

Hospitality

The Nomadic Alternative



Atelier Lacaille-Ayoub

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Dear students,

Next semester, the Atelier will continue working on the topic of Hospitality with a specific focus on nomadic architecture.

Switzerland has ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention of February 1995 for the Protection of the nomads travelling within its borders. Nevertheless, just a few kilometers from the school, in Bellinzona, as in the other cities in Switzerland (Bern, Basel, Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne...), nomads do not fully enjoy the right to housing. Several thousand of them are either consigned to reside in areas called "camps" administered by the police, or alternatively given the lack of space, to camp illegally. Rejection by pushback, confinement behind fences, police patrols, movement control by automatic barriers, permanent video surveillance, adjacent to motorways and polluted sites, lack of sanitation, no access to water and electricity: all these devices enforce territorial strategies of social discrimination and racism.

By imposing an arbitrary antagonism between the sedentary and the nomad worlds, the modern West has almost eradicated the nomadic way of life. Yet this modern dualism is not universal. Elsewhere, other approaches have not found it necessary to make this disjuncture. It is a historical error to consider that architecture has its origins only in the sedentary world. Architecture is also rooted in the nomadic world. For Gottfried Semper, for instance, the origin of architecture is the "nomadic Assyrian tent". For Siegfried Giedion, one of the "beginnings of Architecture" is the earliest Egyptian architecture which he links to nomadic origins. The list goes on.

It's a challenge to us as architects. What if the nomadic worlds were able to challenge and propose an alternative to our ways of inhabiting? On the margins of the sedentary world, against the privatization of land and the financialization of housing, rather than monopolizing resources and dominating the environment, nomads ignore the property of land, draw an environment in which the relationships between things are more important than the things themselves and question radically what it supposes to make one's home. Within this relational milieu, architecture is much more than a physical object. It can be defined as an experience, comprising movements, passages, liberties and interlinking all that exists, namely the people and the place.

Such an architectural project is not possible without inhabitants. Doing *with*, means reconsidering the power relationships within the architectural project. The architect is no longer the designer of objects that come out of a given program, but the guarantor of a social process required for the emergence of an inhabited environment. Such a refoundation would allow architecture to revive the political project that it seems to have abandoned.

The work process, imagined as a continuous drift, will take us to several stopping places for nomads in Switzerland, learning *with* their inhabitants. From these sites, the project will be carried out both individually and collectively. The study trip (26-29.09) will take us in the city of Alba in the Piedmont, in the path of the most important architectural experience for a nomadic alternative. There, in 1956, the situationist artist Constant Nieuwenhuys, after visiting a nomadic camp that still exists today, started to work on "a camp for nomads on a planetary scale", his revolutionary *New Babylon* project.

You are kindly invited to join us into this journey,

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