

Studio Statement, Daisy Ames

Adaptation

In this studio, we will think together about how we might transition from outdated learning environments and outdated construction processes, toward new learning and construction processes for the future.

While there are many definitions and interpretations of the term 'adaptation' this studio will engage the following:

1. General: (n) adjustment to environmental conditions, such as a:
 - a. adjustment of a sense organ to the intensity or quality of stimulation
 - b. modification of an organism or its parts that make it more fit for existence under the conditions of its environment: a heritable physical or behavioral trait that serves a specific function and improves an organism's fitness or survival (Merriam-Webster)
2. Biological: (n) a change or the process of change by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment. (Oxford English Dictionary)
3. Evolutionary: In evolutionary theory, adaptation is the biological mechanism by which organisms adjust to new environments or to changes in their current environment. (National Geographic)

In the definitions above, there are implied relationships between 'what was', and 'what will be'. The master studio syllabus provides a clear narrative of the many historical attempts which point to the fact that it takes time to evolve the structure of learning to meet contemporary needs. This studio acknowledges that given the fast-paced nature of our current social, educational, and environmental climates, we are constantly in a state of transitioning between what was and what will be. Therefore, thinking simultaneously about what we can learn from the past and what we imagine for the future is necessary. While precedent can serve as a jumping off point, and our imaginations can serve as inspiration for the future, the main axis of engagement is our current socio-political moment. So, for this Adaptation studio, we will build from what we learn about the New York Department of Education and the New York Department of Building as the grounds for our new architectural project.

The New York Department of Education, which governs the City's public schools, has an online database which outlines the many ways public schools strive to be healthy, accommodating, and safe. Part of the accommodations reflect special needs ranging from physical to psychological.¹ Aside from accessibility, there is little mention of the ways in which a school's design (i.e. form, space, circulation, light, and air) may play a role in a student's ability to absorb and use information – which is to say, 'to learn.' While architecture certainly has the potential to impact a student's ability to learn information and recall it for test-taking, this studio invites students to imagine spaces which might also facilitate self-expression and creativity as necessary and complimentary forms of learning.

New York City Department of Building supports certain construction processes which privilege internationally sourced materials, large scale industries, and as a result, produce high embodied energy structures. What material ecologies exist within proximity of New York City that might serve our community for the construction of new schools? Are there natural resources that we could rely on that are close by that could reduce carbon emissions? Are there employment opportunities created in locally sourced materials and skills? If the NYC building code does not support such emerging technologies for construction – what kinds systems (i.e. hybrids) could serve as the first steps toward this kind of change?



¹ <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/school-environment>