

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
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Honors theses

Building in the Aosta Valley in between tradition and modernity

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The aim of this work is to reconstruct the steps that drove the way of *doing architecture* in the narrow territory of the Aosta Valley. The mountain region, rich in natural and scenery resources, is characterised by particular geographic conditions, that find their synthesis in the couple *cell* and *crossroads*. *Cell* because it is an island in Western Alps and *crossroads* because it has always been a link with Northern Europe.

The way of building the landscape is a crucial problem for both tourism and group identity, and involves different subjects and fields: Region Administration (i.e. the political area), public opinion, designers and firms.

The research focuses on the last 30 years, which have been an important period of transition. Since the seventies, after the industrial crisis and the flop of an economy mainly based on the secondary sector, the region has been pushed to find out a new model of development reinventing its role both on the national and international field.



As a matter of fact, in this period, as the end of the fortune of big factories was clear the importance of the territory and the peculiarity of the region were identified as a resource for future tourism development.

The work starts from the situation in which the action on the landscape takes place. It was important to study the laws and rules of the region, which are peculiar as the Aosta Valley is an autonomous region, also in order to understand cultural and political specific attitudes. From this analysis came out some rules having a direct impact on landscape building: within town planning and conservation directions, some laws allow for grants and funds for landscape protection and guardianship on agriculture and rural houses, recovery of ancient villages and buildings belonging to minor architecture.

In some cases we tried to quantify the number of requests and the funds which have been given, verifying the trend in the 74 communes of the Aosta Valley since the eighties. This allowed to draw some conclusions on the consistency between the aim of the laws and the results obtained.

It is important to refer also to the landscape plan approved in 1998, to the scheme of the regional plan of 1973 and to special rules deriving from the land use plan of some communes of the Valley.

The effect of the rules on the practical field has been analysed considering the difference between the *realisations* and the *realisators*.



As regards *realisations*, attention stressed on the recovery of existing structures both from public and private bodies. The public body used grants from Frio/Fospi Funds; we elaborated a table with the aim of highlighting the design approach, the technical realisation but also the educational role stemming from the necessity of giving a quality standard to the people.

Because of the privacy law, it was impossible to collect as much information for private actions; the exam could consist only in an external analysis of the buildings and their renovation.

The *realisators* section is dedicated to builders.

Having said that they play an important role in the region's economy by means of their technical skills and building techniques, we interviewed some building firm owners. The output is information on techniques and common operations in restoration building sites, the relationship with other subjects (i.e. designers, public and private purchasers), and the training of workers. This gave a realistic view of what happens in a building site, pointing out all the problems, which can mainly be found in the technical ignorance of workers and in the superficial approach to the project.



New buildings are characterised by a strong bond with tradition, expressed in the use of typical elements, and repropose the issues on the way of building on the Alps commented in the Alpine Architecture Meeting held in Bardonecchia, Italy, in the 50's.

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