

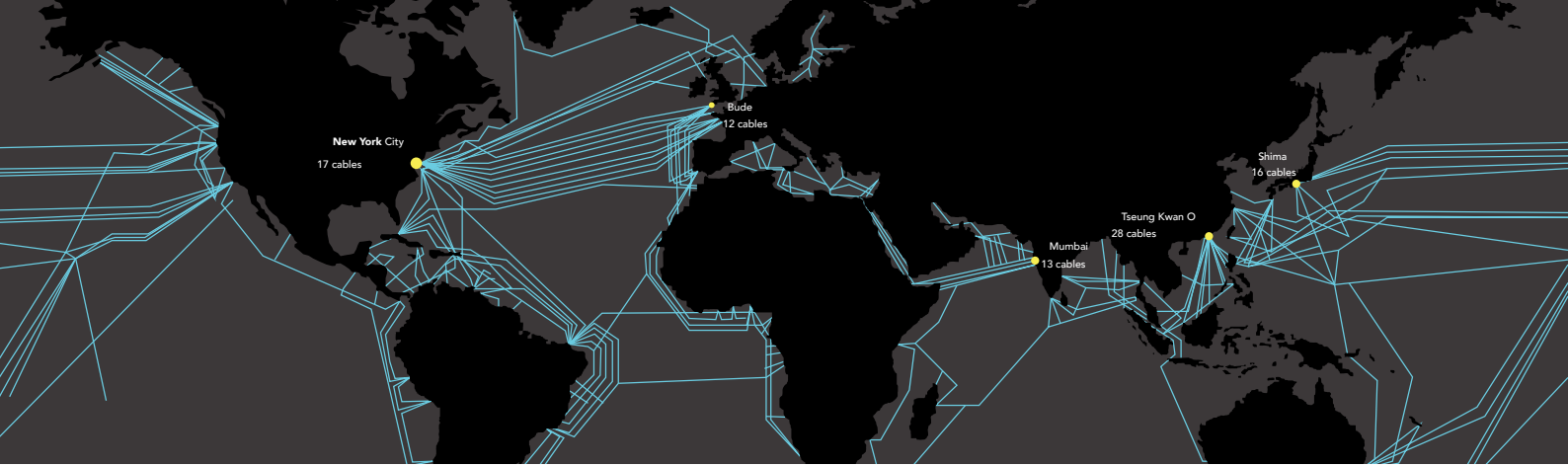
Talent Machine

Midtown NE Manhattan, New York, NY

Joanna Cieřlikowska, 4941918

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Introduction

The subject of the conducted research is the area of Manhattan Midtown, in New York City, U.S. Based on the conclusions drawn from the context analysis is the fact that New York City is one of the most digitally connected cities in the world, as presented in the submarine cable map.

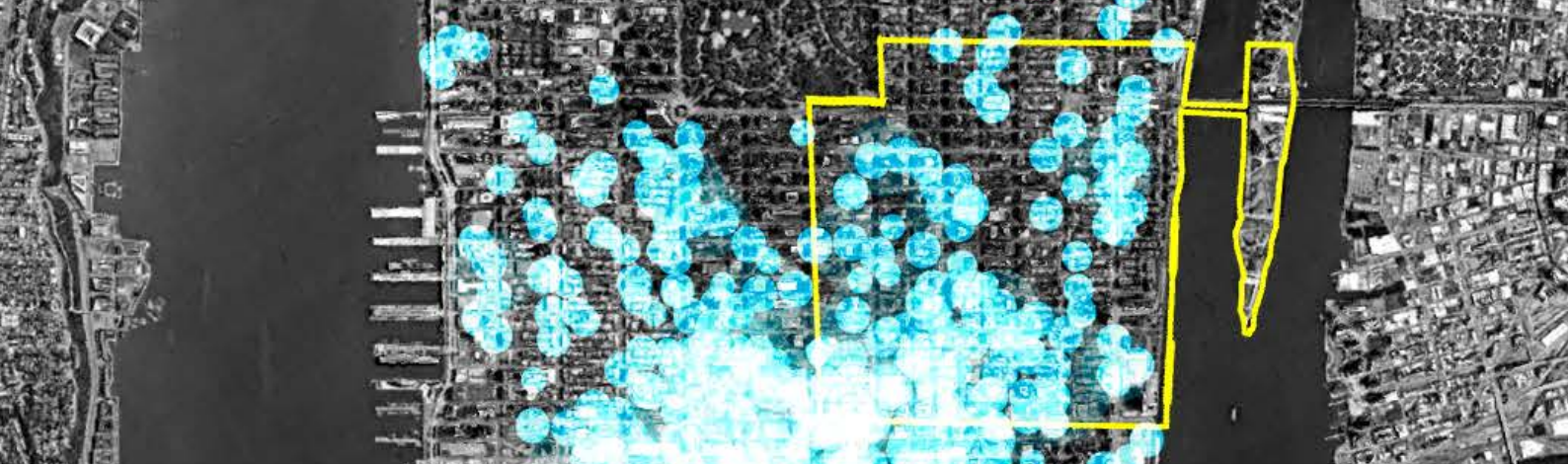
The growing tech sector started to take advantage of that, which can be observed in the movement from Silicon Valley to New York State, where the biggest tech empires moved their offices and headquarters. New centres concentrating technology-oriented field have been created, one of which is New York City, with its heart in Midtown Manhattan.

The migration started in the Flatiron District, and has been spreading across Midtown, along so-called "Silicon Alley" by which the greatest tech giants (such as Google, Facebook, or Apple) settled down, followed by multiple newly created start-up companies which number has steadily been growing ever since. The initial number of start-ups equalled 1600 in 2012, 6000 in 2015, 9000 in 2017, reached over 40 000 in 201, and is predicted to keep continuously increasing.

This movement reached the area of Northeast Midtown as well. The Northeast quarter of Midtown Manhattan is recognized for its high architectural value being a site of such iconic buildings as Chrysler, Rockefeller Center, Trump Tower, Seagram Building, or Grand Central Terminal. Therefore, Northeast Midtown has earned its unofficial name of the Valley of Giants. This is also related to the fact that most of the buildings in that part of Midtown are considered old, meaning that 83% of all buildings in Northeast Midtown is 60 years old or more. Such a unique architectural context makes one ask a question: what does the arrival of the technological era mean for the Valley of Giants? The main research question was formulated more precisely is: how can the fourth industrial revolution of the digital era start a grassroots initiative for resilient development while enhancing the architectural value of Northeast Midtown?

To answer this question, a few factors have to be analysed: the intellectual capital, added to economic capital, and combined with the political support. The first factor - the intellectual capital - is the potential that has been collected in the highly-educated demographic group that lives in Manhattan. It has been concluded that 80% of the residents of Northeast Midtown hold a degree in higher education. It is almost twice as much as the rate of the higher education attainment of all the residents of New York State, which equals less than 50%. Therefore, it can be concluded that people living in Northeast Midtown are the most educated residents in the entire state. Secondly, it has been concluded that one third of people living in Northeast Midtown do not originally come from New York City. What brings these people to New York are better career and education prospects, so New York becomes a magnet that attracts people who bring talent, knowledge and skills. In this way, they ensure the well-being of the city that is fuelled by a constant influx of the highest-educated class which provides the economic capital for the city's development. The third factor mentioned is the political support, and it comes from the political leaders whose mission is to take care of the prosperity of New York and make strategic decisions that should bring as much profit as possible.

These three pillars: demographic, economic and political provide a fertile ground for innovation. As an outcome of this analysis, the design proposal is a community innovation centre for the exchange of information, skills and knowledge. The main goals of the project are: bottom-up initiative, cooperation and exchange, sharing, and activation. The inspiration for the design can be formulated by a quote of a writer Carol B. Thomas "Talents are meant to be shared".



Aspect 1: The relationship between research and design.

Architecture is a complex field of study that indirectly relates to multiple professions and spheres of science and art. Research process is the essence of the architectural design, as it answers the questions such as why? what for? for whom? where? These questions are like a thread that we follow during the process of designing, and which we cannot forget about while being in a constant search for the best answers. Although research is the main base point, a foundation on which the design is set, it persistently interweaves with the design, it is like an anchor that is dropped in a certain spot and around which the design floats but cannot drift away. The anchor and the design ship are inseparable in this way, otherwise the design would lose its meaning and reason. The research, on the other hand, is just left as a set of data with no bigger use. In order to achieve a successful outcome of the design process, a solid foundation is desired. Only by providing comprehensive research conclusions, is it possible. It is related to gaining a better understanding of the site or context, as well as future function and future users of the final project.

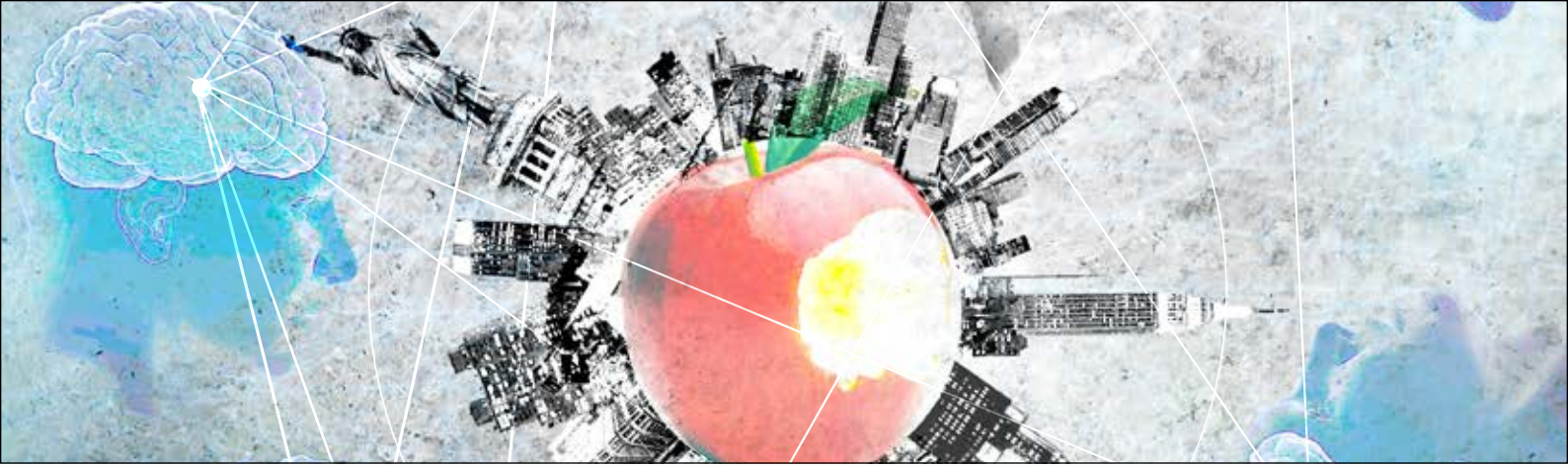
Such an understanding was gained in the Complex Projects studio, as an extensive set of facts and conclusions has been carefully carried out. This appeared to be crucial in the process of gaining an overview on the analysed site, and understanding its character, including its strengths and issues. Initially vague idea of the location has steadily been getting sharper edges and subsequently an azimuth of interest has been set and then followed. This has been a breathtaking trip, considering the mileage between the starting point and the travelled distance of experience.

The research process in the topic of Midtown Manhattan stimulated multiple senses, from digital data collection, through sketching, modelling, then also involving physical experience of smell, touch, or sight during the excursion. All these factors shaped a specific path to follow.

Once an idea, a sparkle of interest has been lit, the conducted research allowed to specify more details, such as specific function, location, target group, program, materials, special quality, or atmosphere. All these result from analytical research that directly relates to the final design. In this particular case, the research focused on the demographic data, namely on the education level, as well as on economy-oriented interests and political goals, which are giving a promising outlook for the future of the historic site of Northeast Midtown. The research ensured that the proposed design is going to have a desired function for a particular group of users, and bring the new light to the specified location. This whole process shaped the concept of the "Talent Machine".

Aspect 2: The relationship between your graduation topic and studio topic.

The topic of Complex Projects graduation studio "Midtown Manhattan" is seemingly narrow, but at the same time extremely wide. It refers to a quite precise area, but this area has much more to say than these two words. Manhattan is one of the most developed, prospering parts of the United States, most likely of the world. It is powered by the constant need to develop, improve, progress, always competing in the merciless race of pioneers that is probably never going to stop. Once it stops, the city will regress. The graduation topic "Talent Machine" indirectly refers to this phenomenon. New York needs a powerful engine to run in the race, to be efficient, and to secure its way to victory. This can be provided by some of the most talented and educated people in the world, who would be encouraged to take part in the process of sharing, using, and gaining new skills and knowledge. The proposed design is going to provide them with an inspiring place to work and exchange ideas. Talent Machine is the engine that processes these ideas that can be further developed and introduced as the final market products.



Aspect 3: Research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio.

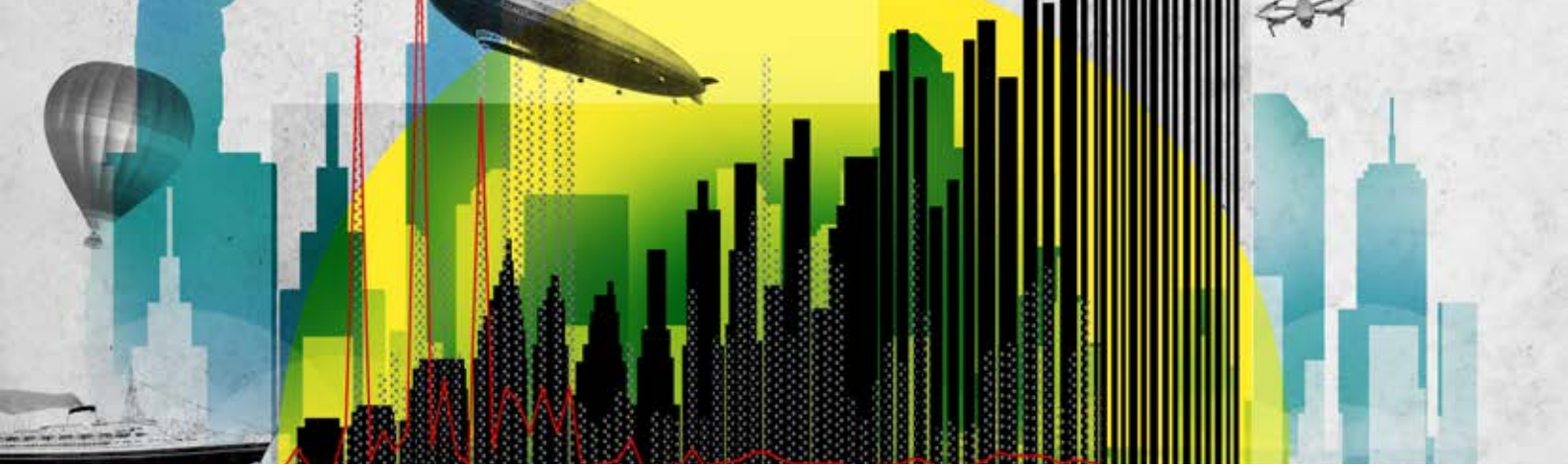
The research process consisted of multiple methods, such as sketching, data collection and processing, graph drawing, interviewing, photographing, reading, or mapping. In general, there has been a multitude of available analytical methods that have been implemented in the architectural research. However, these techniques might not always lead to a successful solution. It is a learning process that is not always followed by an optimal or unequivocally correct answer to the thesis question. Even if such risk exists, it does not mean that the whole method failed. The educative process itself matters. Natural order of things implies that the variety of methods allows to adapt the most adequate ones, which would lead to justified conclusions, or also to a possible rejection of the initial approach or hypothesis. In my individual research I tried to keep my eyes open for many directions where the chosen method may drive my exploration. By selecting a certain method and analytical tools, prior to implementing and adjusting them during the course of study, it made me shape my own optimized way of learning and observation. The research process is in a constant state of change and I expect it will keep evolving on every stage of my master thesis development. At the beginning, the research approach required obtaining a wide and precise set of data of the city of New York, and further processing it. For this reason, the primary part of the research focused mostly on the quantitative method: collecting hard data, mapping the data and operating on statistics.

The data was based on statistics of NYC Open Data published by New York City Government, and the census data provided by United States Census Bureau. The results obtained can be easily compared with a certain area of interest (Northeast Midtown Manhattan). Numerical data enables further analysis and comparison with other available sources. Afterwards, the results are mapped, which allows to present the initial numerical data in a graphical form. It is done using GIS processing software (Geographic Information

System). Also, using this sort of data has proven to be the most reliable in this type of research, as it can be conducted on a larger scale and multiple topics, where it is necessary to generate the largest amount of data in a relatively short time. In this way a generalized and objective overview on the analysed location can be obtained.

The quantitative GIS-based method appeared to be a suitable preparation for the following work on site, as it turned out rather quickly that the produced data - in order to become more reliable - also needs another source of verification. Therefore, the second part of the research had a qualitative tendency – such as conducting personal interviews during the site visit. This active way of researching appeared to be a very informative method for learning about the area on site itself. There were several key topics that the answers revolved around which regarded common and personal opinions of the studied area giving a deeper insight into addressed issues that might have been omitted during quantitative research. The interviews were documented as audio-visual recording. Afterwards, notes were taken to list the most useful information which was then carefully analyzed and compared with the research done before.

As the result, the quantitative method of statistic-based data was verified with the social qualitative method of on-site interviews. The combination of these mixed approaches allowed to build up solid foundations that were subsequently verified in their original context.



Aspect 4: Relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific relevance.

Complex Projects studio touches on various issues and aspects of the living environment finding its relations in the architectural expression. Social factor of the design has as significant impact on the ultimate project. Manhattan is a particular location; being an area driven by the power of money and the need to make profit, there is not much left for an average passer-by seeking for social- or community-oriented amenities. Northeast Midtown has been called Valley of Giants not without a reason. The area, dominated by high-rises, does not have much to offer in the terms of community or public functions.

Although the densifying concrete jungle does not seem people-friendly, it serves people's wellbeing. Ambitious and career-oriented entrepreneurs are attracted by an infinite number of possibilities – anything is possible in Midtown Manhattan. However, many might forget that it is a city consisting of individuals – everyone is self-centred following own dreams and the will to reach higher. The concept of Talent Machine is a proposal giving these highly motivated people a chance to cooperate and participate in the bigger visions, once they decide to step on the platform of exchange.

As it was mentioned in the book by Richard Florida "Cities and the Creative Class", creativity has become the principal driving force in the growth and development of cities, regions, and nations. The author states that there is a bridge between the technological innovation and the regional development, resulting in the creativity, diversity and the economic growth. It seems that New York is a perfect spot to implement that strategy, which is also supported by the available economic sources. As book follows, we read that tapping and stoking the creative furnace inside every human being is the great challenge of our time. Finding mechanisms and strategies to make this happen is the key to greater productivity, improved working and living conditions, and

more sustainable patterns of development.

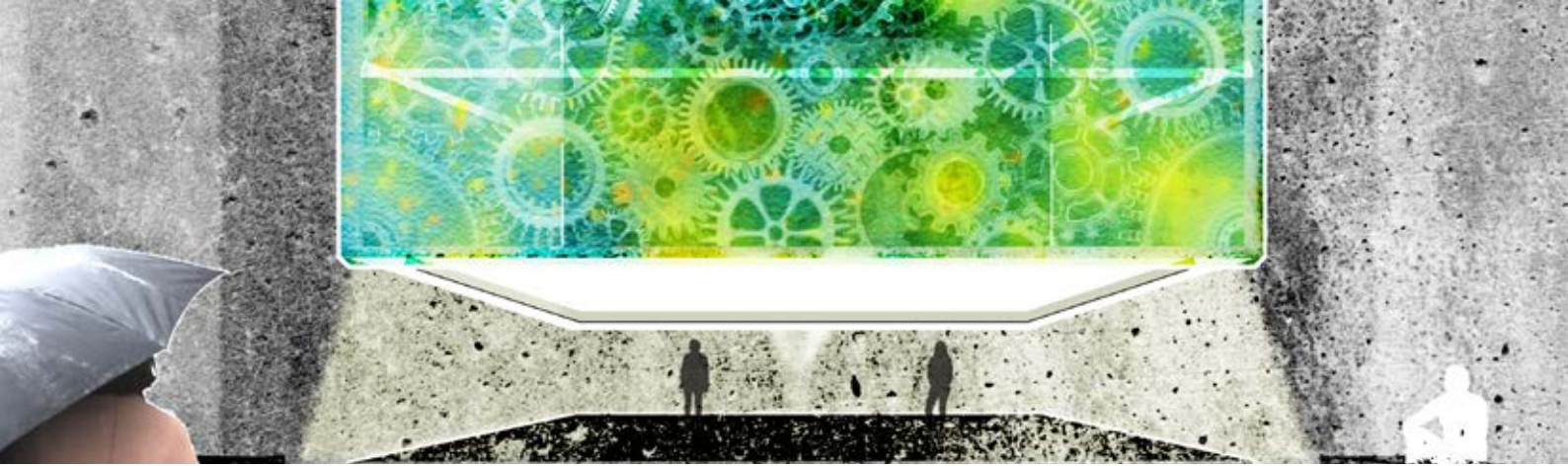
Giving the people the opportunity to develop, New York will become not only economic, but also intellectual capital, where one depends on the other. Professionals, scientists, researchers, analysts, students, or amateurs from around the world will participate in a huge spinning wheel of innovation, bringing progress both in local and global scale, spreading sparks of enlightenment in their own places of origin. In this way the project will contribute to the scientific development of the modern times. At the same time, the Valley of Giants will gain a new meaning, and chance to blossom with the new vigour.

Aspect 5: Ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered during graduation.

There have been two main dilemmas encountered during the design process.

The first of them was the context of Manhattan as an extreme race towards economic benefit, where social or moral issues seem to be minimized or even forgotten. It appeared that also the buildings do not serve people, but money. The dilemma was to find an objective answer to that, to propose a design that would circulate between these two targets, otherwise it would be rejected by the given site context. It was a challenge to come up with a project that will ensure both economic, as well as social improvement, and then turn it into a physical product. Following just the economic factor, would pose an ethical dilemma, and on the other hand, designing a purely social project, would have no *raison d'être* in the Valley of Giants.

The second ethical dilemma was still given by the context, being the architectural atmosphere of the area. The scale of the buildings is overwhelming; in Manhattan the endless race towards the sky is as competitive as the one towards money. There was a question if it is correct to engage in this race and try to reach higher, or turn your back to the surroundings and do own thing. Of course, none way seemed the right one. In this case, the hint



is in the urban and architectural context, so the proposal finds its proportions in the location and the buildings around it. Following urban pathing and implementing outside to the inside seemed the most appropriate way to follow, giving a natural continuity between the old and the new.

Conclusion

New York City has been growing on the foundation laid by three pillars: intellectual and economic capitals, as well as the political support. Highly-educated people have been the fuel for the city's constant growth, which has always been driven by the power of money. Also, government has always been supportive towards innovations and modern solutions that would keep city's well-being. Another important factor is the high value of the Value of Giants, with its unique architecture that needs to be kept and its expression enhanced.

The new design proposal is envisioned as the next piece in the chain of progress and city development. New York has always been growing on innovation, being an experimental field for introducing industrial revolutions.

The main goal of the Talent Machine design is to attract entrepreneurs, scientists, researchers, students, and engineers – in general: professionals of different fields to come and work together. This can be achieved by providing an environment oriented towards bottom-up initiative, cooperation and exchange, sharing and activation. A quote can be cited to sum up the conclusions and serve as an azimuth for the coming design process: "Money can run out but talent is forever".

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