

# SPRING 2016 NAHYUN HWANG STUDIO

Jan 11, 2016 Brief

## Camp

By 2043, Cornell University will produce a 2.1 million square foot state-of-the-art Tech Campus on Roosevelt Island in the East River, New York City, occupying 12.5-acres of city owned land and involving 2 billion dollars of public and private capital. <sup>1</sup>Planned to house 2,500 academic and corporate community members on site, the campus is a doubly lofted "ideological laboratory"<sup>2</sup> par excellence, a techno-entrepreneurial utopia where chance encounters are guaranteed and start-ups are already established. Projecting \$23 billion economic activities for the coming decades, the seemingly insular topology of "Silicon Island" is solidly contiguous with the principles of the metropolis.

The studio considers the typology of contemporary campus and its versatile institutional and territorial frameworks<sup>3</sup> in order to investigate the nested scales and landscapes of collectivities in the city and their overlapping, splintering, ecologies. Exploring various spatial formats of knowledge production (and consumption) and their associated urbanisms, the work aims to investigate relationships between goals of individuals, institutions, and the ideals of the city, as well as the notions of public(s), collective productivity, and the agency and opportunities of architecture in the milieu.

## Islands

Throughout history, the island has been the territory where different logics and desires of the land are projected and overlaid. The island is at once a site of daring experimentation and languid refuge, a place of survival and pleasure, where man-made and the natural blur and pragmatism and romanticism coexist. From Manhattan and Venice to the Dreamland of Coney Island and the proposals for New Welfare Island, from the Metabolists' bay of Tokyo to the "World" of Dubai, the island is at times a paradigmatic specimen from the past inscribed with its own persisting urbanisms<sup>4</sup>, and at other times a constantly transforming tabula rasa for the projection of the future where boundaries and limitations become freedom.

The studio utilizes the islands in the New York metropolitan area - including Roosevelt Island, the site of Cornell Tech, but also other well and less known urban islands- as instigators and probes through which territories are read. More pronounced in the delineation of (un)wants and needs than their provincial counterparts, the islands in the metropolitan water have been not only reflecting but also actively contributing to the operations of the city, often outputting density and supplementing land use patterns, and effectively defining distinguished zones onto the surrounding land. Once perceived as outdated palimpsests of the past, with new demands, development pressures, and changing climates, islands become the

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<sup>1</sup> "Campus." *Cornell Tech*. <http://tech.cornell.edu/future-campus>.

<sup>2</sup> For the discussion of "bases" of the city, or the "ideological laboratories," see Koolhaas, Rem. "The City of the Captive Globe (1972)." In *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. The Monacelli Press, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> 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 most of the contemporary institutional campuses. See also Easterling and Agamben's reading of camp and campus, and the criticisms of the current university system by P.V. Aureli.

<sup>4</sup> 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

forefronts of the future architecture and urbanism of the city, where complex geographies of new environments begin to converge and become legible.

## **Approaches**

The studio operates along and/or against two overlapping mechanisms of camp and the island, challenging their inherent insular dispositions while appropriating their absolutism and legibility. The work will engage the program of knowledge production and a widely defined typology of “campus” (to be further defined by each project), and diverse momentum, agendas, and agencies around the territory of urban islands and its surrounding water as the vehicles, frameworks, and infrastructure, to project the possibilities of new collective domains in the city.

The studio will start with a brief review of the relevant discourse; research on the notion of camp, campus, and the city and their related spatial typologies; and the in depth investigation of immediate and expanded geographies of selected islands through the production of analytic drawings on the topic proposed by each student after a preliminary reconnaissance. Initiating the design phase, the students will be asked to define a set number of project trajectories based on the research and analysis thus far, each engaging a critical inquiry of the studio topic with a distinctive argument or hypothetical thesis outlining the speculative or actual institutional framework of choice 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 islands are provided as a reference.

Isle of Meadow  
Barren Island  
Coney Island  
Randall’s/Ward’s Islands  
City Island  
Roosevelt Island  
Riker’s Island  
Broad Channel  
Governors Island  
HARS

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

*\* Studio excursions to selected islands are being scheduled for February.*