



BLOCK CITY

Cornell University, Dept. of Architecture Spring 2020 Option Studio, Dasha Khapalova, Visiting Critic

The Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) is the busiest bus terminal in the world, with 225,000 people and 8,000 buses passing through every day. Built in 1950 and expanded in 1979, it covers 1 ½ city blocks in Manhattan, spanning from 40th to 42nd Street from 8th to 9th Avenue. It is one of the largest structures in Manhattan, it has been hated for decades, and it has reached the end of its usable life.

In this studio we will probe the possibilities of what a 1 ½ block megastructure that mediates between permanence and transience, car and pedestrian, infrastructure and building, building and city, entrance and departure might be. We will be interested in how a new Port Authority might become a microcosm of the city that it serves through a rethinking of existing parts and conditions, and through the introduction of new civic and cultural program.

The semester will start with an intensive analysis of the island of Manhattan to ask: what makes a city? Through the lenses of public space, civic and cultural institutions, infrastructure, fabric vs. object, thresholds and boundaries, connections and separations, grids, program, natural vs. man-made conditions, history and scale we will understand the components of urbanity. Alongside we will study examples of urban microcosms, ranging from parks to buildings. Each student will then propose their own vision for the “city in a block,” one that fully realizes the potential of the Port Authority to be a unique and vital node in the public life of New York City.

This is an Ithaca-based studio. There will be a short studio trip to NYC.