The *Nomad’s Lands* project main topic is nomadic societies, which are frequently treated at the margins of research on other subjects, due to source bias, epistemological contexts, and the lack of efficient approaches. It was selected at the end of 2020 to be funded for two years within the framework of the Junior Laboratories and MOM’s Axis 5.

The group of young researchers behind the project has therefore set itself the objective of putting them back at the heart of research while questioning methodologies, based on interdisciplinary reflection. The activities of *Nomad’s Lands* are based on thematic seminar sessions and on the organisation of an international conference planned for autumn 2022.

**A new topic for study?**

Nomadism goes back as far as our knowledge of human societies. Indeed, during the Palaeolithic period, which covers most of human history, the subsistence of human groups was based on mobility at different spatial and temporal scales. The rise of sedentary societies in the Neolithic did not lead to the end of these ways of living and exploiting the environment, which still exist today in various forms. The question of nomadic societies therefore concerns all prehistoric and historical periods. However, the study of nomadic societies comes up against three major pitfalls:

● Nomadic societies and activities leave tenuous archaeological remains: their inhabited infrastructures are light, often distributed in extensive spaces and their material cultures are sometimes not well recognised;

● On a historical scale, as many nomadic societies produce little or no written material, their past and present have been described mainly by sedentary people. The main textual sources on the subject are therefore produced by people external to the nomadic societies;

● 19th century positivism and evolutionism contributed, particularly in the context of colonisation, to shaping a Western scientific tradition which, until recently, saw nomads as primitive and irrational, as opposed to the more evolved and accomplished sedentary peoples.

However, this view does not fit with reality, as authors who have spent time with nomads have shown.

**An archaeological, historical, and geographical investigation**

*Nomad’s Lands* is a shared and transversal framework of reflection aiming at the development of new approaches to describe nomads and the spaces they occupy and inhabit in a more nuanced way based on three axes of reflection:

● Nomads' knowledge and management of environments. How do nomadic societies and environments interact? What are the ways in which nomads manage resources and constraints? To what extent are these passed on and/or adapted to environmental changes?

● Unity and diversity of material cultures. How are material cultures of mobility and nomadism defined? What common features or divergences can be found across time and space? What do nomads take with them and, conversely, what do they leave behind? What do they make again? What remains in time?
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- Relations between nomads and sedentary people. How can we envisage the insertion of nomads into wider socio-economic or political networks including other societies of the same type and/or sedentary people? Can one group exist without the other? Are the contacts and exchanges one-way? Are there cultural transfers? In what ways?

Interdisciplinarity to contribute to a renewal of the approaches of nomadism

Nomad’s Lands offers a space for dialogue between students, senior and junior researchers from various disciplines. Based primarily on archaeology, history and geography, and on exchanges with other specialists (ethnographers, anthropologists, etc.), it is a forum for the study of nomadic societies from prehistory to the present day, in a research process that aims to overcome the discourses that, until recently, marginalized nomads and their activities. This work on human occupation and itinerancy in diachrony is also a methodological and exploratory proposal that aims to participate in the renewal of questions and approaches to nomadism, by considering nomads in a different way and by placing their societies at the centre. Nomad’s Lands is thus part of a multidisciplinary tradition of methodological transfer and diachronic comparison that has been anchored at the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux (MOM, Lyon, France) since the late 1970s.

To achieve these objectives, the members of Nomad’s Lands organise regular seminars (8 sessions planned between January 2021 and December 2022; https://www.mom.fr/recherche-et-formation/axes-strategiques/labos-junior/nomads-lands) and will coordinate a final symposium in November 2022. These scientific meetings mobilise the field and analytical skills of specialists from the MOM and other institutions. Nomad’s Lands thus lays the foundations for a research network, for the mutualisation of data and approaches that already exist or are in the process of being integrated within research missions and projects. The contribution of specialists from disciplines that are little or not represented at the MOM makes it possible to take a new look at data that has been little used up to now and that has often been acquired at the periphery of historical, archaeological, and geographical studies, and to propose new interpretations. The approach initiated by Nomad’s Lands thus makes it possible to revise the material cultures, the strategies of occupation of territories and movement, the management of resources and the environment, and the insertion of nomads and nomadic societies in wider networks.

Summaries of the past seminars

The first seminar session entitled "Water and nomads" (4 February 2021) was based on contributions from Isabelle Goncalves (HISOMA, Desert Networks) on the nomads of the Eastern desert of Egypt in the Pharaonic periods, Nicolas Jacob-Rousseau (Université Lyon 2, Archéorient) on water-related practices in the Wadi Ramm desert (Jordan) in the 21st century and Laurent Gagnol (Université d’Artois, Discontinuités) who discussed the naming, place and functions of the Tuareg water points in the central Saharo-Sahelian space.

The second session, entitled "Showing the other, filming nomads" (29 March 2021) consisted of exchanges based on Danielle Davie's presentation of her thesis work in filmic anthropology on a Bedouin family in Syria, and on geohistorical elements provided by Vincent Capdepuy (Géographiecités), who was the main respondent.
The third session, "Production of knowledge on nomadic societies in a colonial context" (25 June 2021), included contributions from Maël Crépy (IFAO, Archéorient, Desert Networks) on the description of Egyptian nomads in the accounts of Western travellers and explorers (18-20th c.), Guy Barthèlemey (IMAF, SERD) on the figure of the nomad in the works of Dom Raphaël and T.E. Lawrence and Yassir Benhima (Sorbonne Nouvelle, CIHAM) on the historiography of Hilalian migrations.

The 4th session entitled "Without leaving any trace? Material culture and visibility of pastoral nomads in the south of the Eastern Sahara" (3 December 2021) saw the intervention of Friedrike Jesse (University of Köln) on the Leiterband and Handessi complexes of the Wadi Howar as a case study of the visibility of nomads in an archaeological context with Cécile Ménéger (University of Lyon 2, Archéorient) and Valentin Lafont (University of Lyon 2, Archéorient).