

Image: Major fire at the data center cluster OHV in Strasbourg, France, on March 10, 2021

THE INTERNET IS HERE

Course Title: **The Internet is Here**
Arch 509 – Experimental Seminar
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We know the internet is here...*but where is it exactly?* Does it matter that this influential technology significantly affects the world that we inhabit, yet its operative parts remain unnoticeable to most of us? How do the sociopolitical chasms and ecological crises enabled by the internet factor into the work of architects striving to create more just environments?

In this course, we will examine how the digital makes its mark on physical space in order to better understand the challenges that arise when we try to communicate and connect with one another. Paying attention to the location of networked devices could help us understand whose desires are really being met and what social bonds are kept intact. Once we can recognize traces of the internet in our surroundings, then we may feel empowered to ask other important questions, like “Who is responsible for taking care of this hardware?” or “How does all of this stuff impact the environment?” at which point other actors reveal themselves to be enrolled in the social and ecological projects of the web. Questioning the design of this infrastructure could help us stretch our imaginations to match the transformative potential of computing.

This seminar will begin by studying the physical spaces, buildings, and contexts where the internet lives. These include data centers, libraries, corporate campuses, cybercafes, carrier hotels, undersea cables, and rooftops, among others. Our aim will be to situate the internet and articulate the ways it continually reformats how we live together. After studying the social formations enabled by these spatial technologies, the remainder of the course will be more projective as students are asked to reimagine how the internet entangles us with our surroundings. Lectures, reading discussions, workshops, and multimedia presentations will occur throughout the semester to broaden our perspectives and support our efforts.

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.