

Urban Nomads and Nomadic Architecture: Exploring Alternative Ways of Living in the Contemporary City

The theme of the studio // Site location and description

A halfway city, a place on its way to shed its suburban skin, an in between space, not city nor suburb.1 Hoboken is forming its own micro-centre away from the historical centre of the big city it is attached to, Antwerp. This new centre is feeling-wise quite separate from the city, but distance-wise very close. With a vibrant cultural island in the middle of it, encapsulated within social and middle-class housing, the area has a unique character, like a collage. This cultural island, called the Blikfabriek, is the unique piece of the collage that caught my attention.

The Blikfabriek is a type of place that lies close to my heart. I feel comfortable there, as if I have been there before in another life. The chaos is soothing, as well as freeing, and gives a feeling of fitting in no matter your background or privileges. As long as you open yourself up to the place, the place will open itself up to you. It really is like the garden that the Material Garden group spoke about in their presentation; “when you care deeply for a garden, the garden will care for you in return”.

Personal fascinations

One of the first advisory quotes I remember hearing in this year’s studio is “Don’t be afraid to get lost.” This quote has stuck by me for several reasons, one of them being that i already felt lost in the moment itself. Getting more lost didnt seem like it would be any good, but getting less lost didn’t seem like an option. So I have just stayed lost, in multiple senses of the word. Sometimes mentally, sometimes emotionally. I have even gotten physically lost on research quests hoping to find some kind of answer to a question i did not even have yet.

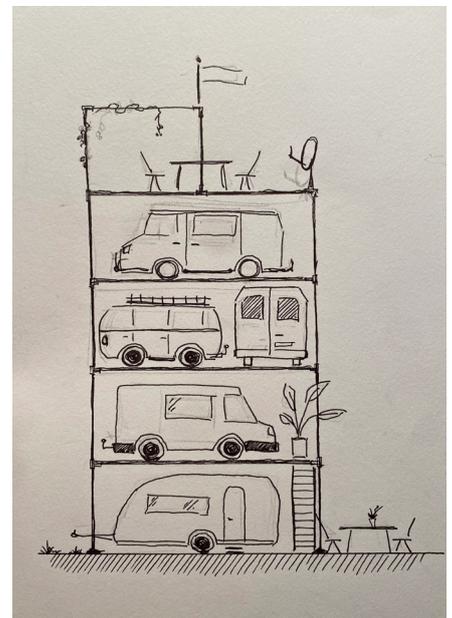
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For this research, I want to explore the lifestyle and architectural needs of Urban Nomads, individuals who reject traditional notions of home in favor of mobility and minimalism. As cities evolve and the demand for affordable, flexible living spaces grows, Urban Nomads offer a lens through which to look at the future of urban design. I want to focus on nomadic architecture—structures designed for mobility and adaptability—and explores alternative living models such as tiny houses and co-housing. These communities value sustainability, flexibility, and social connection, presenting new challenges and opportunities for architects and urban planners.

The primary objective of this research is to understand how nomadic living redefines the concept of home and how architectural design can support these lifestyles within the urban environment. Key research questions include:

- How do Urban Nomads challenge conventional urban living?
- What architectural strategies can support nomadic lifestyles?
- What role do tiny houses and co-housing play in urban contexts?
- What are the psychological and social implications of constant movement and how do nomads create a sense of belonging in fluid living arrangements ?

My interest lies in designing spaces that reflect the shifting needs of



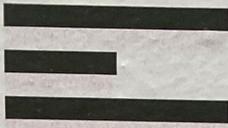
contemporary urban dwellers. I am particularly drawn to how alternative living models address challenges like housing affordability and environmental sustainability, while also fostering community. With the increasing popularity of nomadic lifestyles, we can reconsider how space is designed and how these spaces interact with the urban fabric.

My goal is to explore how flexible, adaptive design can better accommodate the growing population of urban nomads.

Louis Kahn's books on shelters and tiny homes, can be a theoretical foundation for understanding mobile and temporary architecture.

Case studies of tiny homes, co-housing, and other nomadic dwellings will be analyzed to identify design strategies that cater to mobility. Interviews with Urban Nomads and architects will provide insight into their lived experiences and design needs. I will try to identify underutilized urban spaces that could be adapted for temporary or nomadic living. Finally, I want to develop conceptual design proposals that integrate these findings, offering innovative architectural solutions that address mobility, sustainability, and social interaction in the city.

With this research, I want to contribute to a better understanding of how nomadic architecture can offer flexible, sustainable solutions to contemporary housing issues. By exploring the mindsets and spatial needs of Urban Nomads, the research will inform new design strategies that promote adaptable, inclusive, and sustainable urban living environments.



Kunstkaai

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URBAN NOMADS

— *(un)Plug & Play / select play to create*

Urban Nomad? Wat is dat? 'Oost west, thuis best' klinkt bekend in onze oren. Het geldt voor velen onder ons maar niet iedereen denkt er op dezelfde manier over.

Urban Nomads zien het anders. Voor hen is de wereld hun thuis. De steden staan centraal. Ze trekken van stad naar stad en elke keer willen ze de ziel van de stad ontdekken. Ze zien een stad als een plek van verbinding, een plek waar mensen elkaar vinden. Dat plezier en spel enkel voor kinderen is, daar zijn ze het niet mee eens. Spel krijgt voor hen een duidelijke plek in de stadsruimte.

Urban Nomads vinden dat plezier en spel niet enkel mensen onderling verbindt maar dat het ook de mens met de stad verbindt. Logisch want plezier en spel zijn menselijke behoeften. Ze zijn onmisbaar voor de lichamelijke, mentale en spirituele gezondheid van de bewoners. Het is belangrijk dat iedereen zich zorgeloos kan uitleven en zich kan uiten op zijn of haar eigen manier. Hoeveel plek plezier en spel in de ruimte inneemt, hoe kleiner de woonplaats is. Tiny houses en co-housing passen dus perfect bij hen.

Urban Nomads gaan op zoek naar ruimtes met verschillende functies, onderbenutte ruimte of 'restruimte' in de stad. De ruimte wordt herdacht en experimenteel ingevuld vaak met een duurzame kijk op het leven en de stad. Deze invulling is voorlopig en tijdelijk. Na de nodige bijsturing krijgt het steeds een nieuwe vorm en dan trekken ze verder, naar de volgende plek en stad om deze te verbeteren. Zo reizen ze de wereld rond en maken ze de wereld meer rond.