Dear All,

I asked Olivier Ottovaere to share a short piece about his exciting New Orders design research project. I assume that the ‘new orders’ signifies a search for new orders of architectural column. It's inspiring stuff.

**NEW ORDERS**, in search of a new point block diagram for Hong Kong

This ongoing project by the Department of Architecture’s Olivier Ottovaere, explores a series of alternative structures for housing through a design-research prototyping process. Nine proto-structures are developed through the conception and realization of columns cast in concrete. The series explores specific structural principles at 1to1 scale, which are further architecturally tested as speculative towers for urban living at 1to100 scale.

At 1 to 1 scale, an empirical approach is adopted for the making of the columns. Concrete as process rather than just concrete as material sets the main methodology for the design-research. Trial and error experiments, closely related to the properties of the material (liquid to solid formation), seek to put forward new techniques of formwork design and construction procedures that are more flexible and more sustainable.

Design analysis, informed by the work of the early ‘structural rationalists’ (E. Torroja, F. Candela, P.L. Nervi, H. Isler, R. Maillard, E. Dieste, et al.), considers the transformation of structural languages in an attempt to revive an architecture for vertical living (point-block).

While these structural mavericks took reinforced concrete to the limit of what the new material could do both structurally and spatially, their pioneering work responded, for the most part, to lower building scales and to singular programs (i.e. civic, cultural, religious); all but Housing. Olivier’s research revives the dialogue in the context of high density Asian living. The dialogue is being pursued with new technology that breaks the homogenizing influence of concrete.

The modernist search for concrete-based new models for living, fuelled by an urgent need for cheap housing after the world war destruction, was devised in Western Europe in the form of a cast-in-place skeleton frame. This flexible column-slab system was first patented and universally distributed by the ‘Hennebique’ enterprise in the late 19th century and later, in 1914, generalized by Le Corbusier as the Dom-ino protocol (domus-innovation). Its promise was social; to support individualization of living spaces by internally liberating the plan of a building from its structural imperatives (‘Free plan’). A century later, this now ubiquitous structural system has largely achieved the reverse: mainly creating an order characterized by homogeneity based on the repetition of the same living units across building scales.

Olivier’s design-research aims to develop new structural articulations for high-rises that are more agile in negotiating the transition from one kind of program to another within a complex. These aim to provide residents with gradients of communal spaces that reconcile (semi-) outdoor living issues in a sub-tropical climate.
One of Olivier’s overarching research propositions is to reassert structural design and construction procedures as the main driver for new Housing organizations in a way that helps break from the monotony of current systems.

Note from Dean:

Olivier’s concrete-cast columns are truly beautiful objects. Their beauty comes from their proportions, the material, their rugged and easily interpreted yet highly sophisticated structural properties, and the sculptural qualities arising from the self-organising complex construction processes used to mold them. They are a good example of academic design-research in my view: the research methodology comprises experimental casting techniques which test variations in material and form-work specifications. The research objective is to produce beautiful columns with structural properties integral to their design, which are configured to inspire new ideas about point block living in a high density city. You can tell without much probing that this is original, significant and rigorous research because you can see the rigor of the prototyping methods reflected in the form of the moldings; you are caught by the unusualness of the forms; and you are inspired immediately to imagine how the columns might transform into structural elements of fabulously innovative point towers. All of these achievements are worthy of being written up as academic papers and chapters that convey the technical background, the historical critique and the inspiration to designers and to structural engineers.

Congratulations on the achievements listed below. I’m hoping we’ll see Steve Rowlinson wearing his ‘golden helmet’ around the Knowles Building.

Chris
1. Jason Carlow

- His "Hong Kong Single Occupancy Strip" project was selected for exhibition in the American Institute of Architects Emerging Professionals Exhibition in Washington DC.

The American Institute of Architects, Center for Emerging Professionals sponsors an annual exhibition of architectural work, art, and designs of emerging architectural professionals across North America. This annual exhibition promotes the compelling work of the rising generation of architects and designers and inspires professionals to continue to mentor and engage the many talented and motivated emerging professionals across the country.

The annual exhibition is presented at AIA national’s headquarters in Washington, DC. The exhibition is on display beginning with the annual AIA Grassroots Leadership and Legislative Conference.

http://www.aia.org/careerstages/annual-exhibition/2015/index.htm
Division of Landscape Architecture

1. Four papers on health and greenery were published by HKUrban Lab researchers in the current issue of Landscape Architecture Frontiers:


2. Ms. Vincci Mak

- was interviewed by the South China Morning Post, in regards to the Northeastern New Territories New Town Planning. The news article, titled "Give Hong Kong's new towns character, says architecture academic", was published on March 23rd, 2015.

News article link:

3. Scott Jennings Melbourne and Ivan Valin

- Led a five-day overseas study tour to Yangon, Myanmar with first year MLA students as part of their studio being taught together with David Jung. Students conducted a workshop with colleagues at Yangon Technological University in addition to exploring the historic city center, investigating in-progress works of infrastructure, and meeting with local officials.
1. Professor Steve Rowlinson

- received the Golden helmet award at the Construction industry Council and Lighthouse Club Annual Safety Awards 2015 on Friday 20th of March. This prestigious award is presented annually to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to safety in the construction industry in Hong Kong. It is the first time it has been awarded to an academic.
1. Ms. Liu Chang (a PhD applicant who will be supervised by Dr. Kyung-min Nam, co-supervised by Dr. Roger Chan)
   - was awarded a Hong Kong PhD fellowship

2. Dr. Jianxiang Huang
   - With Ms. Sylvie Nguyen and Mr. Guy Perry, led a studio fieldtrip to Mumbai, India with the Master of Urban Design (MUD) students between Mar.06 and Mar.14, 2015. The purpose of the trip is to expose students to urban design practices in international context, in this case, India’s urban-rural transformation in light of robust economic growth. The fieldtrip is an integral component of the urban design studio II with a new town development site situated at the outskirt of Mumbai Metropolitan Region. During the 8-day fieldtrip, MUD students surveyed the studio site and its urban and rural context. They conducted extensive exchanges with urban planning officials, architects, university professors, real estate developers, communities, held joint workshops with local university students, and delivered a successful presentation to experts and stakeholders. The fieldtrip was sponsored by the Wadhwa Group, a real estate property developer based in Mumbai.

Students on the heritage walk in front of the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

Students visit contemporary urban development
Students visit village house and experience local culture

Workshop presentation with professionals and Mr. Wadhwa of the Wadhwa Group
3. Professor Bo-sin Tang

- As part of the Regional and Territorial Planning Studio, MUP Year 1 students and teachers had a fieldtrip in Singapore during the Reading Week (10 March to 14 March 2015) to examine its office development and planning strategies. The group visited the Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Department of Real Estate of the National University of Singapore, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Building and Construction Authority, Far East Organization and Raffles Quay Asset Management. In addition to attending presentations by these organizations, the group also visited a number of development projects including NUS University Town, Jurong East, Clark Quay Central and Marina Bay Financial Centre.
4. Dean Webster

- submitted (with KW Chau) a winning proposal to host the 2017 Planning Law and Property Rights international conference at HKU (2014 Israel, 2015 Greece, 2016 Germany, 2017 HK). The conference will be jointly hosted by the Ronald Coase Centre for Property Rights and the Centre for Urban Studies and Urban Planning.

- represented the University to receive the award of “My 10 most 'liked' Hong Kong Architecture of the Century” for the Loke Yew Hall at the Award Presentation cum Opening Ceremony of Exhibition on 20 March, 2015, at the Garden Court, Level LG1, Pacific Place.