

SPRING 2015 NAHYUN HWANG STUDIO
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REPROGRAMMABLE CITY_COMMON WATERS

Knowledge and the City

In 1966, through an unsolicited proposal of "Potteries Thinkbelt," Cedric Price envisioned a transformation of a town-region of North Staffordshire in England, in which its functional territory was no longer defined by medieval town centers, an ideal grid, or other familiar administrative edifices. Instead, his plan appropriated the existing infrastructural network to produce a new framework for the city - education. Although unrealized, the project remains an important moment when knowledge production and its spatial mechanisms were proposed as the main drivers for the definition and transformation of the city. The new relationship between the ideals of the city (education) and the operations of the city (infrastructure, mobility, industry, technology, housing etc.), between the aspirations of the city and its environment, were articulated through the city-scale framework of "anticipatory architecture"¹ and the participation of the newly defined student body, the new citizens. Education was a "generator of urban location and form."²

Working with the program of the public school, shared year-wide this semester, the studio participates in the continuing discourse on the relationship between the architecture of education and the city. Exploring the possibility of a novel typology of "public campus,"³ the investigation aims to challenge the familiar formats of knowledge production and their spaces in the context of contemporary cities, while utilizing the potentials in the typology of schools to generate new configurations for the collective of the city. Historical and current models, manifestos, and criticisms on educational institutions and their architecture - from the networked mobility in Price's proposals, the adapted concept of Eco's "Opera Aperta" in the Berlin Free University, and "School as City" and "City as School" in the work of Hertzberger and Aldo van Eyck, to internalized, distributed, or corporate co-located contemporary urban campuses and their alternatives⁴ - will be examined to formulate positions and strategies. The work of the studio pursues the architecture of knowledge that articulates and prompts the ideal future urbanisms of the city.

Upper East River

The studio utilizes territories around the upper East River at the border of Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx as a testing ground. Vacuous at first glance, the area is an extraordinarily concentrated zone of past and present LULUs (Locally Unwanted Land Uses), where undesirable yet necessary mechanisms of the metropolis - municipal detention facilities, airport, CSOs, sewage treatment facilities, electric sub stations, landfills, highway tolls and loops, food distribution centers, informal commerce, and various waste stations and scrap yards, etc. - converge. A quietly charged zone on a floodplain in precarious balance, the "backyard" of the city is best delineated by what is absent from the zone - access, a strong residential presence, public space, educational and other civic amenities - than what is present. Despite the environmental and civic necessities and potentials of its five connected water bodies, three boroughs, four islands, and emerging desires for leisure landscapes and development, the zone of contamination and refuge, its water and lands are close yet unapproachable.

¹ Isabel Allen, 'Anticipatory architecture: Cedric Price', *Architects' Journal*, vol.204 no.8 September 5, 1996, pp.20-21,24-25, 27-41

² Cedric Price and Paul Barker, 'The Potteries Thinkbelt', *New Society*, 2 June 1966, pp.14-17

³ The contemporary term "campus" originates from Latin *campus* "a field," as well as English *camp* which is closer to the actual spatial and operational structures of contemporary institutional campuses. See also Easterling and Agamben's reading of camp and campus.

⁴ Other pertinent models and concepts include the Atom and the Polyark (Price), the University of Calabria (Gregotti), Non-School (Woods), and the criticisms of current university system by P.V. Aureli etc.

The studio will take this under-defined yet critically vulnerable infrastructural zone as a new grounds for the city. Highly speculative yet seminal projects situated in bays - Tange's and other metabolists' proposals for Tokyo Bay from the 60s to 80s, or Fuller's *Floating Tetrahedral City* for the San Francisco in 1967, to name a few - suggest the conceptual potentials of the similarly configured terrain, that is alternative yet complementary to the establishments of the inland. The studio utilizes the area as an experimental territory for a similar conceptual ambition for a daringly visionary and transformative, yet decidedly supportive architecture and urbanism for the necessities of the city. The hard bound island of Manhattan has been the most potent paradigmatic site⁵ for the architectural and urban explorations for the past centuries with its own context, economies, ambitions, and dilemmas. The lands and waters of upper East River area, with their inverted physical and functional topology and current environmental and ecological concerns and potentials, may be a potent new paradigmatic territory that provokes the new architecture of the new city.

Reprogrammable City and its Infrastructure

The studio engages the program of a novel "public campus" and diverse momentum, agendas, and agencies around the territory of water and its connected geographies as the vehicles and frameworks to project the possibilities of new collective domains in the city, while exploring the notions of a "reprogrammable city" and articulating the possible spatial arrangement of its necessary infrastructures. Most contemporary cities constantly face the seeming predicament of mismatches - between the requirements of the past and the demand of the present, between the planned or speculated needs and new priorities - and associated impasses. A majority of "developed" cities are at the end of their developmental cycles, and precariously seek new paradigms for transformation and a newly defined concept of growth. The neo-liberal policies and its spaces detaches the civic and the political from the urban. The studio regards these general conditions, that most of contemporary architecture and urbanisms operate on, as the critical context as well as inspiration for the work of the semester, and will consider the work's implications and applications beyond the site boundaries. The work will take the space of mismatch, obsolescence, uncertainty, and crisis - even in its most familiar manifestations of vacant sites and infrastructure "updates" - as the sites of inventive spatial practices that articulate a renewed notion of the city, to reprogram the city.

Approaches

The studio will start with a research and analysis effort - a brief review of relevant discourse and research on the topic of education and the city and the related spatial typologies, followed by fact based investigations of the site area and its immediate and operational contexts through the production of analytic maps and drawings, which will instigate the design directions to be set forth in the next phase. This portion of work functions simultaneously as retrospective analysis as well as an aid for projection. Initiating the design phase, the students will be asked to define a set number of project trajectories each engaging the critical inquiry of the studio topics with a distinctive argument, and outline basic framework, potential strategies, and the site(s) of interest within the studio site zone. The design work, revised through an iterative process in response to the ongoing investigations and dialogue within the studio, will be developed articulating the rationales and impact at multiple scales, from geographic scales of intersecting networks and operations; and the urban scales of the newly defined "campus"; to the architectural scale of buildings, systems, configurations, and their interfaces.

The following short list of neighborhoods and infrastructures of potential interests within the site area are provided as a reference to briefly illustrate the rich and diverse history and characteristics of the site area and their potentials for engaging the program of education.

North Brother Island, South Brother Island, Randalls Island, Rikers Island (NYC DOC)
Bowery Bay Sewage Treatment Plant, ConEd Natural Gas Plant, NYC Prison Barges, Citi Field
Middle Ground, Soundview, Hell Gate, Willets Point, Hunts Point, College Point
La Guardia Airport, Flushing Airport (closed), CSX Oak Point Rail Yard, Rail Road Float Bridge (closed)
Grand Central Parkway, Triboro Bridge, Bruckner Expressway and Boulevard

⁵ See the discussion of Manhattan and Venice as paradigm islands, in Stoppani, Teresa, *Paradigm Islands: Manhattan and Venice. Discourses on Architecture and the City*, Abingon, Oxford: Routledge, 2010

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