

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO  
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2  
Degree in Architecture  
**Honors theses**

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**The eclectic villas in Valsesia. Historical research for a project of critical knowledge**

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It often happens that the concept of *property* is only linked with that of *monument* – considered as an autonomous object leading to an indisputable value judgement – which is mostly seen as the main aim of architectural and landscape protection. On the contrary we think that the cultural and environmental property is made up of a more complex reality, containing several strength – points – not only the monument – but also every architectural element on territory that turns that reality into a system to be preserved. This opinion explains the relativity of catalogation and qualification act.

In order to qualify properties it is good rule to investigate their ambit: a property has to be filed and improved with its ambit. This is why, when speaking about cultural and architectural properties, we speak about not only the ones so considered – those we called *monuments* -, but also buildings of local interest.



Villa Musy in Fobello, built by Costantino Gilodi in 1901

The aim of our study is to single out, to define, to qualify and to signalize those properties (buildings with their dependance and gardens) dating back to late XIX century and first decades of XX century – that period of modern architecture which is known as *eclectism* -, located in Varallo and in Valsesia.

Starting-point of our thesis has been Giorgio Ceretti and Pietro Derossi is essay titled *Le ville stagionali ottocentesche in Valsesia*, in *Atti e Memorie del congresso di Varallo Sesia* (PIETRO DEROSI, GIORGIO CERETTI, *Le ville stagionali ottocentesche in Val Sesia*, in *Atti e Memorie del congresso di Varallo Sesia*, Società Piemontese di Archeologia e Belle Arti, Torino 1960, pp. 455 sgg), containing a brief description of the villas. The following subjects have been deal with in our study:

- the re-discovering, in the second half of XIX century, of Valsesia as a privileged destination for holiday-makers: we have analized the motivations and the consequences which led to this phenomenon;
- the way the eclectic villas of Valsesia and their territory have been perceived and described in the turistic guides of that age: their purpose was that of listing and describing natural ad artistic beauties in order to improve visiting;



Villa De Toma in Varallo, built by Antonio De Toma [1900]

- the social and cultural references – those of mountain derivation and those coming up from big cities like Turin and Milan;
- the designers and their education, which directly influenced the architecture of Valsesia;
- the choices in terms of materials and skilled workers.

Our inquiry found basis on the research and analysis of archives and bibliography: its purpose is that of understanding the transformation of Valsesia and the social and economic events interesting this area.

This stage – analysis of archives and bibliography – led us to give value to what we called the *pre-scheda di catalogo* for buildings, which has to be used to catalog this type of properties. The aim of this *scheda* is that of being an instrument of study and a support for protection and administrative management. The *scheda* must give not only the knowledge of single buildings, but also useful information for their control and valorization.



Villa Grober in Alagna, built by Cristoforo Grober

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