

**GSAPP Columbia University**  
**CORE ARCHITECTURE STUDIO II: Spring 2015**  
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Coordinator: Mimi Hoang  
Sect 001 Mimi Hoang  
Sect 002 Julian Rose  
Sect 003 Stella Betts  
Sect 004 Mark Rakatansky  
Sect 005 Erica Goetz  
Sect 006 Christoph Kumpusch  
Sect 007 Robert Marino  
Sect 008 Jeremy Barbour

*Synopsis: Through the vehicle of a dynamically evolving, mutable program type of the bank, this core studio explores architecture's engagement with its context, across multiple scales and data. Expanding on this syllabus, the readings and your own research, students will consciously work within various frameworks – historical, social, site, type, use, technology – with the goal of appropriately scaling your intervention to those contexts. The semester is generally structured by scale: architecture's impact on site and community, from the outside-in and inside-out (large); building morphology, as shaped by program, spatial and structural ideas (medium); and envelope as interface (small). Students should aim to create conceptual clarity and resonance between these multiple frameworks and scales of concern through the resolution of an inventive architecture.*

**THE X BANK: A CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVING TYPE**

By Dean Andraos

**A State of Constant Re-Invention**

In a recent Crains article entitled 'Banks plot major shrinking of branches,' the future of banking is said to be found in a Chelsea basement, where Wells Fargo & Co. is developing its next generation branch, which features everything from high-tech ATMs "that remember how much cash you typically withdraw to free-ranging tellers toting iPads so they can address questions about your accounts."<sup>i</sup> The article continues to describe the recent evolution of the prototype branch as strikingly small, with about 1,000 square feet or 75% smaller than the traditional Wells Fargo outpost above: 'Say hello to banking's brave, new, cramped world' continues the article. This first Wells Fargo next-generation branch opened in April 2013 in Washington DC, looking to further downsize its other branches nationally. Following the same compression trend, JPMorgan Chase & Co. recently deployed branches 25% smaller than its older models to replace banks deluged by Superstorm Sandy in Long Island.

This physical compression of the banking functions of banks as well as the increasingly virtual nature of banking transactions, has in the past decade opened the door to a deluge of re-invention of the type, programmatically, spatially and experientially, with the 'bank as' phenomenon leading to banks as community center, banks as retail stores, social lounges or even restaurant, amongst other.

In an interview following the completion of OMA's Rothschild Bank Headquarters in London, Rem Koolhaas contrasts his approach to the design of a bank with his usual interest in program re-invention. Likening the banking system to that of the entertainment industry, Koolhaas points to the bank's state of "permanent redefinition," and compares it to a dynamic system, which introduced throughout the design of the Rothschild HQ "totally different organizations, hierarchies and components."<sup>ii</sup>