

# THE URBAN

# ITY

# OF THE INTERNET

Course: The Urbanity of the Internet  
Arch 509-014  
Experimental Seminar

Winter 2022: Fridays, 8:30–11:30am (Hybrid)

Instructor: Cyrus Peñarroyo (penarc@umich.edu)

This seminar will study the **urbanity of the Internet**: the social, political, and material relations cultivated by networked technologies.

Do the words “city” and “territory” sufficiently describe the current circumstances of urban life? Traditionally, cities have relied on their territories for protection and sustenance, and one tends to heighten the visibility of the other – a city can become knowable when framed by a territory, and vice versa. But if transportation and telecommunication infrastructures continue to reformat the spaces of global capitalism, effectively urbanizing the entire world, “city” and “territory” have arguably become empty signifiers. In other words, the city/territory–town/country–urban/rural binaries imply the legible separation of discrete categories of settlement, but the vast transnational webs that dominate our existence call into question the perceived division between these categories. Where do cities *end* and territories *begin*? What happens when territories *become* cities, or margins *become* centers? In the age of the Internet, what is *not* urban?

The aim of this course will be to understand how the Internet is shaping alternative ways of life, urbanisms that interweave familiar technologies of the public sphere with social formations occurring online. Throughout the semester, participants will consult multiple domains of knowledge – including media studies, queer theory, urban sociology, and political science – to reevaluate architecture’s agency in a world of ubiquitous connectivity. This seminar will involve reading discussions in the first half and multimedia presentations by students in the second half. Participants are invited to contribute additional materials to the syllabus.

This course is open to undergraduate and graduate students in all departments, and there are no prerequisites. Participants need only bring their willingness to listen, engage, and share.