

34th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (E5)  
Space Architecture: Habitats, Habitability, and Bases (1)

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MIGRATING SETTLEMENTS: THE ANT SPECIES ECITON BURCHELLI AND FUTURE MARS  
EXPLORATION.

**Abstract**

“Echiton Burchelli” is an army ant species, widely diffused in Central and South America. They differentiate from the most of the other ants subfamilies because their colonies are not permanent, but temporary. In fact, the life of the colony is characterised by an alternation of sedentary and nomadic phases: during the first phase, the ants do not excavate the ground or manufacture structures to create a shelter or settlement, as other species such as the “Oecophylla” do, but they create a temporary nest, called “bivouac”, which is made by the worker ants themselves, that hook and hold tight their bodies, in order to create a protection for their larvae, pupae and queen. They can also manipulate their configuration, in order to adapt to environmental conditions. Once this phase is over, the bivouac is dismantled and the nomadic phase begins, along with the search for another ideal nesting site. The present study aims to develop a conceptual design adaptation of the behaviour of the Eciton Burchelli, as it is believed that it might be of great interest for space exploration and architecture. To do so, it is proposed a system in which the relative of the worker ants are a swarm of specialised rovers which can aggregate, in order to create temporary settlements in which the humans would be protected. Each of these rovers would function as “intelligent bricks”, and they would be able to replicate and provide an essential duty on its own, such as ISRU, airlock, solar power, etc... more rovers would also be able to aggregate and form more complex and bigger rovers. The implementation of such sedentary and nomadic approach would allow new possibilities in space exploration, as it would make possible to explore more and different regions and not to stick to the original landing site.