building, the Former Fanling Magistrate, on July 20th, 2013.

- conducted a workshop and a guided tour (together with Dr. Cole Roskam) for 18 students of Gifted Education from various secondary schools as part of the knowledge-exchange activities for the DOCOMOMO Exhibition “Mapping Modern Architecture in Hong Kong” on July 24th, 2013. This activity was co-organized by the Gifted Education Section of the Education Bureau, HKSAR Government.
conducted a double-lecture “New Design in Old Buildings” and “Science + Sci-fi in Architecture: GS-01 GroundShipOne” for the HKU Summer Programme “Global and Cultural Studies” for undergraduate students from universities in Mainland China, organized by the Academic Liaison Section of the HKU Registry on July 25th, 2013.


Mr. John Lin
- published a design project “House for All Seasons” in A+U, in August 2013.

Professor David Lung
- gave a presentation on the topics of “Disappearing City: A new role for Surveyors” and “What roles can surveyors play in the process of environmental sustainability under the heritage conservation” at the HK RICS conference on July 27th, 2013.

Dr. Cole Roskam
- conducted a workshop and a guided tour (together with Dr. Hoyin Lee) for 18 students of Gifted Education from various secondary schools as part of the knowledge-exchange activities for the DOCOMOMO Exhibition “Mapping Modern Architecture in Hong Kong” on July 24th, 2013. This activity was co-organized by the Gifted Education Section of the Education Bureau, HKSAR Government.

Dr. W S Wong
- represented HKU at a round-table higher education meeting organized by HKIA with representatives from CU, CityU, Chu Hoi and HK Design Institute on July 27th, 2013. In the meeting, Dr. Wong has suggested the HKIA to organize student competitions on specific topics such as design, technology and to hold the crash courses in summer time to bridge the gap between academic studies and professional practices for the MArch students and graduates.
Department of Real Estate and Construction

1. Dr H F Leung
   - was re-elected Chairperson of Hong Kong Mediation Council of Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre on July 25th, 2013.

2. Dr. S W Poon
   - was interviewed by the newspaper reporters on the history of the brick wells, built 110 years ago at Tai Tam Harbor, as part of the site investigation work for Tai Tam Tuk Reservoir Dam construction.

Department of Urban Planning and Design

1. Dr Roger Chan
   - awarded the Doris Zimmern HKU-Cambridge Hughes Hall Fellowships 2013-14.

2. Professor Rebecca Chiu
   - invited to speak on “The housing policy of China and Hong Kong: a comparison” at the International Housing Conference of Shenzhen, China, organized by the Shenzhen Centre of Assessment and Development of Real Estate, on July 25th, 2013.

3. Dr Weifeng Li
   - presented a lecture entitled “Sustainable Development: Environment, Resources and Society” to a delegation from Zhejiang University, arranged by China Affairs Office, in July 2013.

4. Professor Chris Webster
   - published a research article “Urban built environment configuration and psychological distress in older men: results from the Caerphilly study” with the co-authors Sarkar Chinmoy and Gallacher John in the BMC Public Health Journal (http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/695) on July 30th, 2013.