

Towards a nomadic theory of architecture

Shelter, dwelling, and their alternatives in the architecture of homelessness

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Introduction

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. *Albert Einstein*

This paper is about home and homelessness. Of the many ways I could approach these terms I find the philosophical and the architectural to be the most rewarding. Home raises questions of existence and being along with problems of physical comfort and social belonging; the built environment, a stable but always changing part of the human condition, is particularly suited to drawing out discussions along these lines. Homelessness, which is usually taken to mean being without a house, suggests anxiety and dread – cornerstones of de-centered modern life. Similarly, home means having a center to one's world as well as a roof over one's head.

The most pervasive current architectural discourses involving home and homelessness imply either a rationality that suggests facile economic solutions (which never seem to materialize) or an individual Dasein (human Being) that serves as a convenient common point of reference but always obscures how any particular Dasein *comes to be*. These two ubiquitous discussions – the discourse of shelter and the discourse of dwelling – stem, respectively, from early twentieth century Modernism and the culture- and tradition- based understanding of the practice of building. The *problems* posed by these discourses – problems of home – cannot be fully articulated without an understanding of the genesis of the individual or society that occurs along with these discourses. This paper will draw out the assumptions and implied conclusions of the discourses of shelter and dwelling in order to point to a discourse that is able to discuss how worlds and homes are *generated from an aggregation of social forces*. Following the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, I will call this the nomadic theory of architecture.¹

The process of putting this theory together led me to an “architecture” outside the dictates of planning and the questions of dwelling. I will discuss Seattle's Tent Cities as an example of this approach to the architecture of home. The Tent City movement, with its glaring problems and contradictions, exemplifies the architecture of the nomad. By slipping outside of the authoritarian State apparatus, the Tent City movement dissolves the stable categories of shelter and

¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*.

dwelling. This is a trait that Deleuze and Guattari associate with the nomad.² Nomadic architecture turns out to be an *affective* alternative to an untenable architecture of stability and permanence, either in the form of an individual Dasein (as in the case of dwelling) or of a rational system (as in the case of shelter). It uses the pre-given world as its foundation but also as an ever-changing playground.

The rationale for discussing the discourses of shelter, dwelling, and the nomad separately emerges from the different set of assumptions and approaches to architecture that each of these terms conjure up. The historical significance of the debate evoked by the separation of “shelter” and “dwelling,” in particular, has had a lasting impact on architectural theory. Another factor has been the early histories of the Modern movement, such as those of Sigfried Giedion and Nikolaus Pevsner, which constructed a unified Modern movement centered on transparent rationalism; these must be paired with the subsequent critiques, such as those of Giorgio Ciucci and Sarah Goldhagen, which have dismantled the previously unitary view.³ Together these present an acute awareness of how history is constructed, problems are identified, and solutions are found. The construction and destruction of the unified discourse of the Modern movement parallels the development of the discourse of shelter.

A similar rise and fall has occurred in the discourse of dwelling. The term, in its current architectural usage, derives mainly from Heidegger's “Building Dwelling Thinking,” first delivered as a lecture in 1951. Heidegger's philosophical sympathy with fascism – which is contained deep within the concept of dwelling – means that the term can hardly be used without conjuring images of pitched-roofed houses in the *Heimat* style. Heinrich Tessenow faced no such problems writing in 1916; the cultural climate in Germany seems to have been very receptive to the discourse of dwelling.

2 Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine*.

3 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers Of Modern Design From William Morris To Walter Gropius*. Giorgio Ciucci, “The Invention of the Modern Movement” in *Oppositions* 24, Spring 1981. Sarah Goldhagen, “Coda: Reconceptualizing the Modern,” in *Anxious Modernisms*.

Dwelling: The Cultural Foundation of Architecture

Nowadays, if we build ourselves a house or refurbish an apartment, indeed if we make a serious effort at anything at all that is to have a lasting value, we find it strangely difficult; we prevaricate, nothing seems quite right; we know and love almost everything; the very old as well as the very new; the fat as well as the thin, and so we vacillate.⁴

This is how Heinrich Tessenow began *Housebuilding and Such Things* (1916), a work only translated into English in 1989 by Walter Jessen and published in *9H: On Rigor*. Its weak approach to Modernism will serve as an alternative to the strong, rational approach of the *La Sarraz Declaration*, which will represent the discourse of shelter in a subsequent chapter. Tessenow's articulation of the discourse of dwelling represents one response to the cultural homelessness that loomed over Germany and Europe in the early twentieth century. Tessenow's response was to reorient the German practice of building along the lines of a living tradition and towards a monumental object-type (the single-family dwelling) (fig. 1).

Tessenow begins *Housebuilding and Such Things* at ground level, laying foundations – a constant preoccupation of the discourse of dwelling. It is in the introduction to his discussion that Tessenow advances the most developed theory of the text (although it is given without insistence) and also where his links to the German Volk movement are most explicit. These links are certainly not simply rhetorical; later in the text it become clear that Tessenow's concept of dwelling presupposes a deference to “ignorance” and “common sense,” which includes racism and nationalism.

Continuing from the opening paragraph of the text given above:

To judge from the vast inventory of contemporary life and work with some accuracy in order to improve it, especially in the area of our crafts, such as house-building, we need to be able to distinguish between three periods of time, always occurring in the same order. First of all there is the period of the manifold, of to-ing and fro-ing, of ups and does, of confusion [...]⁵

In this manner, Tessenow breaks time into three

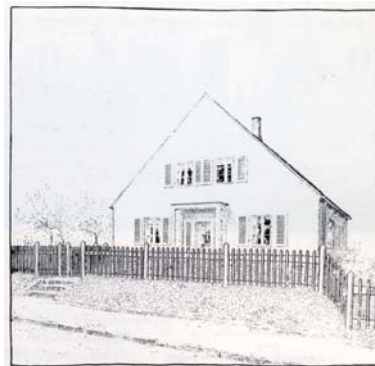


Figure 1
Sketch of house, 1911-1914

4 Heinrich Tessenow, *Housebuilding and Such Things*, page 9.

5 Ibid.

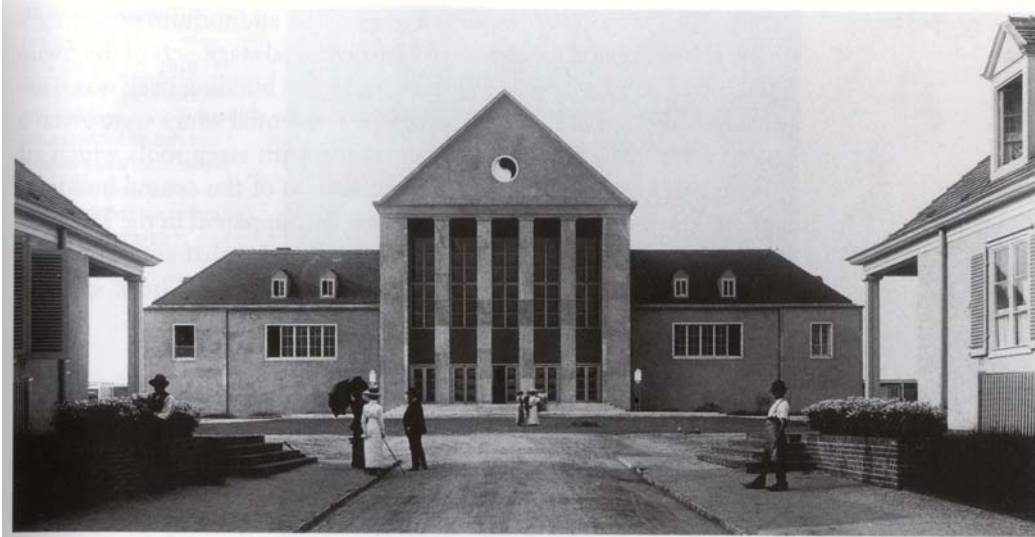


Figure 2
Dalcroze Institute, 1911-
1912, Hellerau

eras: the childish, the youthful, and the mature (which for him means also the “artistic”). We, he says, have been in the childish phase for the last several decades, moving rapidly between interests, working excitedly on whatever comes to mind. Tessenow is speaking, of course, of the cultural confusion accompanying the modernization of Germany. He is addressing German men, implicitly accepting an unspoken vernacular set of cultural, racial, and gender boundaries. Tessenow speaks of “our” race: “We are either a race that has been divinely inspired by God or one that deserves much pity.” He is assuming that what he says is culturally understandable; it will only make sense to a certain audience. His foundation is a specific culture at a specific place and time. These are all hallmarks of the discourse of dwelling.

Tessenow continues his theoretical framework:

We have a high regard for childish qualities and so we have a high regard for the period which has just gone. But we cannot stop ourselves from growing older. If nothing else, our current patriotic struggle vividly shows us that we are stepping out of a period of childishness. We are filled with high ideals, with great courage, and with genuine youthful power.⁶

Here we see that Tessenow's grounding is not neutral or universal; his *place* is a *nation* and the world he calls forth has a cultural center that actively reinforces traditional boundaries. Tessenow was, as Grassi has shown, a critic of the National

6 Ibid.

Socialist party.⁷ However, his leaning and style were certainly “proto-fascist,” a sort of creeping fascism, as K. Michael Hays has shown.⁸

Tessenow was, after all, Albert Speer's teacher, necessitating a certain amount of sympathy with grandiosity. What Tessenow shares with the



Figure 3
Houses designed for the Garden City of Hohenlisa, 1911-1914

fascists is the striving for a return to cultural origins. His simultaneously classical and Biedermeier style, so evident in his design for the Dalcroze Institute at Hellerau (fig.2), as well as his preference for a small town and peasant environment (fig. 3), belie his longing for a cultural homecoming to an “authentic” German way of life. The discourse of dwelling is not retrogressive nor Utopian, and it is certainly wary of so-called progress. Tessenow's idea of development makes more sense as growth than as rational unfolding: the movement from the childish to the youthful to the mature are a natural occurrence in a culture's life.

While Tessenow's theory certainly plays well into authoritarian movements, Tessenow is anything but insistent on his theory; *architecture* (or, as he prefers, building) is his main concern. He posits a developmental framework for culture that relates the present with the past and the future, but neither the future nor the past are really what interest him. The political forces implied by the progression of history outlined in the introduction do not enter into his following discussion of architecture. As with many other topics and arguments throughout the text, Tessenow lets his historical framework drop. He is really interested in what *builders* are to do *now*, an eminently practical concern.

Tessenow interprets the contemporary period as one in which “strong industry” must be developed. “Industry” (Gewerb) is here meant to signify craftwork, mass-production, and the domain of production in general. Industry will be the foundation of youthful building: “today we need to form a broad, strong foundation, to bear our common work so that it can develop into something great and tall.” Work should here be understood as separate from labor; Tessenow is

7 Giorgio Grassi, “Architecture as Craft,” in *9H: On Rigor*, page 39.

8 Michael Hays, “Tessenow's architecture as national allegory: critique of capitalism or protofascism?” in *9H: On Rigor*.

referring to building (production) rather than the maintenance of life (reproduction). Work, as Heidegger and Arendt have articulated, brings forth a world of shared understanding (through thinking):

The reification which occurs in writing something down, painting an image, modeling a figure, or composing a melody is of course related to the through which preceded it, but what actually makes the thought a reality and fabricates things out of thought is the same workmanship which, through the primordial instrument of human hands, builds the other durable things of the human artifice.⁹



Figure 4
Worker's single family detached house, Hellerau, 1911

This *work* that also creates *thought* is precisely what Tessenow sees as lacking in the contemporary "primitive" state of German culture: "the best we could do with a house would be to make a rather careful box," not a work of art that presumes a "common understanding" (fig. 4).

The sketches and elevations of houses Tessenow includes in his text are just that: careful boxes arranged in neat, simple rows (fig. 5). Tessenow is concerned in *Housebuilding and Such Things*, as its title suggests, almost entirely with house building. His disposition towards common middle-class buildings is endemic to the discourse of dwelling. Dwelling is a concern of the middle-class, the common man in the age of industry. As Tessenow states, "industrial prosperity demands strong, healthy middle-class attitudes." By concerning himself with the middle-class, Tessenow locates the locus of authority in German culture. The rational/bureaucratic "superstructure" that is a hallmark of Modernism is nowhere to be found; instead, Tessenow occupies himself with the foundation of society, the middle-class. Tessenow's uncomplicated view of social mechanics is to some extent evidence of nostalgia for a past, simpler way of life when small towns presumably governed themselves. However, Tessenow seeks legitimacy from the present; he implies that middle-class ignorance and middle-class bliss are natural products of a healthy culture and a living tradition. Implied is the romantic view that culture is "natural" and best left unexamined. Dwelling, a cultural phenomenon, is thus not something that needs to be tinkered with but can be taken as an already-

9 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, page 169.

present foundation for building that needs only be cultivated as the “precondition necessary for [architecture's] growth.”

Tessenow's focus on the present explains why he does not condemn modernization in general or even technical methods or modern materials, as many of his reactionary contemporaries had done. However,

We certainly value the simple technical form overwhelmingly for the economic values it nurtures in us. We can value technical form very highly, yet still not want to have water pipes mounted visibly on the walls of our rooms, and we feel similarly on thousands of issues. The form of [technical objects] is not a matter of total indifference to us, but that is not saying much.¹⁰

Because “technology decries all form” and is thus not visibly pleasing, tradition is essential to building. Tradition alone supplies *form* to architecture. What Tessenow seems to counterpoise to the rational force behind modernization, which can, for him, only provide the *means* of production, is the *ends* of the building process: cultural orientation. “Our largest and most significant task is to orient ourselves.” This concept is at the very heart of dwelling. Tessenow's idea of cultural orientation provides a *justification* of the present era that is seen to be lacking in the “childish” era, in which cultural production jumps from project to project. Tessenow's myth of cultural progress is a story of finding a purpose for production.

Tessenow's answer to the question of how we are to orient ourselves in the modern world of strong industry relies on mankind's ability to assimilate new forms. We will learn to appreciate *technical* form, the form of machines, through the use of “unitary forms.” Tessenow states that only when technology comes to be understood beyond the realm of the design of prototypes for mass production - in other words, only when uniform products are recognized by the common man as *typical* – will German culture be able to orient itself in the modern age. Dwelling depends on a form of production – “industry,” whether modern or not – that has become *natural* to a culture.

Tessenow posits *appropriateness* – a cultural construct – as the generator of form. He implies that we ought to *defer* to the middle-class and traditional typologies in order to build appropriately. “We lack the ability to show everything in such a way that the freshness will not embarrass us or insult others, and so we

10 Heinrich Tessenow, *ibid.*, page 15.



Figure 5
Sketch of houses

have much to hide.”

Tessenow implies that the failure of architecture to solve the problems it creates for itself is a general part of the human condition - “we lack the power to conceive of the world in its entirety.” Dwelling requires an *acceptance* of the limits of the human ability to impose order on a chaotic world. Tessenow's nationalistic and anti-urban outlook stems in part from his belief that people's ambitions should be limited to a comfortably small horizon. Rather than ordering things in the big picture (the world, the city), Tessenow suggests that architecture should concern itself with building and refining within the limits of received uniformity in a national, small-town environment. This is the approach of the craftsman. Industry, regardless of whether or not it uses modern methods, must find its forms within the limits of the *known* and *tested*. Ordinarity is the basis of production.

For Tessenow, it is the repetition of accepted cultural forms that allows both uniformity and refinement within the scope of traditional practice:

The rich and the powerful do not like to repeat; that is the way of the common people. Now we are frequently of the opinion that strong repetition creates a paucity of expression, but it is not necessarily the case. Expressions produced by repetition can be very rich and strong in certain circumstances. [...] As far as we are concerned with the means of expressing our sentiments, industrial work offers the best or the most comfortable means. [...] [But,] good strong uniform quality in our houses and our pieces of furniture is not just a good thing in itself, it is a question of repeating what is an essentially correct quality.¹¹

Tessenow means repetition in the sense that Deleuze later developed in *Difference and Repetition*: not copying, not duplicating, but working within a set of constraints or following a certain methodological path to make something different from but in the same spirit as a previous version. This is not imitation of an original, but inspiration from a type (fig. 5). For Tessenow, this implies both the bourgeois ideal of individual creativity and a cultural context that drives a craft tradition; repetition is, in this sense, a feedback loop that starts with an existing condition and always *twists* the tradition in the process of production as the context changes. Tessenow

¹¹ Ibid., page 18.

states that it is only by working through a certain method, a prerogative of the autonomous middle-class, that one can orient oneself within an understandable, shared world. "We will always need to call on repetition as a means of expressing strong or rich sentiments."

While production may be a partially personal process, Tessenow always talks about *expression* as a communal phenomenon. It is only "simple and crude regularity" that is "comprehensible to the man on the street or the community as a whole." Tessenow's concept of community is another condition of dwelling; his particular "proto-fascist" community is always centered on a set of *objects* around which the social structure is built. Society, itself an immanent structure, is built around significant architecture.¹² In this sense, the neat, simple illustrations of houses Tessenow uses to make his points can be seen as monuments to a certain way of life. The regularity of a dwelling type, the pitched-roofed house, assures a shared center – home – for middle-class communal life; its culturally universal symbolism establishes it as a monument to middle-class values. Within a specific culture this dwelling type is as full of gravitas and authoritative power as any religious relic or monolith. The square, symmetrical, pitched-roofed house guarantees a certain social and cultural order under the aegis of tradition. By seeking to perpetuate its repetition Tessenow is ultimately privileging conservative peasant and bourgeois mores that accompany single-family living.

From a pragmatic perspective, Tessenow's notion of building within limits ultimately succeeds in tracing a *weak* path through modernity as an alternative to the strong rationalism of the Modern movement. Tessenow's "why not" is all the more seductive for privileging ordinariness, but as a result requires a healthy dose of ignorance. That this represented a proto-fascist position, leading to an "acceptance" of the culturally-charged rhetoric of the National Socialists can be left to the historical record for elaboration. We will see, however, that the discourse of dwelling does not have a monopoly on authoritarian logic.

12 This idea is from Michel Serres. In *Rome: A Book of Foundations*, Serres recounts the continual re-foundation of Rome around an object of continual reference that, through a drawn out process of nudging and reorientation, generates an order in the chaotic movement of a mass.

Shelter: The View from Above

The undersigned architects, representing the national groups of modern architects, affirm their unity of viewpoint regarding the fundamental conceptions of architecture and their professional obligations towards society.

[...]

The intention that brings them together here is to attain the indispensable and urgent harmonization of the elements involved by replacing architecture on its true plane, the economic and sociological plane. Thus architecture must be set free from the sterilizing grip of the academies that are concerned with preserving the formulas of the past.¹³

The *La Sarraz Declaration*, penned in 1928 as the manifesto of the first Congrès d'Internationaux Architecture Moderne (CIAM) as its introductory section makes clear, approaches “building” from a rational rather than a cultural perspective. This was, in part due to the cultural climate that prevailed after the first World War. As few notes were kept during this congress (a secretary had not yet been appointed), even the best analysis of the event, those of Eric Mumford and Giorgio Ciucci, rely on a sparse constellation of historical events, conjecture regarding the contribution of key members (Le Corbusier and Sigfried Gideon in particular), and a close reading across the original versions in German and French of the *Declaration*.¹⁴ This is convenient from a theoretical point of view: with the details of its production unknown, the document can, with some caveats, be treated as an historical actor within the discursive formation of the Modern movement. The *Declaration* is, in a sense, an embodiment of the discourse of shelter, stemming from a widespread cultural concern with the social benefits of rationality.

During the inter-war period in Europe the “impoverished state of the general economy,” which was only beginning to look less grave by 1928, brought with it a lack of housing – the “housing crisis” – which was often regarded as a systemic condition of “late capitalism.” Industrialists profited greatly from the influx of workers to urban areas; the *Declaration's* insistence on “economy” and “efficiency” was intended to allow the masses a higher standard of living. With the problem defined as the general shortage of a basic need – shelter – the foundation

13 The *La Sarraz Declaration* is a short document; the text is discussed here in the order in which it was published.

14 Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. Giorgio Ciucci, “The Invention of the Modern Movement” in *Oppositions 24*, Spring 1981.

was laid for the realization of a system of universal standardized housing. As the *Declaration* states, Architecture would meet the unprecedented need through “rationalization and standardization” of production methods.

This required an initial logical leap. It was only after technological progress had been identified as an inevitable process that the solution to the problems created *by* rationalization (of industry) could be sought through *more* rationalization (of architecture and finally of society). The success of American industrialists that resulted from their “economic” approach to production, exemplified by Taylor's rationalization of manufacture and management, suggested to the Modernists that “rationalization” could be applied to the field of architecture. Furthermore, if the “unearned increment” were distributed to the workers rather than the owners of capital, the benefits of capitalism would accrue to society as a whole. This methodological translation – from industry to society – would require a benevolent managerial team, envisioned in the *Declaration* as a vanguard of Modernist architects. This approach was not unique; it is a form of authoritarian governance that is implicit in communist, fascist, and capitalist governments. The profession of Architecture would take on the role of the technocratic elite.

As the opening paragraphs, two of which are quoted above, make clear, the *La Sarraz Declaration* asks architects to take on the role of what Eric Mumford calls the “vanguard party of modern architecture” but could alternatively be characterized as an advisory committee to an authoritarian government apparatus.¹⁵ Mumford is referring to the Leninist revolutionary vanguard in early communist Russia, a model contemporaneous with the authors of the *Declaration* that seems especially suitable in light of the socialist leanings of several of the *Declaration's* signers. The document places architecture, reconstituted as “town planning,” in a position *above* the masses and the State bureaucracy which implicitly guarantees its effectiveness. The *scale* at which town planning engages with the built environment determines the solutions it is able to propose. A flat urban landscape of grids, masses of people, and land values engenders a technocratic approach to housing, as a form of shelter.

As technocrats, architects' “professional obligations towards society”

15 Ibid., page 5.

require them to practice “town planning.” The aerial view this implies – which sees populations and towns rather than, say, families and buildings – enacts what Donna Haraway calls the “god trick,” the illusion of total objectivity.¹⁶ Architecture, formulated in the *Declaration* as a modern profession, is enmeshed within a body of knowledge about humanity that depends on the output of other modern professions, such as Medicine, Law, and Government (each of which, as a practice, requires qualifying evaluations, codes of conduct, etc, and necessitates a specific flow of information with certain languages, media, and data collection methods). In this way, the *Declaration* ends up promoting regulations that require, for example, “the effects of sunlight, the ill effects of darkness, essential hygiene, [...] etc.” The first condition of architecture-as-town-planning (Architecture) is an *informational* approach to humanity, a view only available after the recent condition of high urban density and population made humanity visible as a *mass*.

The Modern movement the document intended to define takes technological progress as a natural fact and uses the cutting edge of technology for the benefit of society as a whole.

Conscious of the deep disturbances of the social structure brought about by machines, [the undersigned] recognize that the transformations of the economic order and of social life inescapably brings with it a corresponding transformation of the architectural phenomenon.

Here, naturalized technological progress serves as a model for *social* progress; the *Declaration* critiques social and cultural modernity as lagging behind the current state of technology. It presents a positivist, technological-determinist approach and assumes that it is the job of society to adapt to the new situation. It is the job of architects, as the enlightened experts in charge of the built environment, to design a world that may be oppressive at the time it is built (as humanity does not adapt instantly to new conditions) but, once humanity has adapted, will not only be comfortable but also a source of freedom. Architecture, taking the inevitable progress of technology as its model, will begin by building Utopia; modern humans will learn, in time, to make it their home. Architecture, the *Declaration* assures, will literally lay the foundations for the “organization of life” as a “functional order,” which will in turn create the authentically modern man. This is in stark contrast to

16 Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, And Women: The Reinvention Of Nature*.

the discourse of dwelling, which assumes that an adequate cultural foundation already exists for the building that must be done; the future will not be, in any case, better than the present.

The twenty-seven points of the French version of the *Declaration* begin by aligning “modern architecture” with economics. The first point under the heading of the “General Economic System” - “the idea of modern architecture includes the link between the phenomenon of architecture and that of the general economic system” - announces a profound, but certainly not novel, break with traditional architectural practice (understood as both *building*, which is seen as being dictated by capitalism, and *academic* architecture, which is seen as outmoded as a practice). The notion that tradition can be dispensed with when economics is taken as the foundation of a discipline was, by the 1920s, a trope in avant-garde architecture. This rhetorical move enacted a ritualized separation of the moderns from the ancients and was an attempt to look to find a path out of a seemingly moribund tradition through the identification of a timeless, universal approach. The optimism required for such an undertaking was certainly a lingering result of the conclusion of the World War I, an event which had invigorated the avant-garde with the feeling of being given a second chance. The war made certain traditional practices (in governance, State politics, building, etc) appear untenable, thus undercutting the authority of tradition in architecture as well. The timeless logic of classical economics, derived from Adam Smith and others, would be at the heart of a new

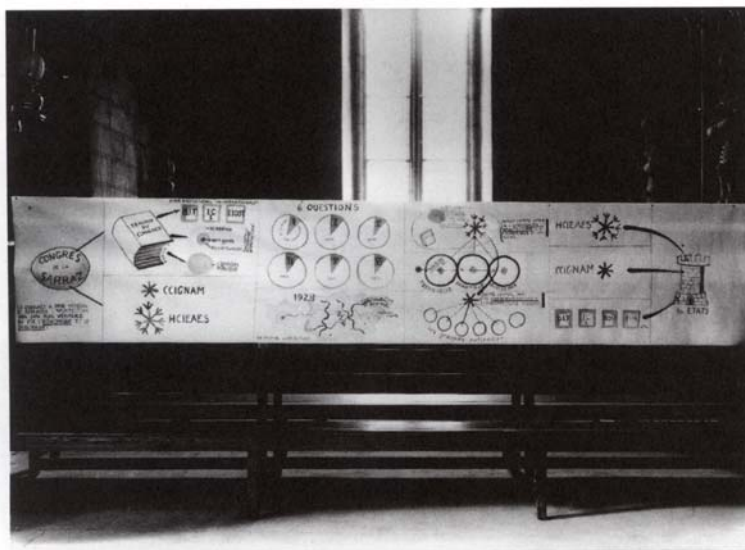


Figure 6
Poster by Le Corbusier for the La Sarraz meeting, 1928

architecture that would construct a new world.

The *Declaration's* second point – “the idea of 'economic efficiency' does not imply production furnishing maximum profit, but production demanding a minimum working effort” – implicitly provides the justification for this rationale. The statement implies that the contemporary social system, seen as an ossified traditional edifice (as the stone turret in one of Le Corbusier's poster for the Congress illustrates (fig. 6)), has been used for personal gain rather than social prosperity and is thus in need of reform. Furthermore, as the *Declaration* makes clear, only Architecture can carry through this reform – a view aptly articulated by Le Corbusier (who was, incidentally, perhaps the *Declaration's* principal author¹⁷) in *Towards a New Architecture*: “Architecture or revolution – revolution can be avoided.” This statement about efficiency has further implications. First, manpower is identified by the *Declaration* as a scarce resource; industry cannot meet demands – particularly the demand for housing – with its inefficient goal of profit generation. Second, as the introduction also points out, the goal of architecture is the welfare of the masses. The benevolent patriarchal social focus of the *La Sarras Declaration* reflects both the socialist inclinations of certain CIAM members and the assumption of *scarcity* that underlies the Modernist approach.

Morally, this is an untenable position. Ends and means become confused, and any categorical imperative collapses under the weight of rationalism. This problem is more apparent in Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*, which provides the dialectical model of architecture-society interaction implied by the *La Sarras Declarations*. Note the confused logic:

A well-mapped-out scheme, constructed on a mass-production basis, can give a feeling of calm, order and neatness, and inevitably *imposes* discipline on the inhabitants. America has given us an example by the elimination of hedges and fences, *rendered possible* only by the modern feeling of respect for other people's property which took its rise over there [...] [author's italics]¹⁸

In other words, we must live in a modern built environment to think rationally (well-mapped-out scheme *leads to* discipline) but we must think rationally in order to build a modern environment (modern feelings *lead to* the elimination of hedges). The

17 Mumford, *ibid.*, pages 24-25.

18 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, pages 224-225.

Declaration embodies the same logic. The final goal of this rhetoric is ostensibly the health and well being of the masses, but, as under Leninist communism, the masses must suffer through a “transitional phase” in which they are used by the vanguard as the instrumental first-wave of the new order. The *end* is the reformation of society in a Utopian mold; as such the end must be deferred until after the prototypical “New Man” has been formed, a painful process to which communist “reprogramming”



Figure 7
House 15 by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for the Weissenhofsiedlung, 1927

techniques attest. On the transitional ascent to Utopia (as “this generation” is being “educated” to be “capable of correctly stating the problems of housing”), a birds-eye view of humanity legitimates utilitarian atrocities which are carried out for a future greater-good. Present morality is liquidated for the *idea* of future Utopia. As with the Russian experiment, rationalist fatigue sets in and progress either becomes an end in itself or another route is taken.

In any case, in keeping with this forward-looking, benevolent conception of Architecture, “consumers” (the masses) are asked by *The La Sarraz Declaration* to re-formulate their desires and re-state their needs: modern economic logic “[expects] from the consumer [...] a revision of his demands in the direction of a readjustment to the newer conditions of social life.” The new condition is a set of widespread scarcities, and the revision is that *dwelling*s must become a purely functional good. This revision will “foster the maximum satisfaction of the needs of the greatest number” rather than the satisfaction of the needs of the few which are “devoid of any real justification.” This logic is clearly visible in the contemporary housing designs of Le Corbusier, such as “House 15” at the Weissenhofsiedlung, completed one year earlier (fig. 7). This house carried out the function of a “dwelling-house” using the same “five points” that could be used in any edifice

(pilotis, roofs gardens, etc).¹⁹ Only these general elements of shelter are “justified” in architecture. Compare this with the “acceptance” of Tessenow: the methods of building that a culture already possesses ought to be used until there is a justification for *not* using them.

By identifying the quantitative lack of shelter as a condition for Modern architecture, the *La Sarraz Declaration* was situating itself within and helping to define the Modern movement. The problem of shelter had been identified much earlier and was formulated as the basis of a Modern architecture by the first decade of the twentieth century. It had been accepted in the discourse of shelter that the tradition of craftsmanship had come to an end; the *Declaration* announces that “the collapse of the class of skilled craftsmen is an accomplished fact.” The Bauhaus had already provided the first successful demonstration (although only at a small scale) of how high-quality mass-produced goods could be designed for industrial production technologies, putting the profession of Architecture in the role of designers rather than builders and therefore out of the realm of craftwork (fig. 8). The *Declaration* implies that in the future, when the “spirit of the age” has coagulated and Architecture has been formulated as town planning, properly modern building types will emerge to define the era; the *Declaration*, however, does not address this issue directly. The ambiguity as to *when* architecture would become authentically modern is highlighted in the text: “architecture can only spring from the present age” but there is a “need for a *new conception* of architecture that satisfies the [...] demands of present-day life [author's italics].” Before the future arrived, architects would be the designers of standard prototypes and the managers of mass-production and mass-deployment of housing – either in conjunction, as with Gropius' goal of the standardization of entire houses, or separately, as with Le Corbusier's insistence on the standardization of types using mass-produced parts in slightly different

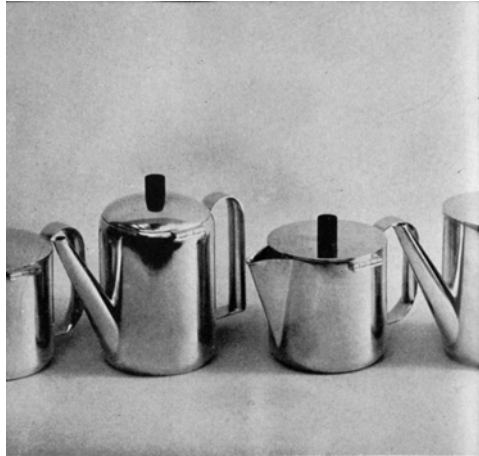


Figure 8
Coffee- and tea-pots designed for mass production by Marianne Brandt while a student at the Bauhaus, 1926

19 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, “Five points towards a new architecture.”

arrangements. In this situation, architects, too, are treated by the *Declaration* as a scarce resource; they would meet the unparalleled demand for shelter by commanding a hyper-productive army of machines as part of a larger governing structure. As architectural logic (both in practice and in theory) fell in line with the demands of the assembly line, there would be no opportunity to build using traditional forms. Form would follow the dictates of technology.

The section titled "Town Planning" highlights another feature of shelter: it can only be seen at a certain scale, from the aerial view of town planning. This is in contrast to dwelling, which, for Tessenow, can only be seen from within a culture. Characterizing the *La Sarras Declaration* as universalizing and totalizing is not unfair. Is there any more grandiose claim than "Town planning is the organization of the functions of collective life?" By abstracting *life* to "functional order" and making this the domain of Architecture, itself an adviser to the State and the designer of the built environment, the *Declaration* is concerned with developing a method of totally and authoritatively controlling humanity. Once again, the categorical moral imperative is trumped by the logic of progress.

We have already seen, however, that the *Declaration* is not concerned with morality, but simply with "objectively" beneficial social functions. From its aerial view, Architecture is able to categorize life into "three functions: (a) dwelling, (b) producing, (c) relaxation (the maintenance of the species)," each of which is governed by a certain "essence:" "(a) division of the soil, (b) organization of traffic, (c) legislation." As mentioned above, for this approach to be tenable, a vast body of information covering humanity – statistics – is needed. Real estate, movements of bodies and goods, rules and regulation: all must be fully known and fully applied in order for town planning to make any sense. The *Declaration* makes a police state, a fully articulated system of "traffic control," the foundation of Architecture. In other words: architectural logic, when fully rationalized, becomes a matter of the rational programming of society.

This dream of a society fully controlled by Architecture was destined, of course, to remain unfulfilled. The "transformation of existing legislation [to] run parallel with technical progress" never occurred and the architectural vanguard was never given the power it sought over the built environment.

The last two sections of the *La Sarraz Declaration*, "Architecture and public opinion" and "Architecture and its relations with the State," present a counterpoint to the question of dwelling addressed in the previous section. The document states that public opinion must be brought in line with rational economic logic because, "through the baneful effects of academic teaching, opinion has strayed into an erroneous conception of dwelling. The true problems of dwelling have been pushed back behind entirely sentimental conceptions. The problem of the house is not posed." Here, dwelling literally becomes shelter before our eyes. "Dwelling" implies sentimentality and an accepted artistic tradition – a judgment that applies to "craft" as well. While the discourse of shelter functionalizes the home – and, indeed, society in general – "dwelling" remains an "erroneous" (that is, irrational) concept.

This is not to say that the discourse of dwelling does not contain its own problems; the discussion surrounding the question of dwelling is a modern discourse that runs parallel to that of shelter. As a technical term, "dwelling" implies a set of foundational assumptions and a specific rationale that poses a certain problematic that can be seen as a complement to the discourse of shelter. The discourse of dwelling provides a means of discussing the cultural foundations of architecture and home. These will often include racial, national, and gender distinctions – categories that, while currently unpopular in professional usage, provide the necessary limits to the untenable universality of the discourse of shelter.

While Tessenow's response to the need for a modern home required a re-grounding of architectural practice in a cultural tradition of building, the *La Sarraz Declaration* responds by enacting a rhetorical break with the past along with an informational view that reconstitutes an outmoded traditional practice as a modern discipline ("town planning"). The functionalization of life that accompanied the discourse of shelter allows an articulation of the mechanics of architectural phenomenon, but falls short of a pragmatics. Functionality is subsumed in a rational system (economics) and a logic of progress; there is no rhetorical leeway for *action*, except, perhaps, by the technocratic elite who direct a totalitarian structure.

Coda: From Prototype to Type

As we have seen, the discourse of shelter involves a top-down approach to a problem of scarcity. The discourse of dwelling is a complement to this: as Tessenow states, it is a “bottom-up” approach to building that starts with the human conditions of community and shared language. The way I have presented these discourses thus far seems to suggest that shelter and dwelling can only be apprehended within a conservative/authoritarian framework – conservative of a social hierarchy and recognizing an authority (in the institutions of the State that are traditionally upheld). While the status quo to be conserved in each case is defined differently, both serve to perpetuate similar social hierarchies.

This can be seen at work in the Stuttgart Weissenhof housing project. The Weissenhofsiedlung, built in 1927 as part of the “Die Wohnung” exhibition put on by the Deutscher Werkbund, can be seen as an intersection of shelter and dwelling (fig. 9). This project has become a subject of speculation in the last two decades, especially in the English world with the publication of books on the subject by Richard Pommer and Christian F. Otto and by Karen Kirsch.²⁰ The central role accorded the project first by its promoters in the Werkbund and the Modern movement in general has been central in creating the myth of the unified movement itself. The project has been transformed in the popular imagination from a prototypical set of model houses to the archetypal Modern housing project, in spite of its uniqueness and the stated intentions of the architects involved.

The Weissenhof housing project was singular in the range of highly regarded early Modern architects that it brought together (fig. 11). Each architect had his own personal



Figure 9
Poster for the “Die Wohnung” exhibition in Stuttgart, 1927

20 Richard Pommer and Christian F. Otto, *Weissenhof 1927 and the modern movement in architecture*. Karen Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung : experimental housing built for the Deutscher Werkbund, Stuttgart, 1927*.

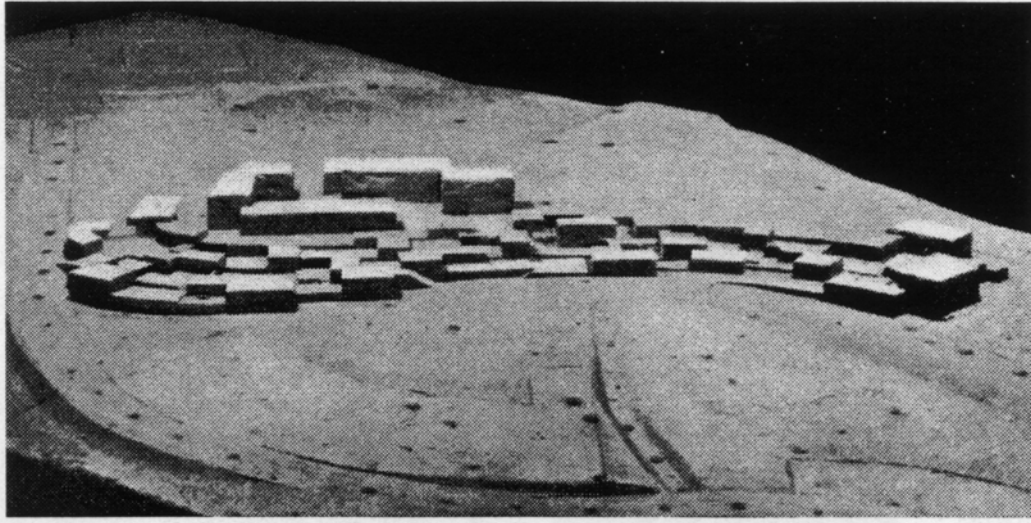
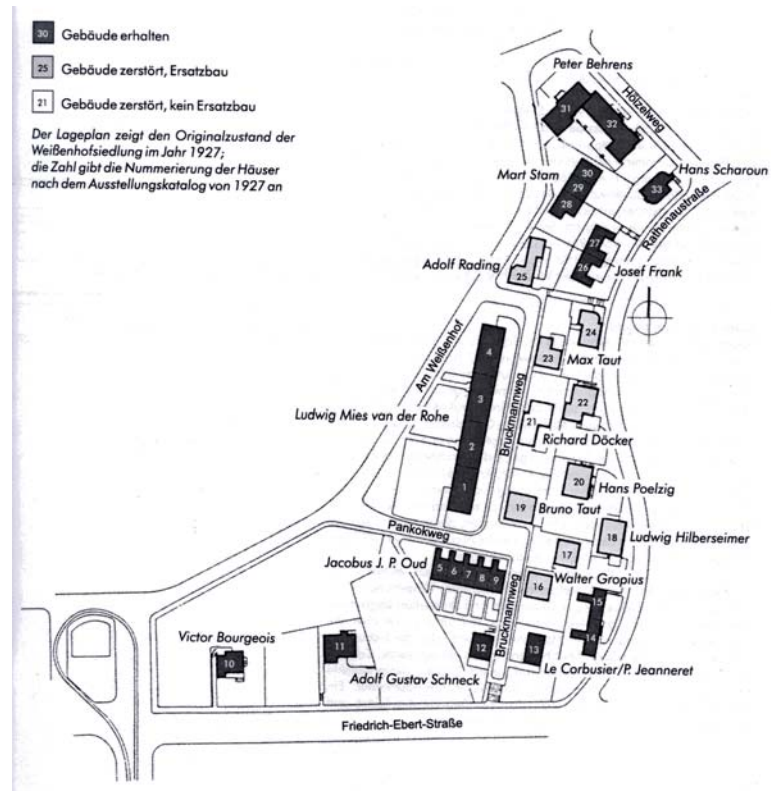


Figure 10
Model by Mies van der Rohe of the Weissenhofsiedlung, 1926

Figure 11
Plan of the Weissenhofsiedlung

ambitions and unique statement of intent. The first thing one notices about the project from the photographs, however, is its relatively uniform style. Most of the houses are white, many are detached and with two stories, all have flat roofs, and there is hardly an “ornament” to be found. The project's typological uniformity was certainly on the mind of the Werkbund sponsors. Mies, at the time the vice-president of the Werkbund, was particularly concerned with the exterior appearance of the buildings; Marc Stankard has recently shown that Mies methodically mandated exterior stylistic elements – such as “off-white paint” and flat roofs – to create “the ultimate surface” (fig. 10).²¹



21 Marc Stankard, “Re-covering Mies van der Rohe's Weissenhof: the ultimate surface,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, May 2002, volume 55, number 4, pages 247-256.



Figure 12
Photograph of the
Weissenhofsiedlung soon
after completion, 1928

The first impression one has of a uniform, white, “modern” landscape (fig. 12) is in profound discord with the explanatory statements of the architects taken individually. As a demonstration project of new methods in house design, there is a recurrent focus on *prototypes* for future mass production that is reminiscent of the *La Sarraz Declaration*, particularly in the explanations given by Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, and Max Taut, but also implied by Mies van der Rohe, Adolf Schneck, and Mart Stam. This suggests that the housing designs were not intended as final, and there is no reason, from this rhetorical standpoint, for them to look so similar.

In any case, a curious thing happens when so many similar buildings came together in a single project with such great visibility and ideological ambition: an archetypal Modern dwelling emerges in the popular consciousness. This was the process Tessenow had outlined a decade earlier. Despite all of the rhetoric directed by the Weissenhof architects against pitched roofs and applied styles, the modern house became a general type.

The stated functionalist ideals of the architects' is belied by the evident aesthetic of industrialism. A first indication of the inability of what Tessenow called “strong industrial values” to account for the Weissenhofsiedlung is the level of *craft* that went in to the making of each building. Everything down to the furniture and

fittings was lavished with attention; a separate furniture exhibition accompanied the housing exhibition, attesting to the importance of the houses as showcase objects for a *visibly* Modern lifestyle (fig. 13). Each house was a model and an ideal type that never became part of a

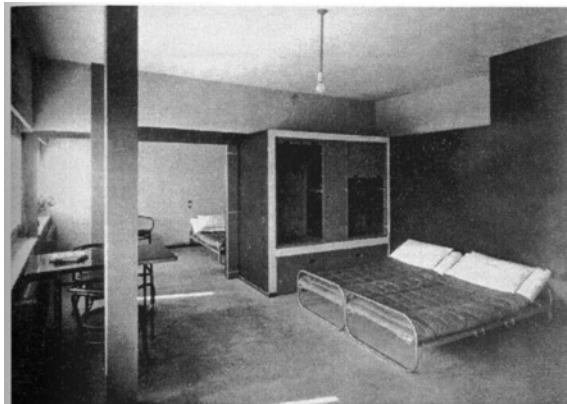


Figure 13
Bedroom in House 15,
1928

mass production process. Even the project taken as a whole – as a suburb of Stuttgart – was a model of town planning to which Mies van der Rohe and the Deutscher Werkbund devoted special attention.²² It never was to play the role of a prototype; the Zeilenbau method remained popular in the Modern movement in Germany until it was abandoned by the National Socialists in favor of the so-called Heimat style.

Another slippage occurred in the cost of the project. Due to the relatively immodest cost of many of the specially designed houses (Bruno Taut and Gropius promised lower costs when their designs hit mass production), the project was unable to provide shelter for the “working class” as the Werkbund had intended. At the time, the units in the project were much more expensive than units in larger apartment blocks, such as those built around the same time in Berlin. As such, the demands of the Stuttgart housing program that underwrote the project were not fulfilled. In the long run, as the documents produced during its restoration as a historic site testify, the buildings have come to be inhabited by the aspiring middle-class; they house mostly government officials.²³ The Weissenhofsiedlung has become a bourgeois suburb admired for its artistic peculiarity rather than a purely functional working-class project.

Perhaps the best evidence of the typification of the Modern house was the popular criticism that the Weissenhofsiedlung embodied a foreign type of dwelling that was inappropriate for southern Germany. Soon after the project was

²² Ibid.

²³ Jurgen Joedicke, *Weissenhofsiedlung Stuttgart*, page 87.

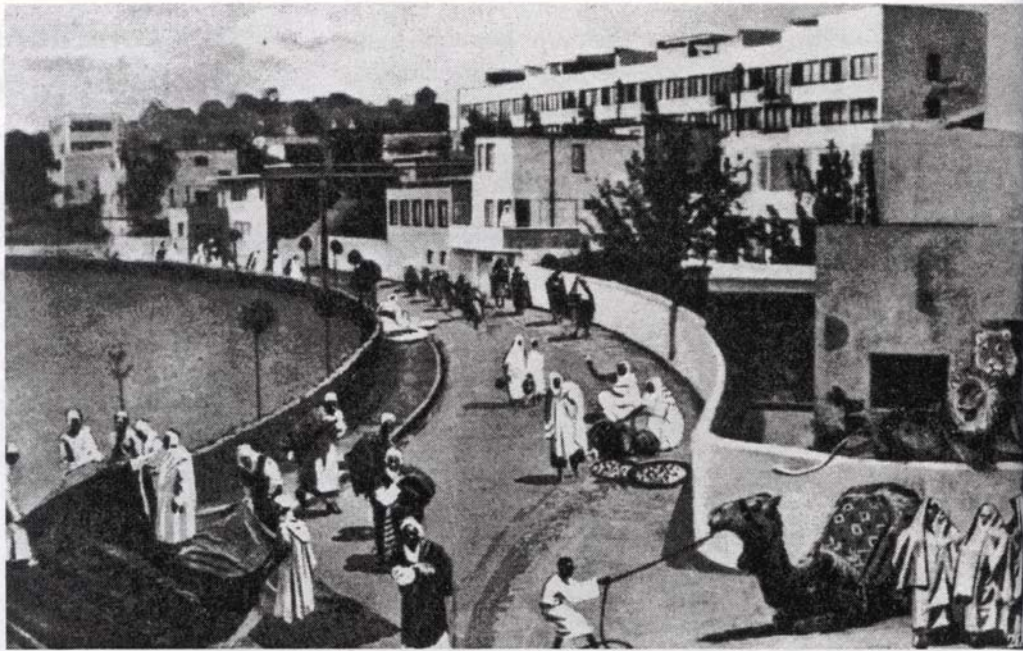


Figure 14
Postcard printed in the 1930s depicting the Weissenhofsiedlung as an "Araberdorf"

completed, a postcard was printed depicting the project as a Mediterranean village, complete with photo montaged camels and Arabs lounging amid the stepped white buildings (fig. 14). This could arguably be called a failure of the architects to make their technological intentions readable, to express the condition of modernity through their medium. The postcard demonstrates that the Werkbund's approach was, in fact, popularly understandable: the Weissenhofsiedlung was recognized by the "common man" as an embodiment of the minimal housing (Existenzminimum) method that was a mainstay of the Modern movement at the time. Looking like the bare, unadorned housing of the Mediterranean – understood as a symbol of the region's relative cultural and material poverty – the white, flat-roofed houses of the Weissenhof seemed as if they lacked the conventional German "heimlichkeit" that dwellings were expected to have; this was, in fact, a stated intention of many of the architects. The Modern typology was thus commonly intelligible, even if it was judged negatively according to traditional values rather than positively as a rational solution of the housing crisis.

The intentions of the Weissenhof architects was to create a modern *home* – in the sense of a house and a sociocultural dwelling place. The project was an attempt to create a microcosm which would presumably become pervasive as

society continued to modernize. In this sense, the Weissenhofsiedlung was an attempt at world-creation. Mies had an understanding of the power of the *myth* of Modernism – this was why he insisted on “the ultimate surface” as a display of what Modernism is in the minds of its believers. Understanding the power of the belief in a unified Modern movement leading the world into modernity required an understanding of the desire for a *home* fit for humanity in the early twentieth century. That this home was clean, healthy, free of material encumbrances, and individualistic (as the project taken as a whole implies) indicates a belief in the myth even as the nature of the myth as a *construction* is accepted.

This simultaneous understanding of the power of cultural knowledge and the power of modernization and rationality – even with their apparent incompatibility – is, in a sense, an intersection of the discourses of shelter and dwelling. At this point of intersection, however, the coherence of “shelter” and “dwelling” begins to erode. Each discourse excludes the other, and they cannot happily coexist. Rather than resolving this contradiction in a synthesis, we need to discuss the force that *affects* this dissolution. A first approximation would be to call this force “homelessness.” It is perhaps the inherent flux of life that always shifts the grounds on which human being is tentatively built that make the shared aim of both shelter and dwelling – constructing a home – untenable. The ultimate instability of these purportedly stable categories (shelter, home, dwelling) is at the heart of the nomadic theory of architecture. The following discussion of the writings of R. Buckminster Fuller will show how the discourse of shelter tends to engender its own marginalization and dissolution when fully articulated.

The Coup of Rationalism

The industrial, quantity reproduction, principle is indeed the simplest exposition of the real meaning of the Christian era of human progress; unselfish creations as opposed to selfish, with the original of the first named unconfirmed in its satisfaction of the needs and desires of humanity by the eccentric infinite picayunity of any one crass vanity. The art of human housing design is at last freed of the tailoring stigma by reproducible design. [sic]²⁴

In a set of articles written by R Buckminster Fuller for *T-Square/SHELTER*, an architecture journal published in 1931 and 1932 which changed its name for the last three issues, Fuller does his best to set out the conditions of and plans for fully mass-producible housing prototype. These articles represent a peculiarly American approach to homelessness and the discourse of shelter; they rely on an engineering approach that will design away the housing shortage, thus ending homelessness. Four articles in four issues in the 1932 volume are particularly illuminating for the triumph of the discourse of shelter over a broader set of issues: "Universal Architecture" in *T-Square* v.2 n.2 , "Universal Architecture, Essay No.2" in *SHELTER* v.2 n.3, "Universal Architecture, Essay 3" in *SHELTER* v.2 n.4, and an "anonymous" article in *SHELTER* v.2 n.5, "Putting the House in Order." During this span of time (January to November), there seems to have been a coup by Fuller over the content of the journal. By the last issue, *SHELTER* is, fittingly, almost entirely an organ of the discourse of shelter. Fuller's articles take the economic logic underlying the *La Sarraz Declaration* to another level of articulation while adding an American concern with mobility and freedom.

Fuller's first "Universal Architecture" article in *T-Square* appears near the end of issue number 2 and weighs in at nearly twelve pages, the

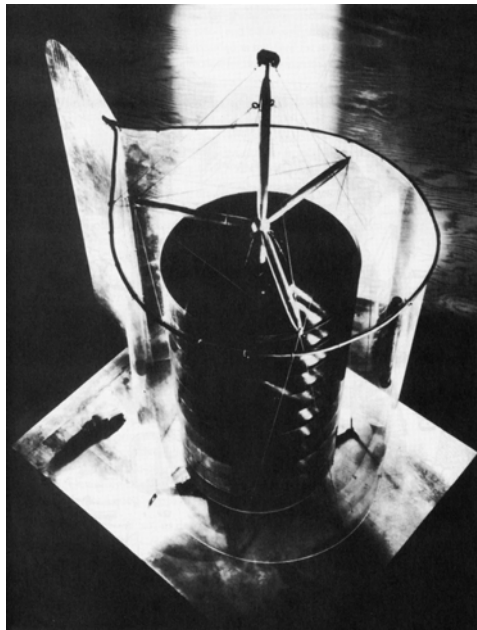


Figure 15
The first page of the last issue of *SHELTER*. Wind-drag reduction structure designed by Starling Burgess for a model of the Dymaxion House, 1932

24 R. Buckminster Fuller, "Universal Architecture," *T-Square* v.2 n.2, page 23.

longest in that issue of the journal.²⁵

His colorful (which is not to say stylistically wretched) writing begins after a lengthy critique of the “International School” of architecture – the European Modernist style – but quickly devolves into an uncompromisingly “technical” discussion of shelter. Fuller's discussion of the “International School” is a reaction to the stylistic encrustations of the Modern movement, a topic of debate in the 1932 issues of *T-Square/SHELTER* following the *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* at MoMA.

Fuller sees Modern architecture as emerging from an “appreciation of American Industrial Building” – the “Universal Architecture” essays are first and foremost *polemics* against European parochialism. For both Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright in *T-Square NO.2*, the MoMA exhibition presents, as Fuller says, a version of American architecture “reinfiltrating itself into this country, from which it sprung, as an aesthetic, static, dogma,” as a perversion of “its original economic science.” While Wright has other arguments against the exhibition (such as H. R. Hitchcock's characterization of him in the exhibition catalog as “half-modern”) Fuller begins his article by establishing American priority and superiority in economics, science, and, from these, architecture. Despite Fuller's claims in later articles to the contrary, this is certainly a form of nationalism; it places America at the vanguard of the international forces of

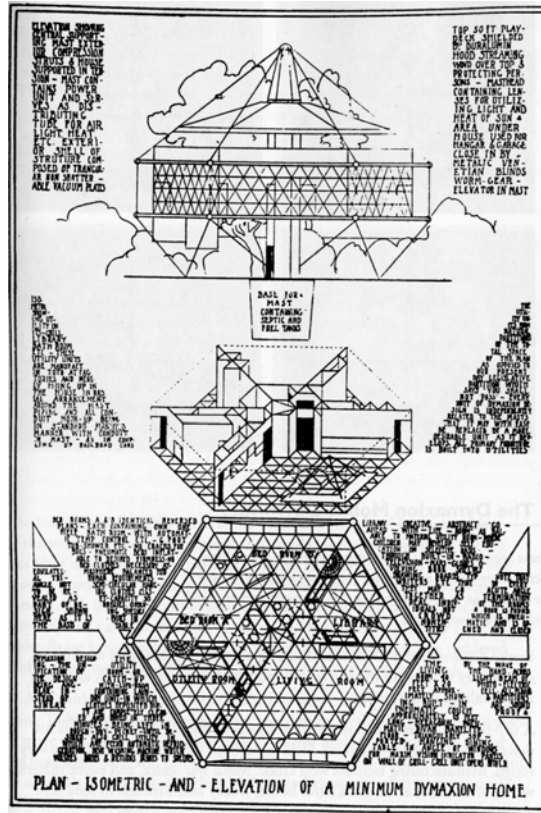


Figure 16
Advertisement for the
Dymaxion House, circa
1928

25 Although he claims to have written the text in 1927 there is reason to see it as a response to the international recognition of a European Modernist (“International”) style – that is, the prototypes the Europeans proposed had gained broad enough recognition to become archetypes with an aesthetic force (as had happened in 1927 with the Weissenhof project).

rationalism. This differs, however, from the nationalism of Tessenow in that Fuller is *universalizing* a national ethos rather than acknowledging his parochialism.

Fuller quickly moves on to his “purely rational” solution to the problem of “the universal minimal shelter:” the Dymaxion House (figs. 15 & 16 & 18). This building,

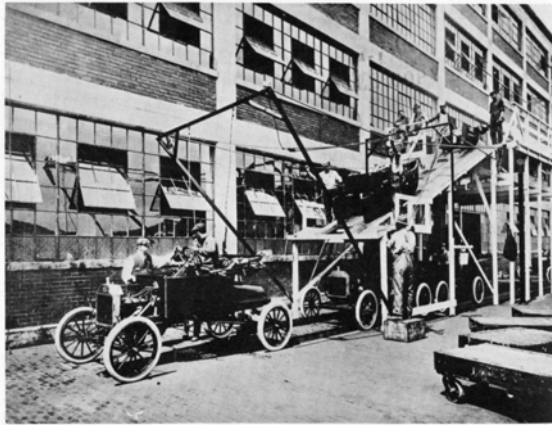


Figure 17
Prototype production line
set up in 1913

which was developed as a prototype for mass-production, is immediately contrasted by Fuller to the “ignorant tradition of building” into which all European architecture is placed. Fuller's approach, which he portrays as a uniquely American development, is to see the problem of mass production not mainly as a standardization of components but as a replication of fully-articulated objects based on an ideal prototype. Fuller's model is Fordist production (fig. 17). Le Corbusier took Ford's methodology in a much different direction: as we have seen, his project for the Weissenhofsiedlung and its accompanying “Five points towards a new architecture” promoted the use of mass-produced *components* in a variety of configurations, suggesting that standardization should occur at a stage prior to house-building.²⁶ Even the Bauhaus under Gropius, despite the director's intentions, was never able to articulate its prototypes at the same level as Fuller's housing models (particularly his later Wichita House, but also his Dymaxion House and others). Fuller assumes a fully developed scientific understanding of the solution to the problem of shelter, suggesting that an ideal type could currently be developed (something that the *La Sarraz Declaration* seems to defer to the future). Fuller differs from the *Declaration* in his definition of efficiency, which is based on the time involved in production rather than the unit of “working effort.” “A million and one-half Ford cars are built” in less time than the “six months to a year to build a simple dwelling, inadequate in every detail when finished.” This marks the provision of shelter as the “last unorganized industrial field.” For Fuller, the inability of the

26 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *ibid.*

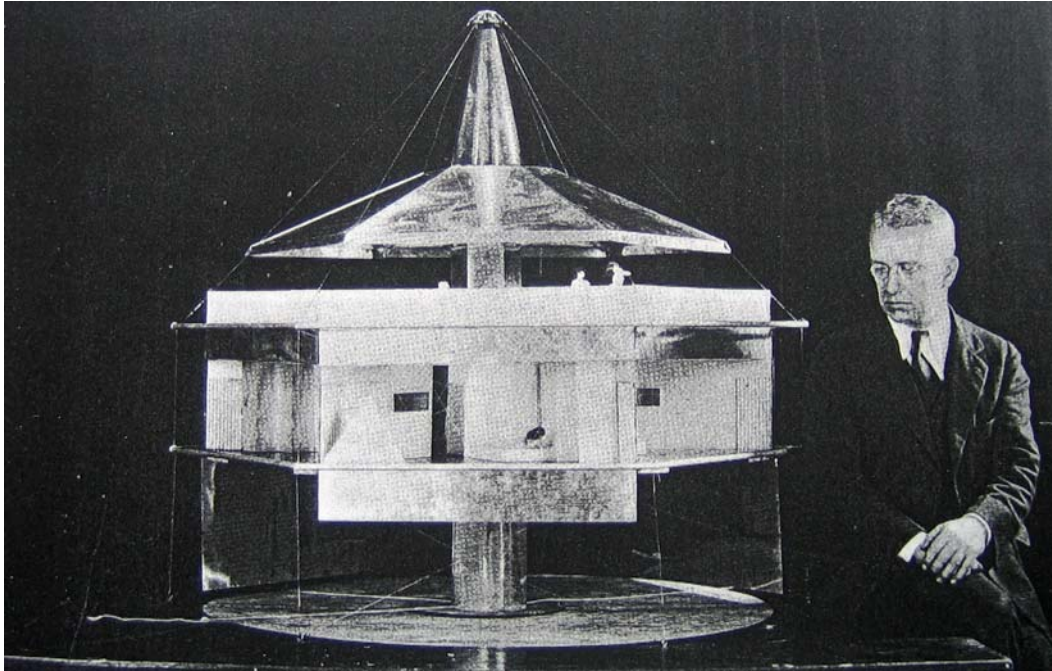


Figure 18
Fuller seated beside his
Dymaxion House model,
1931-1932

effort of European architect's to solve the housing crisis is a result of the time spent on aesthetic issues that would be better spent working directly with industry.

As with the European advocates of shelter, Fuller decries ornament as “stylistic deformities” that are based on inappropriate demands of making “character and individualism” readable in what is in reality a functional object. Not only is individual expression through architecture untenable in light of the vast housing problem (“280 million” shelters per year by the year 2000, taking a “ten year obsolescence of houses” into consideration), but, as Fuller articulates, the ultimate goal of humanity, individual freedom from “material selfconsciousness,” is impeded by the illusion of individualism created by unique houses. Fuller sees the progressive rationalization of thought as carrying out an evolutionary detachment of *mind* from *matter*. A trope as old as Rationalism itself, the transcendence of the mind means for Fuller a detachment of people from the land. Once again Fuller, is construing values he identifies as *American* – rationalism and individualism – as universal values.

The single illustration in the first “Universal Architecture” article clearly dramatizes this rational transcendence (fig. 18). This absurdly comical photograph of Fuller's creation, with the designer himself looking disinterestedly on, presents

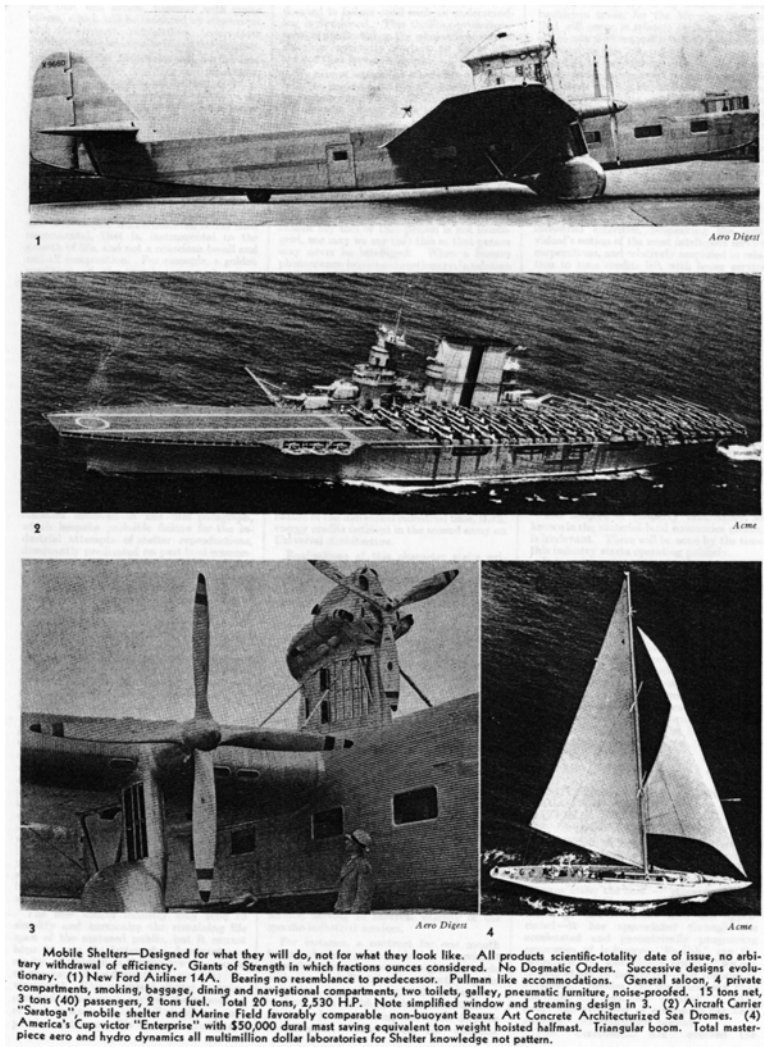


Figure 19
Page from "Universal Architecture, Essay 3" depicting Fuller's influences, 1932

Fuller as the impeccably-dressed businessman and technical expert who is very serious about everything. The model in the photograph represents an ideal object, a fully articulated industrial product – the Dymaxion House – that is meant to fulfill all the basic needs of life at a low cost with universal applicability, as Fuller states. Made of "modern" materials such as glass, rubber, and stainless steel, it is clearly a modern industrial product; it aims for a transparency of meaning and an appropriateness of form that Fuller sees as lacking in European Modern architecture. As with the *La Sarraz Declaration*, Fuller believes that man must learn to live in the industrial world: "provided the functional truths are clearly revealed, and executed in evidently correct materials, will such housing become very beautiful to the eye, when the eye has become adjusted to it." Fuller's assumption

is obvious: only when we learn to live with ever-changing technology in the place of traditional, culturally-weighted objects will we feel at home in the modern world; and European architects of the "International Mode" who are still working within traditional boundaries are not moving in this direction. For Fuller, "no architect is equipped to design the 20th century;" it is only great industrialists such as Henry Ford (one of "humanity's greatest artists") who have the necessary perspective. Ford's disrespect of "nationalistic boundaries" allows him a universal, objective view of the situation of his industry. As the *La Sarraz Declaration* also implied (but, in Fuller's view, failed to implement), any solution to the problem of shelter must attain to this same universality.



Figure 20
Figure from "Universal Architecture, Essay No. 2," 1932

As an alternative to the European approach, Fuller calls the Dymaxion House a "minimum rural dwelling" with "no geographical stamp" (fig. 20). However, to understand Fuller's logic it will be helpful to look at it as a particularly American solution. The house's single central supporting mast serves to disconnect the house from the ground (and "provide protection from marauders") as well as from all architectural traditions, aligning Fuller's architecture with the engineering of ship building instead. This implies an oddly dystopian outlook; as with Tessenow and Wright, Fuller's anti-urbanism develops from a pessimistic view of cities and the social control they seem to imply – the very control the *La Sarraz Declaration* calls for.

It is implied by the universal scope of shelter that it must be fully mobile; the Dymaxion House was for this reason designed to be air-deployable by zeppelin and was based off of the design of ships and planes rather than other buildings (fig. 19).

This approach only makes sense within an environment of constantly progressing frontiers. Whether the frontier is the bleeding-edge of technology or the furthest reaches of geographical expansion, being there keeps humanity connected with the necessities of life – progress and shelter being Fuller's favorite.

The final section of the first essay brings up another peculiarity of Fuller's approach and adds a technocratic inflection to his otherwise individualistic work. Fuller includes an articulation of the technical language needed to understand the problem of shelter, composed into numbered sections and subsections written in a language devoid of normal syntax. This section was ostensibly written by the Structural Studies Associates (SSA), a group determined to maintain individual anonymity by the use of numbers rather than names for its members. The SSA embodied Fuller's personal attempt to create a technocratic elite fully subsumed in scientific discourse. As if by magic, the use of this technical vocabulary would lead to a fully totalized modern architecture of shelter that “frees human phenomenon from robotism of inevitable survival function [sic],” in effect allowing the mind to transcend the body. The “centralization of mental activities [and] decentralization of physical” will allow for this transcendence, presumably with the SSA as the enlightened mind that provides for every physical need.

Despite their very different concerns, Fuller represents a much more drawn out articulation of the same economic rationale that underlies the *La Sarraz Declaration*. This logic leads also to a similar end, with an authoritarian apparatus benevolently providing for humanity which is assumed to be more free and comfortable and at home as a result.

In “Universal Architecture, Essay No.2” Fuller begins by discussing Hungarian birth rate statistics to illustrate the adaptability of humanity to changing conditions (such as wartime losses of males in a population). This type of adaptability is the theme of the article; it requires, as with the *La Sarraz Declaration*, an informational view of humanity. As people adapt to the conditions of a global human mass (“individualism” is a “fallacious concept”) and the provision for every physical need, people will adapt by transcending the physical by “abandoning the land” and losing their “property sense.” Once again, Fuller carries the economic, totalizing logic of the discourse of shelter to its end; he sees this final state as one of total freedom.

PUTTING THE HOUSE IN ORDER

PASS-AGE 1

ECOLOGY—Greek derivation—E (of) COL(house) OGY(study), "The study of human relations, particularly as pertains to the home."

ECONOMY—Derived from Ecology, "The management of household affairs; the science of production and distribution of wealth; and the means of living well."

SHELTER—Anglo-Saxon derivation—SHELL < *scyld* (shield) TER < *trum* (firm)," That which covers or shields from exposure or danger; a place of safety; refuge; retreat." SHELTER represents the inclusive instrumental security and service of **ECOLOGY** and **ECONOMY**.—4D

Figure 21

Title and heading for "Putting the House in Order," 1932

In "Universal Architecture, Essay 3" Fuller states specifically that he is not speaking "to consumers" but to "professionals." The discourse of shelter, to be useful to the technocrat, must fully articulate the "physical function of the human machine," taking "even the slightest human function [into] consideration." This is rhetorically based on a fully-understood economy (fig. 21). The Cartesian dream of full knowledge of the human condition is taken by Fuller as the prerequisite of total human satisfaction; this is the proper domain of Fuller's architecture.

In light of Fuller's staunch rationalism, it is no surprise that a broader discourse was excluded from pages of *SHELTER* during its last two issues. In the editorial to the last issue, "Putting the House in Order," the anonymous author (who is most likely Fuller himself) discusses shelter in relation to ethics and morality of the rationalist position. For Fuller and the SSA, all ethics (cultural values) and morals (transcendent categories of right and wrong) are equally outmoded; they have been made superfluous by the scientific method.

Ethics represents the ultimate stronghold of selfishly enjoyed private or public advantage. By this argument all rules, conscious orthodoxy, and ritual are also selfishly obstructionary to common wellfaring. With ethical recession is common-sense brought into relief and spontaneous guidance [original is in italics].²⁷

Common sense, for Fuller the shining-through of natural human rationality, has been covered by tradition, the stronghold of selfishness. In this view, humans are naturally rational; any social developments that do not address human needs (such as shelter) inevitably create a hierarchy within society. The condition of "bare life" is the authentically human condition; the satisfaction of needs is all that can be added

27 R. Buckminster Fuller, (?) "Putting the House in Order," *SHELTER* v.2 n.5, page 3.

to this without corrupting humanity. This is a romantic theme, linking Fuller to the New England milieu of transcendentalists in which he was apparently raised.²⁸ Along with his attack on ethics, Fuller launches an attack on morality: "SHELTER conceives no moral right or wrong." This statement make it clear why Wright, who uses a strongly moralistic voice in his writings, would not sit well in the evolving *SHELTER*, even though he would certainly have agreed with some of Fuller's sentiments, such as his feelings towards the city and his preference of mobility.

28 Martin Pawley, *Buckminster Fuller*, page 9.

The Shadow-of-the-Wall

"Once upon a time," not so long ago, the conquering of physical or territorial realm was the Frontier. But not to conquer sordid, ugly commercialism in this machine age, the "bony fiver of the dry tree" – that spiritual conquest is our new Frontier. Only by growing a healthy aesthetic, organic in the souls of our young polyglot nationals can we win this victory, greatest of all victories – Democracy.²⁹

In *The Living City*, written in 1945 and revised in 1958 but representing lines of thought first taken up in the late 1920s, Wright covers a variety of topics that cross decades of work and his version of American history and prehistory. "Part One," spanning eleven pages, discusses "the value of Earth as man's heritage, or of Man as earth's great heritage." Wright is certainly romantic in this section, talking about the "nature" of humanity as if "Man" (Wright always uses the masculine gender) were the "noble savage" corrupted by modernity gone astray. While this view of the world begins from many of the same suppositions as Fuller's, Wright takes his in a different direction. Rather than attempting to un-tether rationality from spirituality, Wright seeks to ground rationality and Modernism in American cultural mores. As with Fuller, this begins with the anti-authoritarianism of the New England transcendentalists and the Jeffersonian ideal of a people living "on the land."³⁰

Wright offers in *The Living City* an approach to the problems of home and homelessness. This is not only a *modern* problem, but, in Wright's discussion, a particularly American problem: "here we are in this great melting-pot of all the breaking-down or cast-off cultures of the world wherein we have allowed the present arrogance of science to forestall a genuine culture of our own." As quoted above, it is the "polyglot" nature of America that makes it different from, for example, the fully-formed German culture Tessenow takes as his basis. The homelessness Wright addresses is cultural, national, and spiritual, demanding appropriate solutions. As such, the discourse of dwelling takes the stage. Wright begins his discussion with foundations.

"Part One" begins with a section titled "NATURE," a subsection called "Earth," and the subject of "Man," "earth's great heritage," which is "gone far from [Man] now in any big city centralization has built." As with Tessenow,

29 Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Living City*, page 11.

30 Giorgio Ciucci, "The City in Agrarian Ideology and Frank Lloyd Wright: Origins and Development of Broadacres," in *The American City*.

Wright's foundation is a tradition rather than a modern discipline. Already at this point, Wright's first rhetorical move has set the trajectory for the rest of the section: the present is corrupt in a certain way, and man must look to a past way of life (an *original* relationship between Man and Earth) in order to recover it in the future. This is the same move that Tessenow made in *Housebuilding and Such Things*: correct the misguided present by applying the lessons of the past to create a better, more authentically human future.

The corrupting influence of the present, Wright quickly points out, is the "big city." The fundamental reason is contained in the title of the section: the city is not *natural*, which for Wright means a product of the Earth. In Wright's view, man has lost his connection to the earth, the true center of his values and his heritage. Man has been packed together - "centralized," "citified"- and has lost sight of the ground amid the "herd" of humanity.

This is the conflict Wright sets up: the "herd" versus "Man." This is partially a backlash against technocratic modernism as well as a questioning of tradition in the face of Nature. The view from the penthouse, the aerial view that for Wright embodies the modern equivalent of feudalism, obliterates individual free will. Wright, like Tessenow, is a crusader for the middle-class, for a type of individuality that does not exactly demand complete *freedom* from other human beings – he talks of a "reintegration" of human beings with "the land," forming an agrarian community – but demands, rather, that people recognize impulsive *free will* as a central human *value* even if it is only mythical. In Wright's mythology of the city, the upper-class reigns from above through the evil institution of rent; huddled below are the mindless drones, the working-class slaves to the city-machine. In the middle is the man free from "servitude to Moloch" and free from obligations to other men.

Wright's mythological approach to dwelling plays a crucial role in establishing a certain discourse; mythology maps the realm and the actors of a certain world. Gods, demons, heroes, and monsters inhabit a battleground in his writing. Wright allows us to orient ourselves in a world he creates: we see the battles, the iconic battle-flags, and the sweep of the land. These poetics, which Heidegger established as a shared part of the human condition that is certainly beyond rational explication, provide bearings for being in a world (*dasein*). Wright is concerned not only with building *within* the Modern world, but with building *a world*

itself. This view plays an important role in the nomadic theory of architecture.

After the subsection on “Earth,” we find the subsection titled “The Shadow-of-the-Wall – Privative Instincts Still Alive.” Herein Wright explores a range of concepts under a single rubric: the myth of the nomad and the cave-dweller.

Go back far enough in time. Mankind was divided into cave-dwelling agrarians and wandering tribes of hunter-warriors; and we might find the wanderer swinging from branch to branch in the leafy bower of the tree, insured by the curl at the end of his tail, while the more stolid lover of the wall lurked, for safety, hidden in some hole in the ground or in a cave: the ape?³¹

Here we have a myth of origins. Later we see that the cave-dweller, who “lives in the shadow of the wall,” protecting himself with a club, becomes in modern times the “city dweller.” Conversely, the “nomad,” who finds his dwelling-place in the “folding tent” becomes the modern citizen, a man of the land, the adventurous “democrat.”

Wright's myth has immediate cultural resonance. Wright was certainly influenced by native cultures in his ornamental designs (such as in the Imperial Hotel), and we see here two Native American tribal types reflected in his writing. The nomad is the Plains Indian, with his collapsible tepee. The cliff-dwelling tribes of the American Southwest – who were a hot topic at the turn of the century and even seem to have inspired a club (“the Cliff Dwellers”) in Chicago in which Wright took part – provided another model. Wright's discussion is directed towards an *American* audience: it takes knowledge of the place, the history, and the cultures of America for granted. Wright, like Tessenow, is speaking to his own culture.

In the passage quoted above, Wright aligns the cave-dweller with the conservative. Wright's discussion is certainly located within a certain tradition and he is *conservative* of certain values which have to do with his ideas of human nature and Nature in general. But Wright considers himself progressive; he obviously identifies himself with the wandering nomad. This is important as a contrast to Tessenow's discourse of dwelling. *Housebuilding and Such Things* implicitly conserves a certain social hierarchy by uncritically deferring to an authority which assures patriotism, industry, and other standard middle-class values. Wright has a different approach that sidesteps authority. On the surface there is, of course, his attack on the status quo, but the key is his articulation of an *alternative* to the status

31 Frank Lloyd Wright, *ibid.*, page 21.

quo. For Wright, the *nomad* is not the man who *fight*s the cave-dweller – they are, after all, brothers in their humanity, and Wright accepts the cave-dwellers' presence even while he rails against their fixity; the nomad embodies an alternative. This is how Wright avoids a Utopian outlook; as with Tessenow, Wright is interested in the *present*. His question is: What can we do *now*?

“Part One” of the *Living City* is not obviously about architecture; Wright's architectural theory enters the discussion by way of his approach to modernization.

Yes – modern science makes all ancient, static defenses useless. Man's value now depends not so much upon what he has made static (that is to say, saved, stored up, fortified) as upon what he can *do* – still better - by proper use of new scientific resources. So a human type is emerging capable of rapidly changing environment to fit its desires, one amply able to offset the big city of today: remnant of the great, ancient 'Wall.' In this capability to change we have the new type of citizen. We call him democratic.³²

Here, Wright is aligning modern architecture – a practice implying progress and overcoming³³ – with the democrat, the descendant of the mobile nomad. It is important that this is a strain of *modern* architecture. The discourse of dwelling is often considered pre-modern, ignoring a “modernism” that is broader than rationalism. What Tessenow calls “strong industrial values” (the forces of modernization and rationalism) represent only one strain of the Modern movement, a strain which both Tessenow and Wright accept as an important part of architecture. As Wright illustrates, the discourse of dwelling is also concerned with proper use of materials and technical form, for example. But Wright develops these themes around the notion of a “creative civilization of the ground,” a concept that that implies traditional and cultural rather than rational foundations for modernization. Wright does develop terms such as “Time, Place, and Man” as *technical* terms – they carry a specific and specialized meaning for architecture. Wright's terms, however, are not *just* technical and “modern.” Wright relies on a shared experience of the human condition that lends an unspoken meaning to his language that does not rely on the experience of modernity. As Wright says: “Old wisdom and good sense are modern even now; it is their application that changes.”

To pinpoint the architecture Wright develops in the *Living City* we need to

32 Ibid., 23.

33 Gianni Vattimo, in *The End of Modernity: nihilism and hermeneutics in postmodern culture*, identified “progress and overcoming” as the two corollaries of modernism.



Figure 22
Ocotillo Camp
photographed from
outside, circa 1928

broaden the scope of
"architecture." Wright does not
limit himself to buildings; what he
is building exceeds the scope of
any of his projects, even
Broadacre City. He is laying the
foundations for an architecture of
"Usonia," an idealized version of
American society along
Jeffersonian lines with an added
component of mobility. For Wright, mobility is strongly linked to the American
values of pluralism and freedom. The ability of the nomad to escape his foes by
speed (of movement as well as thought) allows him to accept others as long as they
remain in their own place. In Wright's mythology, the nomad belongs on the prairie
and the Statists in the city;³⁴ neither needs to overcome the other as long as space
is maintained between them. It is implied that only America has this space and only
an idealized America (Usonia) can maintain the pluralism needed for a democratic
culture.

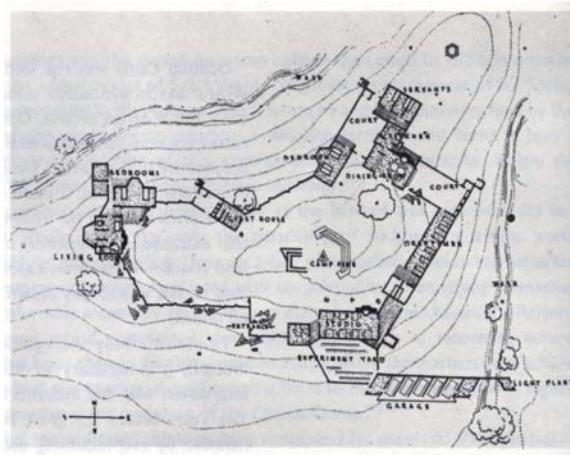


Figure 23
Plan of Ocotillo Camp,
built near Chandler,
Arizona, 1927

Wright's nomadic theory of architecture, as it could be called, is centered on

34 This is the same argument Deleuze and Guattari make in *Nomadology: The War Machine*.



Figure 24
Drawing of the principal entrance to Ocotillo Camp, 1927-1928.



Figure 25
Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright's winter residence in Arizona, built in 1938

a question: how are we to live in an unstable world, always on the move? This was seen as an American frontier question. The continual renewal of primitive conditions that ostensibly occurs at frontiers – the subject of Frederick Jackson Turner's talk at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago and a central idea in the pioneer mythology that subsequently developed – requires a constant renewal of contact with the bare foundations of life. For Wright these grounds are time, place, and humanity. Wright's individualism is based on the need for everyone to rediscover these conditions for themselves; this was also what Heidegger called the greatest and most difficult tasks of Dasein. Wright's architecture – the buildings he built – was fundamentally a means of reconnecting people with these foundations. His Ocotillo Camp project, for example, touched only lightly on the earth, seeming to grow out of the landscape (figs. 22 & 23 & 24); the project seems to require people to actively build a *life on Earth*.

Wright's largest architectural goals were in the social realm: he wanted to help build a society with nomadic values. People's constant movement would allow them to continually re-orient themselves to the changing demands of life. Wright's own house at Taliesin West was a testament to these ideals (fig. 25). Superficially resembling a series of tents, Taliesin served as a nomadic encampment, a winter home for a traveling man. This was perhaps based on the Native American idea of a

summer- and winter- camp, linking Wright with the culture of his nation and the land it inhabits. The idea of settling lightly on the vast American land is by no means unique to Wright; the Tent Cities I will examine next embody this same logic.

Tent City

The Tent City movement represents an intersection of the discourses of shelter, dwelling, and the nomad. The functional view of life that sees homelessness as a lack of shelter tends to take center stage at this meeting; the clean and simple logic of the social justice movement is appealing to the middle-class, who finds it difficult to relate to the situation of the stereotypical homeless person. The discourse of dwelling, with its broad existential questions and complex and messy cultural logic, often enters in the form of a cynicism that can only question the problematic of shelter – and is therefore seen as counterproductive from an activist standpoint. The nomadic strain represents the force that is able to subsume both rationality and questioning to *action*. This is the sense in which Deleuze and Guattari use the term “nomadic,” a usage that, as we will see, can provide the basis of an architecture.

The homeless have no special claim to nomadism, neither in the special “Deleuzoguattarian” sense nor the “classical” sense.³⁵ The particular way people live in the Tent Cities is no more *superficially* nomadic – mobile and disconnected from any specific place – than the middle-class (who sometimes move from house to house on an almost yearly basis). The way the mobility and uprootedness of the Tent City residents create an ephemeral set of forces that in turn create an immanent social structure provides, however, a relatively simple approach to nomadic architecture. The social structure surrounding the Tent Cities serves a specific purpose: the Tent Cities are focused on the problem of creating a home in the world, even if only tentatively. This problem is an absolutely general human problem; as such, the evident “homelessness” of the Tent City residents will provide a hinge to a broader nomadic theory.

The first “Tent City” was set up in Seattle in 1994 in protest of the city government's treatment of the local homeless population, specifically those who live on the south edge of downtown near Beacon Hill in the forested vicinity of I-5 and I-90. This area had become known as “the Jungle” and was subject to bi-yearly sweeps, with bulldozers and garbage trucks forcing out the itinerant population that had had several months to establish itself. “Tent City 1” was set up on Beacon Hill by this displaced population in clear sight of the I-90 freeway. The homeless

35 The term “Deleuzoguattarian” comes from Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*.



Figure 26
Overview of the Tent City 3 encampment during its stay at Seattle University in February 2005. Facing west from the embankment at the northeast corner of the tennis court.

population had joined forces with SHARE and WHEEL³⁶, a pair of homeless-run advocacy groups, and had started a campaign of visible protest with signs urging “Don't destroy this urban village.”³⁷ The homeless had been given a voice in a very public arena – the city's freeways – and, predictably, the first move by the city was to stifle the protests: Mayor Norm Rice was reported by *The Seattle Times* as saying “we can't allow trespassing to occur no matter what the reason is.”³⁸ Eviction notices were put on tents and bulldozers once again moved in. The population of Tent City 1 dispersed, presumably back into the Jungle or to similar areas across the city; they were once again out of sight.

The same set of events happened in 1998. As the city prepared to clear the Jungle, homeless protesters set up an encampment on Beacon Hill as they had done in 1994. While the newspapers failed to acknowledge that the event had occurred just four years earlier, the banners proclaiming the encampment “Tent City 2” made the point that clearing the Jungle did not really solve any problem.

36 Acronyms for “Seattle Housing Resource Effort” and “Women's Housing, Equality, and Enhancement League.”

37 The Seattle Times, “16 arrested near dome at sit-in for homeless,” Local News page B1, 1995 March 30.

38 Ibid.

Whereas Tent City 1 was relatively unorganized, Tent City 2 made an effort not only to make the problem of homelessness visible, but to solve part of the problem itself:

We agree with the city that the jungle is unsanitary and unsafe. We're addressing those issues. We've shown with the encampment on Beacon Hill that we've addressed those issues. We've worked with a public-health nurse, an environmental-health specialist, the Fire Department and Police Department. . . . The encampment is a safe place to sleep until people can get into a traditional shelter or transitional housing or permanent housing. It's not meant to be permanent housing. It's safe. That's all.³⁹

The Tent City was presented as an “emergency solution,” rhetoric that has become the basis of the Tent City movement, both legally (the city can issue Emergency Shelter Permits for homeless encampments) and morally (it makes “substandard” housing acceptable on a short-term basis).

Tent Cities 1 and 2 generated minor sensations in Seattle. In each case, local newspapers ran several articles every week covering the accompanying political statements, protests, and legal actions. As a result there was a groundswell of support for the homeless. The surge in donations of capital led SHARE/WHEEL (now acting as one entity) to set up, one year later (in 1999), another encampment, ostensibly as a way of ameliorating the problems of those “rousted from downtown parks and doorways” by the people who flocked to Seattle to protest the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference.⁴⁰ “Tent City 3,” as it came to be called, was the first of the encampments to reside at a church (the Crown Hill United Methodist Church). This situation, which has become the standard, tends to give the encampment political credibility by situating it within the widely-understood framework of missionary work, but leads to a complicated meeting of advocates of homeless shelters such as SHARE/WHEEL with advocates of a religious approach. This latter approach embodies, as we will see, the discourse of dwelling. By inhabiting such a meeting point, Tent City 3 was not only the first attempt in Seattle to erect a semi-permanent homeless encampment which would act as the reference point and motivational force for an entire social reform movement but

³⁹ *The Seattle Times*, “It's back to the Jungle for homeless advocates – city says Beacon Hill Tent City must fold,” Local News page B3, 1998 June 25.

⁴⁰ *The Seattle Times*, “Tents move in, fears move out,” Local News page B1, 1999 November 30.

also as a means of focusing the problem of finding a home on a concrete community of homeless people.

There are currently (2005) two “Tent Cities” in operation in Seattle, Tent City 3 (which operates on the west side of Lake Washington) and Tent City 4 (which operates on the east side). Due to the requirements of the temporary permits that allow the Tent Cities to provide substandard shelter for the homeless, these encampments are required to move every sixty to ninety days. By elaborating one of Tent City 3’s “visits” it is possible to draw out the conflict of shelter and dwelling.

In February of 2005, Tent City 3 was set up on a tennis course owned by Seattle University, a Jesuit school on First Hill, near downtown Seattle. The process that led an educational institution to host a homeless encampment – for the first time ever⁴¹ – was, predictably, a tangle of University politics. The idea stemmed from a graduate student project that sought a way to incorporate the Jesuit project of promoting social justice to the entire campus community. One particular student – Joe Orlando, who had recently been hired as the Director of Jesuit Mission and Identity – took on the job of carrying this idea through. Through a series of negotiations with other University departments, the Dean, the city of Seattle, SHARE/WHEEL, and the people of the encampment itself (who use a directly-democratic voting model), Mr. Orlando was able to schedule a thirty day visit in February of 2005. The entire University was to be involved. There would be educational events for both students and the homeless and opportunities for serving the homeless; the visit would be a catalyst for social change and Jesuit missionary work.

While its program of services had a much different focus, the physical incarnation of Tent City 3 at Seattle University was not fundamentally different from that of any other visit it had made in the approximately four years since its original form at the Crown Hill United Methodist Church. There were around 70 homeless

41 “I have worked on homelessness issues for over 30 years in all regions of the country and it is my expert opinion that this is indeed the very first time a university has opened its doors to the homeless population.” Michael Stoops, Director of Community Organizing National Coalition for the Homeless, from “Tent City 3 Comments” on the Seattle University website.

men and women (predominately men) who lived in several dozen tents arranged in a haphazard fashion (fig. 26). There were the usual amenities – small-scale food preparation, portable toilets, an enclosed site, etc – as well as several ones that were unique to the location: an adjacent outbuilding provided the opportunity for educational events, campus security was available to regularly patrolled the area, and the nearby student center served as the venue for large publicity conferences. I had the opportunity to follow closely the events surrounding the visit and to document the features of the site and the architectural program. I will talk first about the discussions that took place within the University during the Tent City's visit and then about the architectural makeup of the encampment itself. The inability of the categories of shelter and dwelling to account for either the discussions or the architecture of the encampment will lead to a discussion of nomadic architecture.

The intersection of the discourses of shelter and dwelling was dramatized at the inaugural press event sponsored by Seattle University which took place in the campus student center. Two sets of actors emerged, and one was clearly dominant. The owner of Car Toys, Dan Brettler, a local and prolific philanthropist, embodied the rational side of the equation. In his speech, he promoted an action plan drawn up by a working group of the Seattle City Council that would “end homelessness in ten years.” It was, for him, a matter of funding and therefore a matter of visibility. By such events as the visit of Tent City 3 to Seattle University, the public would become aware of the housing shortage and respond by making donations and calling for legislation that would fund programs for the poor. The city and the state had their hands tied; only a middle-class who sympathized with the poor would provide the votes and the dollars needed to end a problem. And the plan was in place. Former City Councilman Ron Sims made an appearance to assure the audience that an end to homelessness in ten years would be entirely feasible; after all “there is no homelessness in Norway [...] and there is no homelessness in Japan!”⁴² This view represents the mainstream approach to homelessness, an approach that seemed at the conference to be fundamentally flawed. For example, Mr. Brettler acknowledged, in response to a question from the audience, that similar ten-year plans had recently been tried and had failed in other cities across

42 From notes taken by the author during the conference.

the country.

After the politician and the capitalist/philanthropist had garnered their applause, Jesuit and Seattle University President Stephen Sundborg took the stage. Father Sundborg focused, as the other Jesuits to whom I talked had, on a certain combination of personal faith, “radical” service, and community awareness. He did not insist on a solution to the problem of homelessness even while he promoted makeshift palliatives to earthly suffering. In this way, Father Sundborg never left solutions to the future. He seemed to insist that there is a tradition alive within Catholic culture that is able to provide solutions today rather than in ten years. This tradition revolves around a conception of home that has little to do with shelter. Home is centered on God and a religious community, each recognized as stable, eternal entities. The fact that neither a single God nor a single community is popularly recognized as such suggests that the cultural basis of dwelling is not solid enough to motivate any particular *action* in regards to the problem of homelessness.

In the Jesuit approach – which refuses to defer solutions to future – home emerges through working out the question of how we are able to live in an unstable world. This involves connections to a community and personal psychological qualities – faith, determination, independence, etc – that only emerge through performance on a cultural stage. In short, the solution to homelessness must be built into a social structure; it can be approached as an *architectural* problem. This is just what Tent City 3 does. Beyond the facile rhetoric of shelter – in which, as Ron Sims stated, “homelessness is unacceptable and must be ended,”⁴³ presumably by ten-year plans – it is the immanent structure of forces that shaped Tent City 3, both programatically and formally. These forces can be explained in part



43 Ibid.

through the discourse of dwelling.

A shared culture and community, an essential precondition for home, are only the aggregate of a multitude of minor negotiations on the part of individuals within the community. "Individual," of course, makes little sense in this context: the idea of a singular entity must be replaced by an entity that emerges from the very interactions that form its external world. Take the example of tents, which can be taken individually or as a set. Only by existing as a group within an environment that is dominated by buildings (houses and student dormitories, for example) do they take on their meaning as substandard housing. Only by huddling together on a tennis court, surrounded by a fence and a visual barrier of trees, do they gain legitimacy as a relatively large-scale solution. Only by seeming to provide only *shelter* do they represent a unified movement can they be accepted by the Seattle community as a whole. The group of tents at Tent City 3, which become architecture when given significance within this social structure, play up the essential requirements of dwelling. The first of these requirements is acceptance.

As we have seen, from the very beginning, the first objective that the Tent City movement hoped to accomplish was visibility. On the surface, this seems like a means to two separate ends: first, exposing the plight of the homeless (visibility as a means of solving a problem); and second, exposing the homeless way of life (visibility as a first step towards acceptance). While the Tent City movement continues to promote a *solution* to the homeless problem the attempt to promote acceptance was quickly buried beneath the simplifications of the mainstream social justice discourse. The Tent Cities embody, at this level, a rational discourse that insists on a solution – namely the provision of shelter. This strong discourse, however, is never really disconnected from the discourse of dwelling, even if it is



Figures 27 – 30 (this page and the previous page)

All photos of Tent City 3 on the tennis court at Seattle University. **27** Joe Orlando (right) speaking to a resident of Tent City 3. **28** From the center of the court, facing northwest. **29** Man in a tent. **30** Near the northeast corner facing west.

rarely brought up in public discussion. In the complicated lives of those who are “homeless,” the simple problematic of shelter will always be contained within a more general questioning of what it means to be at home. In the case of the Tent City movement, this discursively weaker strain has been successfully submerged in order to make the movement more acceptable to an audience that wishes to hear only plans of action. The complex social phenomenon called “homelessness” is conflated with the personal lifestyle choices of homeless individuals and the (mal) functioning of the economic system. Homelessness is “fought” as if the situation were only a superficial set of personal and economic “problems.” Looking at the visit of Tent City 3 to Seattle University, however, we have seen traces of the discourse of dwelling, which requires, first of all, the acceptance of homelessness. The inability of the movement's stated goals – ending homelessness in ten years, for example – to explain how the Tent Cities operates necessitates this broader (existential) approach.

As with Wright's architecture, Tent City 3 is connected to the existential foundations of dwelling as envisioned by Heidegger. Time, place, and humanity inhere in the structure of Tent City 3. *Time* in the permanence of the Tent City movement as a legitimate, recognized community with an ambivalent permanence within the larger Seattle community. Tent City 3 relates its inhabitation to the movement of time through its provision of a stable reference point to a group of mobile inhabitants. *Place* inheres through its intimate connection to the ground of the Pacific Northwest and Seattle; the rain, the urban infrastructure, the nearby population, the individual neighborhoods – all must be at the forefront of the Tent City inhabitants' consciousness. Making the *humanity* of the homeless population visible to a larger community that often sees substandard housing as a sign of



barbarity is another essential function of the Tent Cities. Together with the provision of shelter, establishing the foundations of dwelling constitute a large part of the significance of the Tent City movement.

There is, however, one component that is missing. Not only are the Tent Cities more than just shelter, they are more than dwelling places. Dwelling presupposes a set of relatively stable categories or entities around which a world is built – significant pieces of architecture, the ideas of God and community, or a set of values, for example – that are *always* undercut by *change*. The historical perspective of modern humans has displaced these categories from their previously central position so insistently that they no longer act as loci of human Being. What we are left with, as Deleuze and Guattari seem to argue, is a set of relationships and interactions. The previous discussion about shelter and dwelling has revealed very little about the structure of forces that hold the Tent City movement together; the discussion has stayed at the level *above* the constitutive elements – seeing individuals and individual communities rather than analyzing how they are created and held together. This is the key to the nomadic theory of architecture.

“The homeless” is a category into which various individuals, with their own complicated lives, are slotted. This does a couple of things. First, it allows individuals to be identified; it construes the condition of homelessness as the trait of an individual human. Second, it suggests a problem of shelter and a problem of home, placing it within the discourses of shelter and dwelling. In short, the category of “the homeless” carries out the simple synthesis which this paper has been leading up to. This is convenient from a theoretical standpoint. However, it erases the affective potentials that become visible when one is homeless or one thinks through the problem of homelessness. The package – shelter plus dwelling – has been put together too neatly for homelessness to be used. By looking at how the social structure of the Tent Cities is constantly created and recreated through its mobility, impermanence, and interaction with a larger social structure, the threads of this synthesis will begin to unravel.

Nomadic Architecture

Mapping the genesis of the individual (whether an individual person or an individual building) is essential to understand how a structure is created. Individuals can be seen as *coming to be* through a process of orientation, a central feature of our common human experience. Two means of orientation become immediately visible in regards to Tent City 3, each of which is connected to a way people relate to the built environment in general. First: looking out from the tennis court one sees the skyscrapers of downtown Seattle (fig. 26). This exemplifies orientation to a static, central idea or object (a monument) that embodies an idea. This was implicit in the program of Tent City 3 at Seattle University. It was certainly hoped by some members of the religious community that the homeless would come to recognize God and would therefore be saved. The state officials would also have hoped that, through a realization of their place within the capitalist system, the homeless would learn how to lift themselves out of poverty. This type of orientation inscribes a power structure onto an individual and makes the power structure visible, and in the process helps the individual to define himself against a larger entity. In Deleuzoguattarian terms, this type of orientation serves not only to *represent* the State but also to *carry out* the affective machine that is the State. Here, the "State" is a stable (at least on the scale of human lifetimes) power structure that is built on the broad foundation of shared understanding; it is a fixed reference point and contains a reliable function.

Orientation to a static power structure is certainly important for smoothly-functioning social life. The architecture that houses the institutions that are the foundation of communal life reminds us of our place within a larger system. The *symbolic* power derived from their monumental status assures us of the stability of government as well as the continuity of our shared lifeworld itself. At the same time, these buildings, as monuments, make us *do* something; we acknowledge the authority and power of these institutions and work within the social parameters that they set.

Around these centers – cathedrals, banks, libraries – is a stratified terrain of significant architecture that allows us to continually re-orient ourselves, creating nodes around which our identity is formed. The street grid, power lines, parking

lots: each tells us in its own unequivocal way that things are under control by a power larger than ourselves. This ordering provides the *base* of our understanding of the world.

The structure of the built environment comes to be reflected in a structure of human individuality – people come to think of themselves as static personalities, modeled after monuments or Gods. Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, called this structuring power

of the built environment “the human condition of work.” It is human works, which we make and live with, that create our world, our map of reality. Heidegger, in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” gave the example of a bridge over the Rhine: the bridge serves to anchor those who know it to the earth, to the sky, to the divine, and to humanity. For Heidegger, this poetic experience mediates between *works* and *worlds*. As Arendt elaborated, works and worlds are therefore dialectically related. The importance here is in the *relations* that enact this interplay; that is, this dialectic is not as important as the reciprocal *actions* of works on worlds and worlds on works. Foucault called these relations the “microphysics of power;”⁴⁴ these could alternately be interpreted as a series of forces that create an immanent structure between the two poles of humans and the environment.

This orientation to a center, carried out by a set of stratifying machines that are also symbols, does, in fact, *create us*. We are embedded in a structure of signs and symbols attached to things in places and time that literally *direct* our movements (both mental and physical). We can no more *escape* this than we can wander curvilinearly through a gridded downtown – we are always running up against the built environment that preexists our actions.

But we are not merely instruments of the State; the semi-permanent built environment is a social construct and therefore requires human complicity.

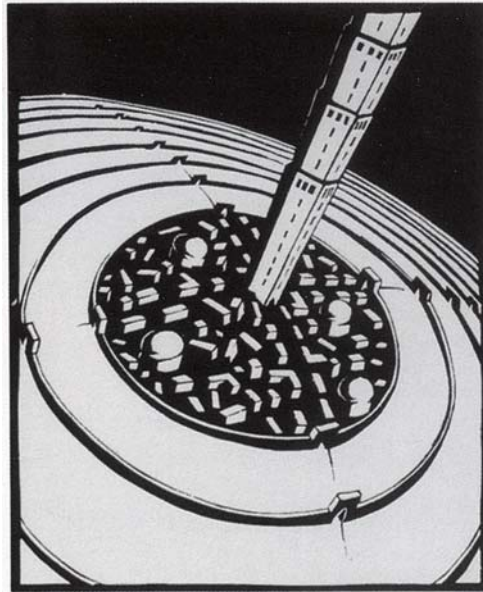


Figure 32
A clear expression of how monumental architecture organizes space, Ottheinrich Stohmeyer, *Das Kreuz im Kreise*, 1920

44 Discussed in Deleuze, *Foucault*.

Monuments are not perfectly stable nor all-powerful; institutions, like individual people, change and dissolve over a long enough timespan. One recent example of the inherent *instability* of monuments and lifeworlds was the demolition on September 11th, 2001, of the World Trade Center in New York. The object, the idea, and the machine of global capitalism came under direct attack and suffered a catastrophic loss. Smaller-scale slippages occur constantly, whether under the heading of “terrorism” or another deviant behavior.

This continual destratification is evident in an entirely prosaic form in the Tent City movement. Contrasted with the stability of the Tent Cities' function (as a provider of services) is the mobility and personal freedom of its residents. By using the services of the program in a way that was never intended (to live comfortably without a home outside of mainstream society, for example), the residents are able to twist the prerogatives of the State. Like cells in the human body, people join and leave the Tent Cities, often remaining “homeless,” while the overall program remains unchanged. While the State is only *imagined* to be dissolved (in the same way that it was only a collective imaginary experience in the first place, whatever force it may have), the experience of its dissolution brings to the fore another mode of orientation that supplants orientation to a center. This is the second type of orientation: orientation to a direction.

If we disallow individual centers and the stratified space that gathers around them, we are left with what Deleuze and Guattari, in *Nomadology*, call smooth space. While this idea could be analyzed in many contexts, the example of the homeless will serve the purpose. In contrast to the urban space that is authorized by the institutional power of the city – sidewalks, streets, freeways, elevators, offices, etc – the homeless inhabit a space that leaks into alleys, under bridges, behind buildings; the boundaries that are set in place and are normally respected are transgressed, serving to smooth the edges of the built environment. The necessities of finding a hidden place to sleep or urinate causes space to open up. The homeless are often not authorized to use certain areas, so other areas become are opened up for unauthorized uses.

Space, in this view, becomes subordinated to a set of flows. Eating, moving, defecating – functions that under normal circumstances are highly ordered – become matters of conscious thought, thus constantly directing action. From the

perspective of a normal citizen, the way these persistent nudges in certain directions (which may seem abhorrent) create a certain lifestyle and type of individual is much more obvious than how similar circumstances create their own personality.

This is a different type of architecture than that of the State; while architecture as it is generally understood serves to uphold a power structure and enact what Deleuze called the “society of control,”⁴⁵ another type of architecture is inherent in the structure of relationships that create both the environment and human individuality. The aggregation of these slight re-orientations (nudgings) creates a structure, an architecture that could be called nomadic.⁴⁶ How do we come to recognize the homeless in the city? We may see them as panhandlers, but in this situation they tend to fade into the crowd; they can very easily be ignored by the disinterested pedestrian. It is through the built environment that accompanies the homeless way of life (or the human environment at the lowest level, including refuse as much as constructed elements) that we see them. The citizen, walking on the sidewalk, sees garbage in an interstitial space – under an overpass, for example. *This is odd; perhaps just accumulated garbage from passing motorists.* On closer inspection, however, she sees that it is a personal dump, a cardboard sleeping-pad, some personal possessions, and a fire pit. *Someone lives here!* From here a series of actions follow: calling up the mayor's office to have the area cleared out because people shouldn't live in such filthy conditions; donating to local shelters because it's better they sleep on a cot than on the cold hard ground. The force of the built environment and the force of homelessness can be seen at the same time. It is the potentials opened up by this moment of recognition that are important. Meaning is subsumed to affect: a force has directed thought (and action), diverted flows (movement and through), and ordered space *before* it took on a meaning. Take an example: Walking through the Jungle on Beacon Hill, one comes upon a clearing with a tent in it. One becomes silent and stops. *Someone lives here! Is he*

45 Deleuze, “Postscript to Societies of Control.”

46 The visibility of this process amongst the homeless serves merely as an example to an outside audience; I do not mean to suggest that the homeless have a monopoly on nomadic architecture.

dangerous? This is nomadic architecture.⁴⁷ Flows are interrupted and diverted; potentials emerge; the relationship of forces takes precedence over meaning or form.

Notice that the individual is not apparent in this situation. The person who comes upon the encampment disappears when faced with an assertive environment. Instinct takes over and action is not subject to an individual's will. Furthermore, the response is to what Slavoj Žižek calls an "organ without a body" rather than to another person. It is the imagined threat of a hand with a knife in it that is responded to, not the ill-will of any particular person. These temporarily disembodied forces create an architectural affect. The diversion of flows (the stroll through the forest) provisionally orders space (one cannot walk through a tent).

This is important because it allows us to approach social interactions through an architecture. Homelessness, for example, becomes a microstructure. We can build a world with homelessness-forces in a way analogous to building a library; each is a semi-permanent edifice built out of a set of materials.

So: start with a smooth space. Add forces. These forces usually refer back to an object in a place at a certain time. Thus space becomes bumpy. We see a structure to the forces connected to a structured space and time. That the structuring is an *effect* does not negate its power. The field of forces permeating the built environment establish buildings as architecture; and the forces themselves can be said to be the architectural element that is inherent in the entire social realm.

47 This is the same force of architecture identified by Adolf Loos in "Architecture." The structure of these forces themselves, apart from any physical manifestation, is what constitutes nomadic architecture.

Conclusion

My most pressing concern has been to establish the Tent Cities as architecture without losing the formative capacity of the homeless as agents in their environment. This is particularly a concern when talking about a group of people that are defined by their presumed inability to acquire a normal set of social goods, revolving specifically around a building, the house. I fear that when buildings come to be regarded as “architecture” they often lose the complexity of *how* they act within a larger social structure that is really a fine-grained pattern of forces. Even in our highly critical era, “architecture” often takes on the guise of an actor at the expense of human actors. This is certainly convenient and often very useful shorthand for a process that is generally acknowledged to be much more complex. My problem has been that in trying to explain the Tent Cities and the homeless, the diversity and multitude of forces – homeless-forces, state-forces, building-forces – that are required to do justice to the situation are lost in this restricted view. The architecture of Tent City 3 is not the buildings or the space of the tent encampment, but the entire field of forces surrounding it. Tent City 3 is an assemblage of forces. What do the tents do to different people? What do people do to tents? What about the environment (the ozone layer, the stock of old-growth forests)? Imagine flows of materials and bodies – tent fabric, food, waste, homeless bodies, police, money, rain, mud. Now imagine an abstract machine (a set of forces) that diverts, churns, processes, excretes – this machine is what was *built* with Tent City 3. This is architecture, the domain of architects and other people with other titles who dabble in architecture. This goes beyond functionality, because it does not deal with objects and subjects. The machine finds no difference between the two, incorporating both in its process.

This is abstract; it is high-level in the same way that a software program is higher-level than the silicon hardware it runs on. But the hardware and software are subsumed in a larger fleshware, a churning “time-flesh continuum” that often embodies a process. This diagram, this provisional structuring, is the architecture.

Why do I call this a nomadic theory of architecture? I have tried to navigate between two poles, finding the medium that links functionality (the domain of shelter) and being (the domain of dwelling). I have called this medium the domain of

forces. I want to look at *how* “architecture” emerge – that is, how we come to recognize buildings, which are an aggregation of forces – as individual objects. I want to look at *individuation*, the becoming that makes the individual visible.

This amounts, in a sense, to adding the effects of time. Rather than a static architecture that preserves an individual object against forces (such as gravity, decay, etc), I want to look at a dynamic architecture that takes the very microstructure of forces that causes things to change. These can be social forces, and we can map how significance changes. But these are linked also to physical forces that cause a building to slowly fall down or be deconstructed or reconstructed. This dynamic microarchitecture is what emerges as “architecture” on a higher, societal scale. These forces are what Deleuze and Guattari identified as the State: they stratify space, they cause provisional fixities. But in the long run, they are just buildups in a flow of matter and energy; talking about fixed, individual architectural objects is a very limited view of this larger picture.

It is this constant movement and destratification and deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari identify as nomadic. The nomad embodies the pure intensity that contrasts the pure being of the State. Nomadic architecture refuses to be unitary and assertive as a monument or questioning like an anti-monument. Rather, it is experimental, relying on lines of flight and continual individuation. In this way, the Seattle Public Library, for example, can become also a living room, a spaceship, a theater, or other things that do not depend on its Library-ness. We can also see it slowly falling down, being altered, and taking part in a changing Seattle. The Seattle Public Library does not remain the same object, but is constantly becoming many at the same time, never remaining any one for more than an instant and only in relation to a small segment of the population. This is how architecture works.

And this is also how Tent City 3 works. The continual physical movement from neighborhood to neighborhood of the encampment and its recurring opportunities to rebuild dramatizes the process of individuation very well. Tent City 3 is not a piece of architecture; it *works through* architectural processes, the social process of a set of forces becoming an individual work of architecture. Human actors surely have a visible hand in the direction Tent City 3 takes; architecture is a social event, a continual negotiation. The possibilities of experimentation Tent City 3 affords us are inherent in all architecture. What would we become if we lived in

tents? What would we become if we were all homeless? These questions of individuation are open to exploration as architecture possibilities; we can craft an aggregation of human lives and built environments by experimentally working in these directions.

The simple rational of shelter tends to lose sight of this larger set of possibilities; the questions of dwelling and its cultural foundations leave these possibilities unexplored even if they are acknowledged. Finding a home in the world must rely, ultimately, on a nomadic sensibility that is willing to experiment with life – to craft a life using the available forces.

Illustration Credits

1. *9H: On Rigor*, page 31.
2. Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, page 63.
3. Alan Colquhoun, *ibid*, page 62.
4. *9H: On Rigor*, page 33.
5. Giorgio Grassi, "Architecture as Craft," *9H: On Rigor*, page 53.
6. Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, page 24.
7. Jurgen Joedicke, *Weissenhofsiedlung Stuttgart*, page 51.
8. Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius, *Bauhaus 1919-1928*, page 56.
9. Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung : experimental housing built for the Deutscher Werkbund, Stuttgart, 1927*, page 24.
10. Richard Pommer and Christian F. Otto, *Weissenhof 1927 and the modern movement in architecture*, illustration 41.
11. Valerie Hammerbacher, *Weissenhofsiedlung Stuttgart: Wohnprogramm der Moderne*, page 1.
12. *Ibid.*, page 15.
13. *Ibid.*, page 51.
14. *Ibid.*, page 12.
15. *SHELTER*, November 1932, volume 2, number 5, page 1.
16. J. Baldwin, *BuckyWorks : Buckminster Fuller's ideas today*, page 25.
17. Martin Pawley, *Architecture versus Housing*, page 50.
18. Buckminster Fuller, "Universal Architecture," *T-Square*, February 1932, volume 2, number 2, page 28.
19. Buckminster Fuller, "Universal Architecture, Essay 3," *SHELTER*, May 1932, volume 2, number 4, page 37.
20. Buckminster Fuller, "Universal Architecture, Essay No. 2," *SHELTER*, April 1932, volume 2, number 3, page 34.
21. "Putting the House in Order," *SHELTER*, volume 2, number 4, (November 1932), page 2.

22. Giogrio Ciucci, "The City in Agrarian Ideology and Frank Lloyd Wright," in *The American City*, page 346.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid. page 347.
25. Ibid.
26. Author's photograph.
27. "Seattle University - Tent City Retrospective - Photo Gallery," [<http://www.seattleu.edu/tentcity/photogallery.asp>] Accessed June 2005.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Author's photograph.
32. Timothy O. Benson, *Expressionist Utopias*, illustration 110.

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