

Columbia University  
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation  
A4003: Core Studio 3, Fall 2017, “States of Housing”

Studio Statement, Daisy Ames

## Alignment

This studio will problematize the concept of *alignment* (and of course, its implied opposite, *misalignment*), with an emphasis on reading site context and communicating a design language. Due to the way that social, economic and political agendas affect the urban planning in New York City, the routes taken during the design process often require a wide variety of architectural accommodations. The five boroughs of the City are comprised of housing typologies which range from luxury co-ops, private townhomes, apartment buildings, high rise condos, industrial loft conversions to short-term shelters. The city is currently balancing the construction of tall and slender skyscrapers for ultra-high net worth (UHNW) non-residents, while striving to meet government benchmarks to provide affordable housing for existing residents. Such simultaneities call into question the extent to which sociological and political initiatives are compatible, posing unique challenges for architects communicating effective design.

The heterogeneous factors that constitute the urban fabric of the Bronx interweave public and private, interior and exterior, as well as exposed structure and finished material. These collisions alternate between hard lines and surfaces to indeterminate zones and ownerships. For instance, while the distinction between “inside” and “outside” is defined by architecture, the context in which the architectural elements that are deployed directly affect their meaning. Furthermore, such delineations oscillate between the virtual and physical, producing experiences which require acute awareness of material, circulation, program, and structure to unearth the means by which space, light, and form are manifest.

Of the three domains of thought influencing this arena (urban design, planning, and architecture), the approach of this studio is architectural, and specifically based on notions of alignment. First, alignment is a creative tool for reading the context of a site; and second, alignment is a tool for communicating a design proposal. As architects and students of architecture, the *capacity to read*, and the *act of communicating* are essential components of an architectural project.

### Reading Context:

There are three types of alignments students will be asked to look for when reading the context of our site: the social, the economic, and the political. Social alignment relates to existing public spaces and a building’s relationship to the street. Economic alignment refers to the source(s) of funding for neighborhood development, and where community funding is still needed. And finally, political alignment refers to the examination of government initiatives which either facilitate or stall neighborhood development, i.e. zoning codes and transferable development rights (TDRs).

### Communicating Design:

Through a series of investigations, students will demonstrate that architecture *speaks* to those who experience it – regardless of how (i.e. by foot, car, bus, etc.). During these investigations, students will work closely with concepts of alignment to elicit design criteria which address the vernacular of the site, while at the same time innovating their own methods to produce form and meaning.

This semester, the studio will analyze Morphosis’ Madrid Social Housing Project. This project was completed in 2006 and is part of the Madrid Public Housing initiative located in the Province of Carabanchel, surrounded by other examples of contemporary housing. This particular project is unique in the scope of the Office’s prior work. Its urban form requires a layered reading of white, orthogonal, repetitive lattices, and the design utilizes loggias, green spaces, and brise-soleil to communicate a domestic scale.

