

GSAPP SUMMER 2014
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The New Landscape

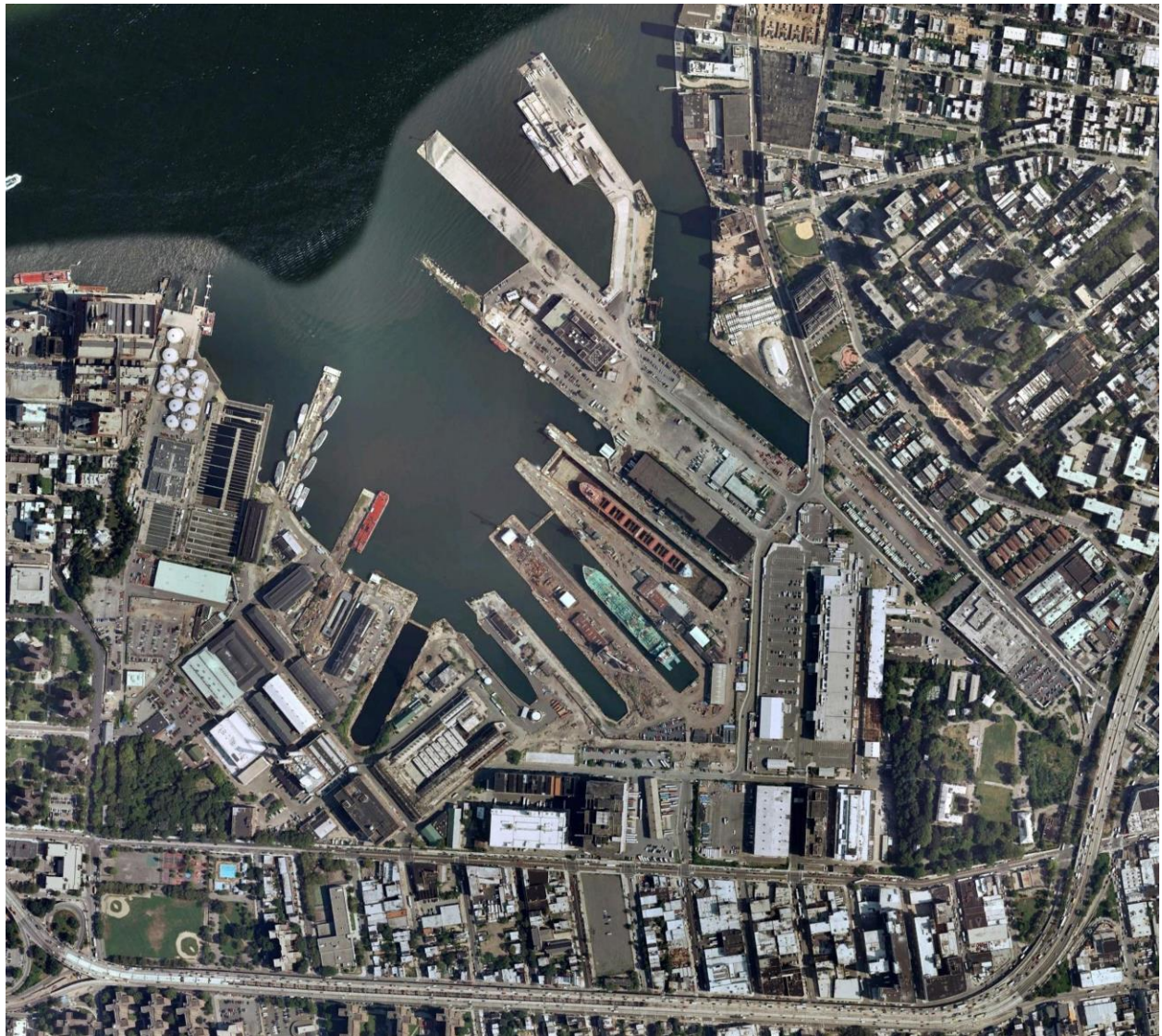
At the dawn of Brooklyn Navy Yard's new status on the list of the National Historical Places, this studio is set to explore the rich historical, urban and architectural content this 300-acre industrial park has to offer, using it as the context for a series of design exercises that excavate the genesis of the place and imagine a new set of relationships simultaneously.

In order to do this successfully, there are a few research topics that one must immerse him/herself with. First and foremost is the anthropological background of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Established in 1801 by President John Adams, the naval shipyards bore the mission to "protect commerce and defending the young nation in a dangerous and hostile world". In the following 150 years, the Yard expanded from the 5 original structures to over 40 buildings, and employed 70,000 people at one point. It underwent succession of technological, scientific and social innovations and launched the largest vessels in the Navy during the two world wars. The significance of the Yard's history will underpin the understanding of the present as well as the imagination of the future in this exercise.



It is, however, also important to study the embedded logic of the place as a spatial occupation. Tucked in the stretch of waterfront between Dumbo and Williamsburg, two of the most exciting neighborhoods in Brooklyn, the Navy Yard waterfront contains massive docks that stretch out in a radial form, currently inaccessible to the public. Within the Yard itself, it

contained a city of its own, with hospital, housing and school amongst the various manufacture facilities that served the building of the vessels. Transportation between buildings and sections within the Yard were by various means including trains, trolleys and carriages/cars. On the southern border, a nearly two mile long uninterrupted wall blocks again public access to the Yard, further reinforced by the presence of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway one block away. A series of mapping exercise will uncover the order and logistics of the place, both within its limits and in its relationship to the neighboring urban context, revealing an ecological system waiting to be revived.



Last but not least, is the survey of the collection of the magnificent and beautiful buildings. Of various scales and characters, some are already undergoing revival by exciting new industry tenant such as film studios, chemical laboratory, digital fabricators and rooftop farms. However, there is still abundance of building stocks waiting to be reconsidered for new use. The development model based on anchor tenancy and focusing on employment building makes it a unique case where architecture becomes the core agency for (re)development rather than a comprehensive master plan. This model has proved to be successful and has

provided not only the much needed economic base and population increase for the Yard, it has also secured a continuous stream of exciting and substantial private interests and acted as the backdrop for the launch of their stories. However, at this pivotal moment of growth and coupled with its new status, the limits of this model within the hands of the large anchor tenancies and large scale buildings will have to be overcome in order to progress towards a more sustainable system with finer grains and larger public presence. Therefore, the survey will focus on the medium to smaller size buildings that are more likely to be revived as non-manufacturing based programs and consider their viability as agencies for a new stream of economic and social energy.



Over the course of the semester, the project will be divided into three main sessions. First is the research period, where three groups will each delve into one of the above topics, collecting and building a wealth of knowledge about the Navy Yard through narratives, maps and architectural imageries and illustrations. From there, each student will select a building that has not being significantly renovated, ranging from the small scale to the medium large. Under a cohesive planning model, each building will find its own place in the collective narrative which is to be developed as a group. During the third and last session, each student will use his/her building as an independent agency to activate and transform the collective through its own evolution. In this process, the vision for the Yard as a whole remains transformative and flexible, and is part a feedback loop between the life of the buildings and life of the place. Architecture does not passively serve a bird's eye master plan but informs it and in turn is informed by its position in the larger system.

In the end, the representation of such an elastic system and planning model should be carefully discussed and designed in order to communicate and instigate the future life of the Navy Yard. Methods such as dynamic modeling and augmented reality applications should be explored but not mandatory. Fluency of traditional representation conventions such as plans, sections, diagrams and models is a necessity when attempting to utilize them in new media formats without losing clarity. And the ability to work with peers and communicate in a group discussion is fundamental to the success of the studio. My role as an instructor is to facilitate you as a group to deliver a collective presentation that proposes a new narrative for the Brooklyn Navy Yard with acute relevance, and to understand the processes of a new model of planning through this exercise. And I'm very looking forward to it.

