



Remoteness and Identity

Klausenpass, August 2024

You don't just 'go for a walk' in Canada. Setting off north from Montreal, the last settlements soon recede into the distance and eventually you reach the North Pole; it is a harsh one-way journey. Similarly, a trip north in Britain ultimately encounters, dead-end, the North Sea. Switzerland, on the other hand, is in the middle of the European landmass. Traversing even the most exposed alpine pass leads, before too long, to inhabited lands. The image and the instrumentalising of mountains, alps, and passes lies at the root of Switzerland's identity, economy and history, for the land has long been a crossroads for goods and people. Before too long, those who choose to stay, or who are left behind, become Swiss.

Lately, Swiss architecture has become enmeshed in densifying cities and suburbs, making concentrated centres, with little attention being paid to its counterpart: the condition of remoteness. With the climate crisis comes a reassessment of many aspects of Swiss land management and construction, including agriculture and tourism, and these important contributors to the image and the economy of Switzerland play out amongst the mountains.

This semester we will re-evaluate the qualities and uses of remoteness at the Klausenpass, where, at 1948 metres, the cantons of Glarus and Uri overlap. We will study and map the social and the historical, getting to know the walkers, bikers, soldiers, and maintenance crews that are its visitors today. Informed by cartographies, handbooks, and chronicles we will go on to design intimate settlements – newly constructed places that with buildings and gardens provide a space for contemplation, assembly, and quiet industry in this special place at the top of Europe.

Introduction: 17 September 2024, 10:00 am,
Klausenpass, Details to be announced
Construction and writing as integrated disciplines
are included in this course

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