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R.E.D.S. 2 ALPS  
DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE  
PROGETTANDO UN FUTURO SOSTENIBILE

ARCHITECTURE ECOLOGICAL DESIGN CITY AND LANDSCAPE

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# MONOGRAPH **.RESEARCH** 02

## RESILIENT ECOLOGICAL DESIGN STRATEGIES

**R.E.D.S.2ALPS**  
DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE  
TOWARD AN ECOLOGICAL  
APPROACH | PROGETTARE UN  
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VERSO UN APPROCCIO ECOLOGICO



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# FREEING THE VOICE OF THE PLACES

Silvia Dalzero

**Keywords:** War, Ruins, Memory

This research finds sphere in a mountain territory, in a territory characterised by historical memory, by social and environmental value. It is a return to frontline, to the 'theater of war', the First, where, even now, in various ways and forms, emerge: ruins of outposts, trenches, high altitude walkways, galleries and in all of those paths, villages everywhere, many mark the territory the 'white War', of that war fought on the eternal snow, the glaciers of the such suggestive but inaccessible peaks. A return that was a must, that is, to return to those places, too long neglected, more or less forgotten, a certain recognition of the current landscape, for the purpose of design, with the interest of highlighting, a mountain territory of surprising beauty even of war, of history, of cultural and social 'value'.

Paths of knowledge and in-depth study of the fortified space and of all those spaces mindful of a military value that 'loudly', now, ask to be 'recovered' and understood. A recovery plan, then, that you not only discover a rich place of historical value, but most of all the opportunity to discover the mountains, the natural beauty that distinguish it are added: the high altitude pastures, the trails that run through the gentle slopes or the rugged snow-capped peaks, always keeping alive the wonder in the eyes of the beholder. A veritable outdoor museum seen in a global sense is revealed because it guarantees an interest in hiking in nature but also a historical and civil interest; an animated land, here and there, by war machines, strong, shelters, ramparts... outcropping, in the manner and form as similar as different, from the rocks, the trees of the mountains marked by miles of trenches, walkways, cableways lines, stations artillery, villages and military barracks for the shelter of the troops. Places targeted and damaged that after the war naturally lost their strategic function, turned into stone quarries, metal mines for so-called 'recovering' that gave rise to livelihood and had, in effect, initiated a system of subsistence, increasingly, organized and articulated to the point of becoming a real industrialized system. Artefacts of war, for the most part, reduced to piles of stones, silent ruins, war stories that

gradually became recycling material and tangible proof of the absurdity of war, of history, of social and environmental value of our territory. Starting from 1918, in fact, once the last soldiers came back from the peaks and from the latest abandoned trenches, a bit everywhere, unexploded bombs were found as well as bomb deposits, equipment, weapons and even everyday objects to be reused or 'transformed', so that in the road of the valley everything would be resumed. A huge task to accomplish as soon as possible not only for the need of the material but also to reclaim the land that, soon would have seen the return of displaced people, of soldiers who lived there and who were eager to go to other contexts, toward new prospects and above all to forget, to go beyond.

There were, then, as mentioned, those figures 'who recover', described by both writers, Mario Righi Stern, for example, and both directors, as Ermanno Olmi in the film appropriately titled: *'I recuperanti'* who went to the 'plateau' in search of remnants of war metal to sell.

So, the mountain peaks, in addition to telling a story of war, became testimonies of ordinary poverty, hunger, merciless toil and great risks because the materials were not just scrap, but also the thousands of bombs, often unexploded, had hammered battlefields, being tangible evidence of the tragedy of war, a war at high altitude, a trench war, a war of bombardments, a war too often neglected and ignored.

Stories of men and women, old and children, 'loudly', now, ask to be 'recovered' so that our history, our territory, our social identities can always be manifest and be 'known' being revealed not only in the testimonies of war but also in all 'theaters of war', in those places where, more or less consciously, becomes overwhelmed by a virtual dimension, contested between a present and a past condition, a dimension of dream that seems, at times, to return to a fragment of a past life, a here and now superimposed on a past time, a kind of 'lost time' as Marcel Proust said, or another meaning a common space to both the past and the present. Ultimately, we would say once pregnant, filled and reinstated as time released, a time when the ruins do not accumulate under the storm of progress, but are recomposed and



redeemed; 'theatres of war', mindful of their historical value, then seek, another reason, another use, becoming, active and reactive in the social and territorial system in general.

Distant and suspended spaces, war scenarios where you can only imagine what you are observing; nothing but the simple link in a chain composed of units aligned before and after us. Indeed, precisely because of their anachronism, for their singular character seemingly detached from the context, from a common and usual time dimension these 'theatres of war', these ruins, these battlefields reveal the uncertainty, they stage a different reality that opposes the present and declares a 'lost past' and at the same time the possibility of a rare, fragile, ephemeral moment that escapes the present and it alludes and suggests fragments of a helpless some unknown continuity that stress the imagination and that causes a break, a controversial or uncertain feeling.

The ruins tend to mingle, to blend into the landscape, often, losing lustre imposed by man to return to be stone, to be ground, matter, 'nature' itself. After all the 'ruin', should not be thought of as a simple reality that destroys form but what form itself or rather, the mass in the form of destruction, nothing more than an 'accident' which derives precisely from status of 'instability', meaning another including both the historical memory and what is the present and the future to be, therefore, weaving of time, of forms and meanings, discernible in all those strong, bivouacked minds, galleries, mindful places, in different shapes and forms, acts of war. 'The Ruins' declares the tragic destruction but also the 'meaning' before the work being a witness to history, a social and territorial reason, asking to be reinterpreted and 'reactivated', developed in a system, added to a land recovery plan based precisely on a tale of war but also of place and landscape that looks forward, now to another 'life', another use. Nevertheless, in contemporary society a search for modernity is emerging, the eternal present that causes a flattening of time and a subversion of space in a perpetual here and now. Modern age leads to the disappearance of mythical origin, of historical value and the twentieth century, threatened by the kingdom of the evidence and the tyranny of the present, reduced to a simple fleeting moment of images, often useless, totally pleonastic and fabricated... Yet areas that resist time, actually (sometimes 'landscapes of nature', sometimes 'landscapes of ruins') witnesses a past history ask, just, to get

back to being a territory, or to go back to being active and reactive environments, recognizable and usually frequented in contemporary territorial dimensions.

Promises, therefore, of a return to the mountains, a return to the 'trenches', a return to the strong ones, a return to all those places full of 'landscape value' and also of 'reason of war', a war that swallows everything and confused, a war that breaks, tears, separates and rejoins, in a frightening continuity between figure and ground.

There is, indeed, a certain synergy, some 'circular power' between the memory and the physical experience, the state of affairs of these battlefields, military areas, artefacts of war in which you have to return: conscious and passionate. Well, territories, the 'exploitation' depends not only on 'form' but also from 'sense' their space, or the system of values that emerge over time and that you make, progressively, resources place understood, in fact, part of a relational system is both chart and memory. In this way, these singular *terrae incognitae* come to life both in the past and in the present is to project into space a wealth of emotions, virtues and qualities that can guide the transformation. You go, then, suggesting a balanced comparison between historical knowledge, cognitive, perceptual and territorial knowledge, geographical, environmental, a comparison that wins a mesh of territorial relations articulated in an order underlying the apparent chaos since the historical material and the geographical, cards cognitive and topographic maps are made sharers, common parts in the formation of the spatial and then the discovery and environmental enhancement. It is assumed, then, a recovery not only of the individual parts of a complex structure of the project but that means united spaces near and far, known and unknown spaces, and spaces built but not all shared, witnesses of the same war past, of a war, the First, consumed in the mountains, on the high snowy peaks of our Alps.

So a 'physical' trip from the suggestions and memories of the past able to put in close relationship place and history is proposed. Design ideas that, just through a careful recovery plan, is the interpreter of 'theatre of war', of forts, trenches, tunnels... made by paths, from the direct and indirect, physical and visual point of view.

On the other hand, as in the early nineteenth century, the same JW Goethe said: "Where the interest is Void, Void is also the memory" (2013 GOETHE, *Maxims and reflections*, 192).



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