



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

COURSE OF  
ARCHITECTURE FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY DESIGN

*Abstract*

DESCRIBING ABANDONED LANDSCAPES  
HISTORICAL SOURCES AND REVELATIONS ABOUT A COLLECTIVE  
CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE LANDSCAPE OF PAESANA

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The landscape is, as Martin Schwind wrote, "a work of art comparable with every other creation of man, but much more complex: whereas a painter paints a picture, a poet writes a poem, the people as a whole create a landscape, constitute the deep reservoir of their spirit". Thinking at the territory as a "theater", a "movable palimpsest" holding the culture and the identity of a civilization, we have studied the abandonment phases of the landscape of the Po Valley. In particular we have focused on the territory of Paesana, in that it can be considered the emblem of the great economic, social and cultural transformation occurred in the last 150 years.

The aim of this research has been to reveal the landscape through its protagonists, its events and their connections, reading the territory as a result of an ongoing anthropic transformation process.

Starting from fragments of territory, we have retraced the plots, the relations of continuity and discontinuity of long or short term processes that have brought us to these pieces of history. This have allowed us to outline a precise cultural context, an environment, a landscape, going beyond a merely factual knowledge of dates and facts. On the ground broken by the *Ecole des Annales*, our attention has been extended to those sources kept on the margins of the Great History for a long time: historic photographs, interviews, memoirs, popular songs, stories.

After the analysis of the agricultural trends and rites, the mountain pasture, the transhumance and the community life, we have investigated the steps that have transformed this area of social relationships into an abandoned place:

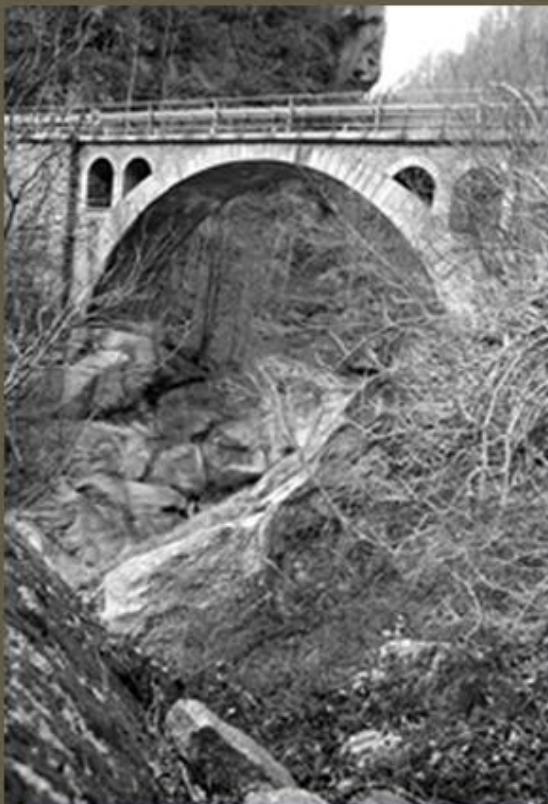
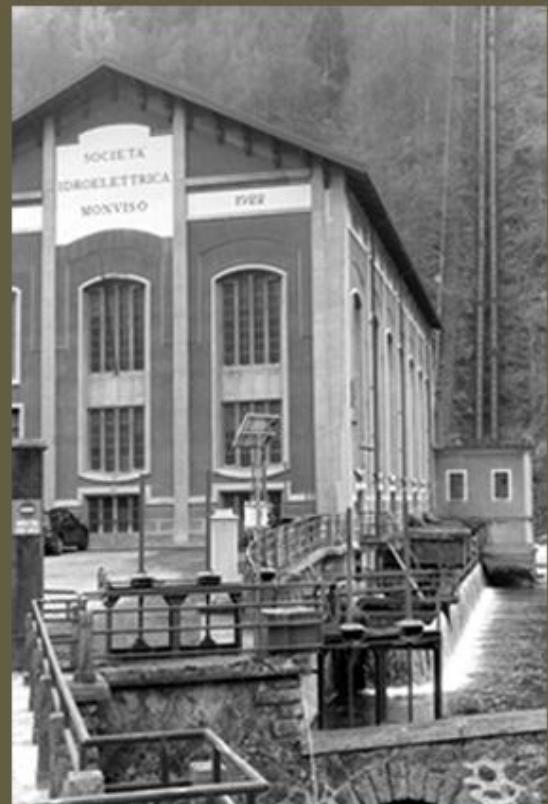
- **1871 - 1918** The beginnings of the industrial era, the myth of progress and the creation of a modern industry;
- **1919 - 1945** The first post war period and the economic expansion; the loss of specificity in agricultural strategies of Fascism and the beginnings of alpine tourism;
- **1946 - Today** The "great exodus" and new perspectives for re-inhabiting the mountain;

On the other hand our historical research has found a practical application through the use of photography which shows us the traces remained and the transformations occurred. Drawing inspiration from the experiences of the twentieth-century photographic campaigns, in particular those of the DATAR, and the census of the Italian historical

centers of Emilia Romagna made by Paolo Monti, we have postulated a semantic survey of the Paesana landscape.







In search of a systematic method in the succession of the pictures, we have evaluated different classifications. Instead of making a rigid classification of typological elements, physical or temporal places, we have thought to a proposal combining new relationship frameworks, like a writer writing a story. A *fil rouge* that connects the pictures to each other in a stream of consciousness, as James Joyce said, following the *leitmotif* of the photographic story.

In conclusion, without claiming that this framework could be exhaustive of the landscape totality, our pictures recreate a single whole image in the mind, which is our interpretation of Paesana landscape. As Arturo Carlo Quintavalle wrote: "Photography is necessary to see and the adventure of gaze and thought born, for a photographer, from a metaphysical view of the world".

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