

Market Values: New Economies for New York



The studio will design sites of transaction and exchange—a marketplace—as a way to reflect upon its corresponding new societies. If the political and environmental turmoil of the 1970s gave rise to a series of social experiments, intentional communities, and alternative social models in reaction to that time, how might other formats of living materialize today? The dominant mode of unchecked capital accumulation and economic growth has had accelerating effects on climate crisis, carbon emissions, resource extraction, and encouraged a culture of discard. To that end, increased social inequity, overconsumption, overconnection, and political disinformation have impacted peoples’ anxiety, happiness and sense of belonging. But this mode of living has reached exhaustion. How can we imagine and propose a new paradigm for alternative ways of living and new sets of values with our tools as architects? What is the relationship between environmental form and social organization? Using the power of speculative design, borrowed from practitioners like Dunne & Raby, we will imagine and visualize a marketplace with new economies that suggest shifts in behavior and attitudes for an alternative model of society.

In 1965, the intentional community Drop City was established in the Colorado desert as a decentralized, non-hierarchical counterpoint to the prevailing social politics of the time, connecting an ideology of “dropping out” of society with a design language influenced by Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic domes. Drop City is just one example, along with Owens’ New Harmony and Fourier’s phalanstery amongst others, of historic social models and modes of collectivity that marry ideology to form. As a starting point for inquiry and experimentation,

participants in the studio will develop in-depth research into such historical models, as well as contemporary and speculative examples including Constant's New Babylon and communal experiments by artists such as Fritz Haeg and Joep van Lieshout. While these examples lean towards communitarian values, shared resource management, and anti-capitalist tendencies, we will also look at contemporary collective social models that span the political spectrum such as Seasteading, Burning Man, survivalist enclaves, WeLive and the Living Energy Farm (an intentional community in Virginia that requires its members to live a fossil fuel free life) in order to open up a range of outlooks and future potentialities.

Building on case study research to assemble a dossier of social models and organizations, students will then develop a future-oriented and speculative design for a marketplace in New York City as a manifestation and index for a new economy and value system that it facilitates.

DROPPING OUT IN THE CITY

New York City will be the studio's testbed and laboratory for its exploration. As Koolhaas' "Delirious New York" and the recent exhibition "Never Built New York" at the Queens Museum reveal, New York City has a rich history of using architecture to speculate upon possible futures. While communities such as Drop City insisted upon withdrawing and "dropping out" of society off the grid and physically disconnected from the rest of the world, the studio explores what it would mean to design for the urban. How might new societies find traction—today or tomorrow—in the spaces of New York City, the world center of finance and the epitome of capital growth symbolized by projects like Hudson Yards?

MARKET VALUES

The marketplace is a site of exchange and transaction that is reflective of a culture and its values. Typologically, the marketplace has a long history from Trajan's Market in Rome to Les Halles in Paris to MVRDV's Markthall in Rotterdam. At the same time, whether we look at agricultural products at the Green Market in Union Square, the futures market at the New York Stock Exchange, the individual storefront markets along Canal Street selling fake luxury goods, or the numerous black marketplaces in the city, we can begin to deduce current units of value.

As an act of reverse engineering, the studio will design the marketplace, or site of exchange and transaction, as a means to reflect and speculate on its ideological system and economy (or lack thereof). If most social models that we will study are self-contained or closed, the marketplace program is a site of interface and friction between the proposed society and the city. In a society where no money is exchanged, what might be bartered or traded to produce alternative social value? Might a water marketplace one day replace the local bodega? How might we consider 'scales' of value, which take into account resource scarcity/surplus, authenticity, use and time? These radical design proposals become representative of the societies that are to be enacted and reveal the values embedded within them.

DRAWING SOCIAL ECOSYSTEMS

The studio shifts architectural focus to include not only form and organization, but to also incorporate and reveal values and social contracts embedded within social models and their designs. In this way, we will develop a taxonomy of collective ways of seeing and looking. The studio will develop a systems drawing technique to represent their design projects as social ecosystems that include infrastructures, resources, values and social contracts. Students will work in small groups throughout the semester and each group will be expected to develop a thesis articulated through a visual argument that will be materialized through a unique toolkit of representations.

N.B: The research topic of this studio is related to an ongoing project of my own in collaboration with Jesse LeCavalier, Dan Taeyoung and Chris Woebken for the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale.

SCHEDULE

PHASE 01 (2 WEEKS)

Intentional Societies and Social Experiments: Then and Now

We will research, analyze and assemble a collective dossier of historic, speculative and contemporary intentional communities, societies, social experiments and collective models of living. As a studio we will develop a set of filters, or ways of seeing, to analyze and evaluate these case studies in terms of, for example: form, resources, site, money, social organization, and value.

PHASE 02 (2 WEEKS)

Market Values

Building on case study analysis from Phase 01, students will establish a social model to work with and develop a design for a marketplace based on typological studies along with hybridized research into new economies that might be developed from science, art, pop culture, sociology or film. Students will be pushed to gear their design frameworks towards the future.

PHASE 03 (2 WEEKS)

Design Development

From Phase 02, students will situate and test their design proposal for a marketplace in a site or sites in New York City. In parallel, students will develop a toolkit of representations to best articulate their projects, for example through systems drawings, models, GIFs, maps, brochures, or artifacts.

PHASE 04 (2 WEEKS)

Production

Synthesis and final development of design projects.

KEY DATES

03 June - Lottery

05 June - Studio Introduction

01-03 July - Mid-Reviews

04 July - Independence Day (no studio)

15 July - Interim Review

31 July-02 August - Final Reviews

A detailed schedule will be handed out at the beginning of each assignment.

STUDIO REFERENCES

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Goldin, Greg and Sam Lubell. *Never Built New York*. New York: Metropolis Books, 2016.

Scott, Felicity. *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics After Modernism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.

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