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PAD

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EDITORIAL #28

Dwelling on the Move

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How long does a house last? In an era characterized by a constant evolution of relations and societal norms, the essence of dwelling undergoes a profound transformation. Permanence and stability have defined our dwelling culture for centuries, yet architecture has always incorporated elements of lightness, flexibility, nomadism and mobility. This is more than ever the case today. The concept of mobile spaces worldwide revolves around accommodating specific needs through relocation, enabling the comparison and comprehension of how various environments impact society and shape unique demands among their inhabitants.

Moving architectures are among the earliest human-made artefacts, predating vehicles, and they maintain a persistent relevance (Kronenburg, 2013). Historical examples of mobile architectures depict a world not bound to place but characterized by itinerant and nomadic responses to permanence (Siegal, 2002). Nomadic cultures moved for various reasons, including locating migrant food sources, adapting to changing climate conditions, trading goods, seeking communal protection, discovering new cultures, and exploring the unknown. With the advent of the information age and the widespread connectivity technology, a new type of high-tech traveling lifestyle has become possible, giving rise to digital nomadism culture (Broek et al., 2023).

Among these globally dispersed individuals, many face similar challenges in their search for shelters that are durable, lightweight, flexible, self-sufficient, and ultimately transportable

From *Archigram the Book*: "Seaside Bubbles, Leisure Study", Ron Herron, Archigram 1966 (Courtesy Archigram Archives).

by low-tech means. In the late 1990s, with the publication of Digital Nomads by Makimoto and Manners (1997), the vision of a globalized world with blurring distinctions between leisure-work-home-travel started to get real. However, it is only after the pandemic that this phenomenon became the symbol of the contemporary liquid society in which individuals are continuously "on the move", as Andrea Branzi already formalized. Traditional notions of permanence give way to a fluid, adaptable concept of living and working. Over the past few years, trends related to dwelling on the move have been on the rise, also triggered by the new challenges and opportunities highlighted by the pandemic. In the yachting sector, reports on chartering show a 12% increase in the number of weeks sold for the last two years compared to the same period before COVID-19. The recreational vehicle sector has experienced strong growth, and forecasts envision further improvement in the coming years (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). Even the world of camping is experiencing noticeable expansion. Within the next four years, its market is projected to have an annual growth rate of 7.28% (Statista, 2024).

Pneumatic, tensile, kinetic, wheeled, and floating structures are shaping the development of the new nomadism. They provide growing opportunities for architects, designers and artists who draw inspiration not only from the ancient cultures of Bedouins, Tuareg, and Gypsies but also from the experiences of Glenn Curtiss' Aerocar Land Yacht, Richard Buckminster Fuller's inflatable structures, Archigram's provocative visions (Herwig, 2005), and Studio-Orta speculative Refuge Wear and Body Architecture (Siegal, 2008).

However, dwelling on the move could be then represented not merely in terms of movable structures, but rather as a way of inhabiting a specific locus at a specific time and reflecting the personal identity and the community relationships.

Issue #28 of PAD, therefore, gathers critical reflections, studies, and field research that explore both the physical aspect of mobile living spaces as well as broader social and cultural meanings, with a focus on how architecture and products can shape the experience of temporary dwelling. Specifically, the contributions are organised into three thematic strands, each aiming to critically dissect the multilayered dimensions of contemporary flexible dwelling. These thematic areas are not conceived as discrete compartments, but rather as interconnected lenses through which to interpret the complex intersections between spatial temporariness, cultural narratives, and technological foresight.

The first section, "Nomadism and Cultural Identities", explores the shifting notion of home in a mobile and fluid society. Here, the contributions investigate the cultural, anthropological, and symbolic implications of nomadism – both historical and contemporary – on individual and collective identity. By tracing the genealogy of mobile spaces and their evolving meanings, the selected studies examine how migratory living patterns reshape the semantics of domesticity, belonging, and territoriality. Key concepts such as cultural identity, nomadism, and the home emerge as central tools for interpreting how contemporary societies negotiate permanence and movement.

The second section, “Beyond Physical Spaces”, shifts the focus from traditional physical environments to hybrid and micro-configured habitats. This cluster encompasses research on analogue and virtual dwelling practices, examining how digital nomadism, extreme environments, and immersive technologies challenge the very boundaries of architectural space. From inhabitable furniture systems to speculative virtual ecologies, the contributions reveal how dwelling is increasingly enacted through adaptable interfaces, both material and immaterial.
These reflections raise questions about the nature of habitability itself, as design extends into dimensions once considered peripheral or intangible.

Finally, the third section, “Resilience and Sustainability”, investigates how technological innovation and ecological thinking converge in shaping future-oriented mobile architectures. The articles in this section propose strategies for sustainable and resilient design practices that address environmental concerns while maintaining adaptability and circularity.

Through case studies and theoretical frameworks, themes such as nearly-zero energy buildings, biomaterials, additive manufacturing, and life cycle design are discussed as enablers of more conscious, flexible, and ecologically integrated modes of temporary living.

Together, these three sections frame the evolving landscape of mobile dwelling as a critical paradigm shift, one that redefines the relationship to space, identity, and the environment.

Nomadism and Cultural Identities

The first section gathers reflections on the relationship between mobility and identity, exploring how the notion of home evolves within the context of nomadic practices, historical, digital, and spatial. The selected contributions examine how cultural identity, memory and domesticity are reshaped when permanence gives way to movement. Together, these contributions reflect on how nomadic life reshapes the concept of dwelling, not as a permanent structure but as a mobile condition rooted in identity, culture, and personal choice.

In *Home in the Context of Contemporary Nomadism*, Pedro Fonseca Jorg addresses the condition of identity in the absence of a fixed spatial reference. The paper focuses on the tension between the need for impermanence and the human tendency to express the self through space, objects, and atmosphere. Departing from the immaterial detachment of digital nomadism, the article proposes a methodology for defining a sensory and affective home for mobile individuals through spatial layouts, adaptable furniture, and dematerialised design strategies.

Aura Escobar Padilla and Addie Payne Morgan, in *From Wandering Tribes to Digital Villages: The Evolution of Nomadic Living*, retrace the genealogy of nomadism from early migratory cultures to contemporary digital communities. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods – including interviews, ethnographic analysis, and survey data – the study reflects on how autonomy, belonging, and continuity operate across different forms of nomadic life.

The paper questions whether current mobile practices mark a rupture with or a continuation of traditional modes of inhabiting in motion.

The article *Floating Architectures: Nomadism Aboard a Boat with the Convergence of Living/Working Spaces and Relationships in a Fluid Society* by Mariateresa Campolongo and Massimo Musio Sale investigates the sailing boat as a mobile domestic space. The research reflects on how life aboard merges private and professional dimensions into a single, flexible environment. The boat becomes a spatial device for navigating a society where fixed boundaries – between home and work, stability and movement – are increasingly blurred.

Beyond Physical Spaces

The contributions in this section open the question of what it means to inhabit when the physical substrate is no longer a given, when space is carried, simulated, or improvised. Dwelling becomes a condition defined less by form than by action, intention, and context.

In *Grown, Sewn, Blown, Hewn: Dwellings for New Extremes*, Barbara Imhof draws from the trans-terrestrial experience of orbital habitats to reconsider Earth-based dwelling. Using the International Space Station as both a metaphor and case study, the paper develops the City As A Spaceship (CAAS) framework to discuss design principles, such as impermanence, scalability, and transportability, across vulnerable urban and coastal conditions. Drawing from resilience theory and analogous habitats, the research proposes a mul-

ti-scalar strategy for adaptive living in extreme environments shaped by climate, infrastructure, and mobility.

In *Design for New Paradigms of Sustainable Living and Dwelling: More Than a Hammock*, Maria Dolores Morelli, Benedetta Terenzi, and Giovanna Binetti propose a pedagogical-experimental approach to minimal, mobile artifacts as tools for sustainability and social regeneration.
Originating from the Abito Mediterraneo project, the work invites reflection on objects such as hammocks as ecological devices – made of reused materials, lightweight and demountable – that reframe rest, leisure, and presence to planetary care. These micro-dwellings become expressions of responsible design at the intersection of aesthetic gesture and civic engagement.

Laura Giraldi, in *Design, Technology, and Cultural Expressions in Contemporary and Future Forms of Nomadic Living*, explores how immersive technologies extend and abstract the spatial condition of dwelling. Anchored in a historical review of mobile architecture, the paper discusses how digital and virtual environments – ranging from AR and VR to platforms like Second Life – reshape the domestic sphere. Case studies highlight how such technologies can support new forms of presence, adaptability, and continuity in the experience of nomadic living, where the boundary between real and virtual dissolves.

Resilience and Sustainability

This section focuses on the convergence of mobility and environmental responsibility, exploring how design disci-

plines engage with ecological imperatives under conditions of impermanence. Each contribution addresses the challenge of aligning transience with durability, proposing models in which resilience and sustainability become structural elements of dwelling. Collectively, these contributions reframe resilience not as a reactive posture but as a design mandate – embedding durability within impermanence and transforming mobility into a terrain for sustainable innovation.

In *Furniture for a Society in Motion: Product and Service Solutions that Meet Temporality and Circularity Logics*, Mattia Italia and Xue Pei examine the role of furniture as both functional and symbolic infrastructure in mobile living contexts. Through a comparative study of case-based design and business models, the research distinguishes between hard and soft solutions - products that are physically adaptable and services that facilitate circulation and reuse. Circular strategies emerge not as technical add-ons but as integrated design logics that respond to shifting patterns of habitation, proposing a system in which flexibility, sustainability, and affective continuity coexist.

In *Amphibious Housing Modules: Sustainable nZEB Solutions for Climate Adaptation*, Irene Fiesoli, Gabriele Pontillo, and Giuseppe Lotti present a prototype designed for liminal geographies – urbanized areas facing increasing hydrological stress. Drawing from a site-specific case in the Lake Massaciuccoli area, the project develops modular, amphibious units combining biomaterials, digital infrastructure, and energy-efficient systems to meet the nearly Zero Energy Building

(nZEB) standard. By emphasizing reversibility, mobility, and ecosystem integration, the model suggests a habitat not in opposition to environmental instability but shaped by it.

Technology-Driven Approaches for Environmental Responsibility by Massimo Piccioni and Andrea Ratti explores additive manufacturing (AM) as an enabling technology for sustainable mobile living. Focusing on its capacity to support waste-minimized, on-demand production, the study reviews AM-based design in emergency, recreational, and maritime contexts. A case from the PNRR-funded MICS project is presented to demonstrate its application in yacht design, with broader implications for a design practice that operates at the intersection of adaptability and ecological stewardship.

Finally, *Towards a Life Cycle Design Framework in Floating Spaces: Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Yacht Design* by Ludovico Ruggiero and Arianna Bionda addresses the environmental cost of luxury mobility. The research outlines the integration of Life Cycle Design (LCD) methods into yacht development, identifying systemic gaps and proposing tailored strategies for floating architectures. Positioned within an industrial PhD framework, the study advances a methodology where temporality does not exempt responsibility but necessitates deeper attention to the total environmental footprint of mobile living.

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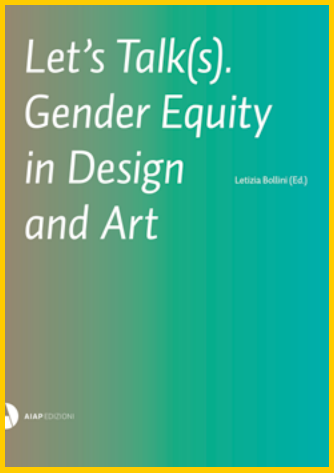

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