

**CourseNo:** ARCHA4105\_015\_2012\_3

**Instructor Information:**  
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**Theory:** Knowledge City

**Site:** Columbia 125<sup>th</sup> Street Campus

NYU - Houston and Mercer Community center

**Program:** An interface between the urban community and the campus

**Schedule:** Fall 2012

### **Theory - Knowledge City**

It is projected for the beginning of the XXI century that over 50% of the world population will be living in urban centers. But what is the actual purpose of a high density City at the beginning of the XXI Century? With the advent of new technologies the storage, transmission and management of information has become quasi spaceless. So, with a brutal contraction of time and space, not to say a complete disappearance of the notion of distance for data transmission in the Information Age we have arrived again to the notion of Delocalization. So why are we paying so much rent to live in the center of cities like Paris, New York, Tokyo, Mumbai or Kyoto?

What is the city of the XXI century offering to us that we believe is so valuable?

And in that regard, what is the model of the new city of the XXI century?

My fascination for this semester subject comes from two consolidating poles:

1. What is the relationship between the stored Knowledge of the Virtual and the constructed Physical environment?
2. How do we strategize the development of fast growing cities?

If the future of the city is the "Knowledge city" what form and shape does such a city takes? Is it a human oriented Network, or an information oriented network? It brings us back to the initial question, regarding the relationship between the Virtual and the Physical in architecture. *If the main "raison d'être" for a city is its production of immaterial information, how does the physical constitution of the city encourage and enhance this non physical production?* There is a paradoxical relationship between the build environment and its attempted finality. On the other hand we all accept this condition, as our current experience of the city is a condition of "interface" where the build environment allows us to understand better abstract "information". Personal experiences and shared experiences in the city becomes a decoder of the artificially

produced information and Architecture finds a new role as an Interface between the Virtual/ Immaterial and the human body.

This is where we need the city; as a physical interface contextualizing Virtual information into a Physical space, negotiating between dimensions, and in return producing information and knowledge. The future of the city in the information age is not the dissolution of the physical space into the ether of digital bits, but rather an essential tool to understand and interface information: It is what I call the “knowledge city”. The City should be considered as an interface between stored knowledge and active users, as well as between active users themselves, and between active users and the surrounding space. It is the place for the possibility to exchange knowledge, to learn from each others. It is the place for chance encounter, the un-programmed, the unexpected.

So how do we design it? Can we enhance a city to improve its knowledge capital? Is Paris, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Mumbai, Shanghai, Beijing, New York or Tokyo better suited to become the next leading “Knowledge city”?

### **Project Site: New York Campuses - Columbia 125<sup>th</sup> Street + NYU**

Most of the major urban campuses of New York City are currently growing rapidly. The trend is impressive as all the learning centers are colonizing and expanding, in the very competitive real estate market of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

#### **NYU Mercer & Houston**

In Manhattan, Columbia University is developing a new large campus on 125<sup>th</sup> street and Broadway, while the School for Visual Arts, City College and Cooper Union are also expanding rapidly. NYU has already a fairly large footprint on the East and West Villages, sharing large public spaces such as Washington Square park. NYU is planning to expand by operating a densification of its existing locations and the current athletic building at the corner of Mercer Street and Houston Street is planned to be demolished and reconstructed. Just a block from SoHo, next to Angelika film center, this location could become a new entrance point to NYU Campus, connecting the surrounding activities of the pedestrian city with the campus research centers.

#### **Columbia University New Campus - 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway**

Columbia has purchased five blocks of Manhattan for their new campus in Manhattanville. Located between 125<sup>th</sup> Street and 130<sup>th</sup> Street, between Broadway and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the huge site will allow Columbia University to double its size in an almost contiguous way. The triangular site at 125<sup>th</sup> Street offer an interesting hinge between the campus and the rest of the city.

The projects will address a multiplicity of scales, from the Urban Network strategy to the specific “interface scale”. The Subway stop at 125<sup>th</sup> Street is also part of the adjacent facilities, as well as the network of streets such as Broadway and 125<sup>th</sup> Street. In this regard, does culture exist only in designated areas or is it a network culture? Can major influx of money create knowledge and culture?

#### **Program - Knowledge City Center - Architecture as an interface.**

The program for the “knowledge city center” is an interface, between stored knowledge - such as written information, digital information - and the human body. It is a mix between an interactive library, a public space and a museum. Some sort of a cultural Times Square grafted on the Seattle Library and the Pompidou center; basically, an urban condenser.

The first part of the semester will be oriented toward the different types of urban interfaces, from public libraries to campuses and public squares. The question of the different forms of densities - digital, multimodal, pedestrian and vehicular - will raise the notion of the current formula for a culture of congestion, so well developed and embraced by OMA.

The second part of the semester will involve designing the specific building or Network - médiathèque, cultural center, café, city square - as well as its relation with the outside space surrounding it. A special emphasis on the membrane of the envelop, separating/connecting the inside and the outside of different environment and its potential "hypersurface" quality, as a vehicle to transmit and potentially generate information/ knowledge

### **Collaboration**

Previous Knowledge City Studios have been conducted at Columbia University, Osaka University and Tonji University and generated an important set of data. In addition, I organized an international Symposium in Osaka, Japan, with the participation of Mark Wigley, Beatriz Colomina, Preston Scott Cohen, Fumihiko Maki, Xu Weigo, Takashi Yamaguchi and I. We will be able to analyze their point of view and their lectures.