Violet Whitney
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Columbia University

Friday, November 15th
Newell-Simon Hall, 1305
1:30-2:30pm
Host: Paul Pangaro

City Complex

Cities have always been complex, but in recent years, technology has inadvertently changed the nature of that complexity. Websites like Yelp and Airbnb direct people to preferred restaurants or reprogram homes into vacation rentals, resulting in new emergent behaviors. Autonomous vehicles influence rhythmic patterns as populations head to and from work. New policies for e-commerce create economic impacts across districts. These immaterial dimensions have huge implications for designers, but they can be the most difficult to grasp.

We’ll discuss new technologies and methods for exploring and visualizing urban complexity through these many systems and invisible dimensions. Urban planning simulation, economic modeling, traffic simulation, operations research, and agent-based modeling comprise the new tools. Even more critically, we’ll discuss how open simulation tools can extend agency to people outside of a disciplinary expertise.

Violet Whitney is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation where she teaches urban data analytics and physical computing. At Sidewalk Labs she leads the Generative Design product at Sidewalk Labs as a Product Manager. There she’s developing tools to facilitate collective decision making with expert and non-experts alike. Prior to joining Sidewalk, Violet created a humanitarian mapping project that geolocates civilian journalist YouTube videos for the Center for Spatial Research; led research and development of interactive and immersive environments at SOFTlab; and developed building cost benefit analysis tools as a LEED Specialist at SmithGroupJJR.

Violet holds a BSD in Architecture from Arizona State University and an MArch from Columbia University. Originally from Los Alamos, New Mexico, she enjoys all things society, technology, and the built environment.

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