city, citizen.

the common grounds of an urban education

<u>Critic Statements</u>

Design 4: Urbanism
Instructor / Coordinator: Aniket Shahane
Teaching Fellow: Ben Thompson
Yale School of Architecture
Spring 2021

"Architecture in which the world matters. A world in which architecture matters". YSOA

"Architects are such a dull lot - and they're so convinced that they matter." - *Cedric Price*

Studio Philosophy
The role of the architect might lie somewhere between the words of soaring ambition penned by our own beloved school and the blunt self-critique by Price. In this studio, the burden of searching for and defining that role is placed on *you.* And in order to understand who *you* are, one must first understand – with dispassion and empathy – who *they* are. Throughout the semester we will ask ourselves not only *what* defines the city (buildings, blocks, streets, open spaces, etc.), but also *who* defines the city (children, parents, school principals, mayors, developers, and architects).

Studio Approach
The urban problem we're tackling this semester is, ultimately, centered around ideas of learning. The District 15 report was initiated by a group of citizens that realized how the inherent inequalities of a public education system are exacerbated by lopsidedness in other urban systems including everything from quality housing to transportation access to job security. Using the lens of a few key schools in the district, we will look to identify key physical and social networks in the area in order to then begin understanding how the entanglement of these structures not only helped create the current situation but that in their interconnectedness might lie potentials for future alternatives. In other words, this section will prod the notion that the design of a public education *is* the design of a city.

That interconnectedness is also useful in thinking about our working methodology. Readings and discussions will be organized around the problems of the city as posed by its citizens (those who live and work in the city) as well as positions on the city pitched by architects and designers (those that speculate from afar). Assignments throughout the semester will encourage you to explore how research, analysis, and design might inform each other to frame a problem (site and program) as well as possibilities (design).   Lastly, while you will be working in teams of your own choosing, we will search for ways in which your design might benefit from relying on the realities of another team's project. This involves everything from participating in each other's crits to sharing resources and intelligence to assuming that another team's project lives in the world of your own. Your project doesn't need to be the hero that saves the city; just one that inspires a neighbor – both in the city and in the studio.

Design 4: Urbanism
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Spring 2021

Multiplier Effect: Translating the Paulista SESC to 21st Century NYC

In 1946, the same year that Brazil ratified a new constitution, members of the nation's commerce and service industries came together to establish a novel institution in São Paulo: **SESC** (Serviço Social do Comércio). Translated as Social Service of Commerce, this private, non-profit institution provided a set of facilities to dues-paying members as well as to the general public—facilities that the state was either unwilling or unable to provide. This dual use created a multiplier effect, whereby SESCs provided everything from health and wellness facilities to libraries and swimming pools. Today there is a network of over 36 SESCs across the state of São Paulo, annually servicing over 2.8 million people across all ages and social classes. From Lina Bo Bardi's SESC Pompeia of the 1980s to Paulo Mendes da Rocha + MMBB Arquitetos' SESC 24 de Maio in 2017, SESCs have become crucial social *and* physical infrastructures in the city to sustain lifelong education. Indeed, SESCs are the architectural and urban embodiment of a social contract between an institution and a plurality of publics. To this day they evoke a sense of civic pride through their physical presence in the city and architectural language. What might it then mean to translate and update this model of social and physical infrastructure to New York City and pair it with one of the city's most pressing urban issues: housing?

Using District 15 as an object lesson in reimagining a fragment of the city, in this section of 4th semester core we will collectively hallucinate on how we might introduce a new model of recreation, education, and social services with housing. How might we reconceive the transformation of a select number of sites in the making of public space and housing in a largely developer driven city? How are we to understand recreation, education and housing forms for experiencing urban life with diverse conventions and dimensions? And how might we, as architects, engage with the mechanisms of development and forms of city making in order to create new grounds in the city? These are but a few of the questions that we will explore by developing a position on architecture and the city through drawings and models.

Design 4 - Urbanism
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This studio will approach the urban conditions of District 15's educational apparatus through the lens of one building, 4004 4th Avenue in Sunset Park, that houses two middle schools, IS 136 (also known as Charles O. Dewey) and Sunset Park Prep. The specificity of what this (huge) building holds - two schools and largely Latinx students - sheds light on the structural conditions (economic, cultural, political) that is Sunset Park and its weird urbanism.

The goal *is* to start from the specific to get to the general, but it also contains some assumptions - assumptions that may be contested by the students, but are in any case starting points. 1) That the presumed solution to better education in an underperforming district like this - integration - may *not* be the best; that we instead need to address how a student's education is woven into the fabric of the family (where and at what do the family members labor? who is considered to be "the family"?) and the neighborhood (where and what are the stores? where are the parks and public facilities? what is traffic and transportation like?). 2) That part of the weirdness of the area, of which 4004 4th Ave is a part, is the radical mix of building typologies, such that the "urban" here defies characterization; one needn't fight this but it must be played with and buildings coaxed into programs that defy their type. And 3) that weaving together a more robust neighborhood does *not* imply building anything new; architecture and infrastructure must do more by constructing less. Your creative acts, in other words, will be ones of erasure, recycling, and re-appropriation, not addition and proliferation.

The vision: that "schools", "work", and "home" are not defined or located as they currently are, and that they operate in a GND economy.

Design 4: Urbanism
Instructor: Elisa Iturbe
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Spring 2021

"A problem like climate change is going to need unprecedented collaboration between kinds of knowledge and labor. Such a challenge may well require of us that we produce new kinds of production relations, new technologies, new kinds of affective culture, new ways of organizing the world."

– McKenzie Wark

At the heart of a transition away from fossil fuels and carbon modernity will be a transformation of production. As McKenzie Wark states, this will require us to forge new links between labor and knowledge. Our current patterns and relations of production cannot be undone, overturned, or rethought without an effort to work and make differently, and we must learn to do so. We must all go back to school.

Our studio will work together to imagine a city-wide public education system for a just transition. Research will focus on areas of urban life that require reinvention and remediation, including the identification of specific constituencies in the city that will be in need of re-skilling or new forms of education. All ages and sectors of society must be considered. For example, perhaps K-12 programs should be reinvented so that all graduating high schoolers know how to compost, grow their own food, and filter rainwater. Or, as the construction industry changes in an effort to decarbonize, steel workers should be retrained to work with new materials. Or, a soil remediation school might progressively transform empty lots around the city. In all cases, students of these schools should be considered active agents within the city. The task is not to design a series of individual school buildings, but to imagine how the city will change as stewardship and maintenance become part of a city's curriculum. Schools will be thought of as sites of urban transformation, creating new forms knowledge hand in hand with new modes of production. Together, the studio will propose a new "school district," one that becomes legible in the city for its work on the built environment.

Design 4: Urbanism
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Spring 2021

Parents and students heading from Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's office in Midtown to City Hall during a pro-integration boycott that kept over a third of the city's roughly one million students out of school. Feb. 3, 1964.
(Eddie Hausner/The New York Times). https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/nyregion/school-segregation-new-york.html

Integration is an Education
On February 3, 1964, a pro-integration boycott by students and parents headed from Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's office in Midtown to City Hall to protest the pernicious segregation of New York City public schools. This boycott, which kept over a third of the city's roughly one million students out of school, was a potent civic action to bring attention to the deleterious effect of segregation in schools. Citizens young and old carried signs demanding "mejore escuela por todos," proposing "integration [as] the first step toward quality education," "equal education for all!" and "integration is an education," all bold statements that are as urgent now as over 50 years ago. Intertwined issues of policy and poverty, changing zoning lines and redlining, discrimination and color-blindness all contributed to inequities in the quality of education for thousands of NYC school children.

We will work as a group to understand the issues that District 15 faces, in that it is "among the most socio-economically and racially segregated" districts in the city. The D15 Diversity Plan is a starting point for our investigation into issues of segregation and how this reflects patterns of residential housing segregation that is a core problem in the district. "Integration is an education" takes on a second meaning where the act of integration itself can teach parents, community members, and us as designers about ourselves and the places we design for. We are all a part of a learning process, and to take on social injustices, we must first listen and learn—before we act and not expect as the Diversity Plan notes, that "historically students of color have always had to travel when integration initiatives are implemented." Our task will be to investigate how that burden is not placed on students of color in District 15 and what new lines we may draw or project we may propose to provide a new common ground for education.

Parallel Lines
To understand the complex issues that face District 15, we will need to research and map the lines that have been drawn over time by the Department of Education and how these lines reflect, subvert, or are complicit in obstacles to equity in education for the students in this district. These lines, while invisible, intersect with other lines that demarcate voting and zoning districts, subway lines and elevated highway lines. We will use mapping as core tool in our understanding of the complexities of place. Mapping is one of the tools central to our understanding of a place, but it requires thorough investigation to understand data beyond points on a page. Maps and planning have been used as tools to segregate and

divide communities from redlining to Robert Moses' highway system, but maps can also be the tools by which we dismantle the systems of injustice.
Once we have a sense of the larger system each team will decide on their next move: open options from data visualization, video, transportation proposals, working actively with local policy, or design an alternative at the architectural and/or urban scale for D15.

We will begin by going backward in time through the use of historical maps (New York Public Library digital map collection, NYC Sanborn maps, NYC Zoning maps, etc.). We will then develop a set of representations of the D15 over time. What was the site like in maps and photographs. How can we imagine the quality of the landscape through the historical maps that we find. We will also explore the databases of information that can give us extremely finely detailed information about land use, census data, toxic spills etc. We will analyze the characteristics of the different locations using demography databases such as SocialExplorer and PolicyMap and through a series of workshops with the CSSSI gain exposure to ArchGIS software. This research work will reveal census data, median house prices, distance to mass transit, and other quantifiable data.
Looking at large data sets can be combined with "fine-grained" information about lived experience. Questions about big-data collection in the public realm. Though we should be cautious about the tools of data collection and the accuracy of the data that they provide. How can data be used to make people's lives better rather than to quantify the various experiences of people and then to not target them to sell more products. These are the aspects that will be added to your mappings and work with databases that form the basis of you telling your story about the site.

Once we have a sense of the larger system each team will decide on their next move: open options from data visualization, video, transportation proposals, working actively with local policy, or design an alternative at the architectural and/or urban scale for D!5