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SPRING 2017 NAHYUN HWANG STUDIO

KNOWLEDGE CITY

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]

Participating in the continuing discourse on the relationship between the architecture of education and the city, and acknowledging both precarity[3] *and* possibilities in knowledge in the context of a knowledge economy, this 2017 Spring studio, working with the expanded school program shared year-wide and as a part of the on-going research and studio series "Knowledge City," focuses on the typological investigations of experimental educational institutions and their less institutional counterparts. Exploring the possibilities of a novel architecture for knowledge production, exchange, and consumption, the investigation aims to challenge their familiar spatial and institutional formats, while utilizing the potentials in the typology of schools[4] to generate new configurations for collectivity in the city.

Experiments and Utopias

As a genre of architecture, educational environments have been one of the most instrumental experimental platforms to instigate new organizations and forms as well as new values and ideologies. The Groundscraper of Berlin Free University prompted the architecture of "Opera Aperta" attempted by Team 10 and others[5], and Ant Farm's inflatable "Clean Air Pod" that declared "air failure" at the1970 U.C. Berkeley campus pushed forward the typology of tactical inflatables, soft yet subverting. Challenging institutional and typological conventions in different ways, Herman Hertzberger's Montessori buildings explored configurations of ideal collectivity within the framework of "School as City," while Aldo Van Eyck's playgrounds across-post World War II Amsterdam spatialized the notion of learning dissociated from institutional enclosures, through the non-hierarchical, distributed design that asserted the idea of the city open to and re-imaginable by anyone. The Open Air School movement at the beginning of the 20th century, Neutra's indoor-outdoor classrooms, and the contemporary Edible Schoolyard Movement challenge the assumed boundary of the type and suggest its provocative permutations while articulating renewed ideals of the individual's place within the nature.

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[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] See the notion of precarity in the context of contemporary "Edufactory" and neoliberal knowledge economy in Aureli, Pier Vittorio. 2011. 'Labor and Architecture: Revisiting Cedric Price's Potteries Thinkbelt'. Log, No. 23. Anyone Corporation: 97–118.

[4] Banham, Reyner. "Megastructures in Academe." In *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

[5] See Eco's concept of "Opera Aperta" (The Open Work) adopted by Team 10 through the typology of Mat Building in Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work*. Translated by Anna Cancogni. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989. (original publication 1962)

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The studio investigates historical experiments and their ideological and disciplinary contexts, as well as contemporary spaces of formal and informal knowledge production and exchange, to formulate positions and outline individual projects pertinent to the issues and priorities of the contemporary landscape. In the essay "Utopie Experimentale: Pour un Nouvel Urbanisme," Henri Lefebvre defines "Experimental Utopia" as "the exploration of human possibilities, with the help of the image and the imagination, accompanied by a ceaseless criticism and a ceaseless reference to the given problematic in the 'real." In the context of continuing socio-political and environmental crisis and deepening inequalities, the studio's work aims to utilize the program of education and learning as a platform for daring yet effective experimentation that speculates on the ideal relationships between the goals of individuals, institutions, and the city, and the agency and opportunities of architecture in the milieu.

Environments

Engaging the discussion on the environment shared year-wide this semester, the studio will explore multifarious and constantly evolving notions of the environment through the programs of knowledge. In a series of symposiums and discussions at MoMA in 1972 titled "The Universitas Project" Emilio Ambasz and the multidisciplinary participants including Manuel Castells, Umberto Eco, Jean Baudrillard, and Henri Lefebvre explored the possibility of "Institutions for a Post-Technological Society," "a new type of University concerned with the evaluation and design of our man-made milieu."[6] Despite the fact that the effort did not actualize and that it still invoked the familiar institutional structure of a university as a solution, the project was an attempt to "inquire into the nature of the man-made environment" and the role of design and agency of education in the context. The project sought to, through new modes of education, find the conceptual link to produce and communicate a more comprehensive thus more resistant definition of the environment, that connects and blurs the binary distinctions between the artificial and the natural, author and products, and most importantly the technical and the social.

> *If one begins with the affirmation that "man constructs his milieu," and if one refuses to reduce this "man" to a technical agent imbued with a universal and ahistorical rationality, then the problem becomes one of a social relation. The environment is no longer a physical "given," exterior to human action, but a particular form of matter (human and nonhuman), an expression, a relation among elements. But what elements? And the expression of what?* [7]

After 45 years, the key concerns of "Universtas" - the environment as a complex bio-techni-socio-political milieu; and the instrumentality of knowledge as a medium and a framework in the context- are still, if not more, relevant. The studio will investigates different readings and goals of the environments and their implications through strategically framed design interventions.

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[6] Emilio Ambasz, "Introduction." In *The Universitas Project: Solutions for a Post-Technological Society*, edited by Emilio Ambasz. The Museum of Modern Art, 2006.
[7] Manuel Castells. "Urban Symbolism and Social Movements: On a New Institution for the Study of the Urban Environment." In *The Universitas Project: Solutions for a Post-Technological Society*, edited by Emilio Ambasz. The Museum of Modern Art, 2006.

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Approaches

Acknowledging the significance and diverse potentials of the knowledge environment in the contemporary city, the studio will engage the possibilities in architecture of knowledge through a set of projects diverse in concept, location, and scale. The studio will start with a research and analysis effort through a review of relevant discourse and an overview of both historic and contemporary cases through readings and surveys. Following the initial overview, fact based investigations on selected topics or examples with focused research and analytic documentations will instigate the individuated agendas of the design projects to be set forth in the next phase. Initiating the design phase, the students will be asked to define a set number of project trajectories and outline basic framework, potential strategies, and the site(s) of interest pertinent to each project. 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 intentions at multiple scales and time frames regardless of the projects' physical bounds -from global and regional scales of intersecting networks and operations; and the urban scales of the newly defined collectives; to the architectural scale of buildings, systems, configurations, and their interfaces.

Manhattan as a Laboratory

Taking advantage of the infinite programmatic and demographic complexity, the studio utilizes the site of the never realized Universitas - Manhattan - and its extended water territories as a testing ground. The hard bound island of Manhattan has been the most potent paradigmatic site for the architectural and urban explorations for the past centuries[8]. The city of the consummate grid and the muse to the Manhattan Transcripts, the City of Captive Globe is where infinite "environments" are constructed, and their ideals are maintained. Through allegorical urban blocks of the Gotham City, the metaphors and metamorphosis of the city are conceptualized.[9] Manhattan obsessively "more interested in becoming than being" is also full of "unforeseen potential for conceiving a quite different notion of city."[10] Investigating the island's most rooted mechanisms and familiar manifestations as well as its hidden and connected geographies, time frames, and transformations, the work aims to explore diverse notions of environments and their ever critical implications in the contemporary city.

The emphasis of the studio is on the production of rigorously articulated architectural propositions that each engages the critical inquiry of the studio topic with a distinctive thesis. The following short list of examples of potential programs and institutional sites of experimentation and interventions are provided as a reference to briefly illustrate their potentials for engaging the program of education.

> Halfway Houses
> Center for Urban Pedagogies (CUP)

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[8] 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

[9] O.M. Ungers, Werner Goehner, Hans F. Kollhoff, and Arthur A. Ovaska, *The Urban Block and Gotham City: Metaphors & Metamorphosis: Two Concurrent Projects*, Cornell Summer Session in Ithaca NY, (1976)

[10] Emilio Ambasz, "Manhattan:Capital of the 20th Century." In *The Universitas Project: Solutions for a Post-Technological Society*, edited by Emilio Ambasz. The Museum of Modern Art, 2006.

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Pilot Universitas

Refugee Academies

Army Corps of Engineers - Prime Power School

Center for Land Use interpretation

School of the Future (www.publicsphereproject.org)

Correctional Educational Facilities

University Clubs

"Labs"

"Incubators"

Co-Located Research Institutions

Cornell Tech v 2.0.

City As School High School

Department of Education

New York Harbor School

And other institutions and examples

* Group work for some portion of the semester will be encouraged but students will have options to work individually.

* Studio excursions to selected sites are being scheduled for February.

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