

PhD in Architecture. History and Project

Research Title: Building the Alps

Funded by	Politecnico di Torino
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Context of the research activity	<p>In recent years, the Alps have again become an interesting laboratory where to experiment with new ways to design and build; a space to develop new strategies of local development and sustainability, and a territory where a specific attention to the landscape and to historical and cultural heritage must blend with technological innovation.</p> <p>Today, thanks to the recent launch of the European macro-regional strategy focused on the Alps (EUSALP), mountain-related issues acquire even more strategic importance. They become an opportunity for reflection on an idea of living closer to the specificities of the territory, its environment, its history.</p> <p>In this context the Politecnico di Torino, which has a long experience of working on Alpine territories, has re-founded in 2009 the Istituto di Architettura Montana (IAM), in the wake of the activities undertaken by teachers that have marked the identity of Turin's architecture school, such as Carlo Mollino and Roberto Gabetti.</p> <p>With the aim of enhancing the skills gained in more recent experiences, the IAM has been further consolidated as a research center of the Department of Architecture and Design (DAD), and performs numerous institutional activities, both cultural and scientific, in close cooperation with the local authorities, research institutions and Italian and foreign universities.</p> <p>In keeping with its competences and its constant and continuous activities, the IAM is today recognized nationally and internationally as an active subject in research on issues pertaining to the relationship between the built environment and the mountain.</p> <p>The IAM carries out activities in different fields: theoretical research (through articles, papers and publications); education (undergraduate and doctoral theses, doctoral courses, workshops, summer schools, etc.); project research through the development of pilot projects or the drafting of guidelines and best practices; and finally, cultural dissemination through the organization of conferences, exhibitions and the editing of its magazine, "ArchAlp".</p> <p>A favourable context to provide support for new research on</p>
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	<p>alpine architecture issues -whether design-oriented, or focusing more on territorial or historical studies - within this PhD program is therefore already in place. Moreover, Turin Polytechnic appears as an ideal institutional setting for the development of innovative and internationally relevant research in relation to the institutional scenarios outlined by EUSALP, the “Convenzione delle Alpi” (Alpine Convention), and other programs and international agreements related to the Alpine territories.</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>The objectives of the "Building Alps" doctoral scholarship are to explore the role of design-related disciplines in relation to the mountain territories and to Alpine architecture: a perfect laboratory in which to test how not only the project, but also historical and architectural criticism, can apply their own methodologies and instruments in a specific physical, cultural, social and economic context.</p> <p>Among the many research options, three main areas or themes are recommended, that may intercept specific disciplinary proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation and architecture. This theme moves from the characterization of the Alpine region as an ideal place to test the disciplines of the architectural project using the concept of "limit", as a radicalization of the boundary conditions (climatic limit, environmental, topographic, etc). This approach should lead to new, uncharted reflections on design, technology, energy, language, etc - Territory and the landscape. This “thematic area” focuses on wide-scale design issues connected to the Alpine region. Proposals should consider problems related to urbanization and infrastructural transformation (infrastructures, settlements, environment) and explore the researchers’ role within these processes, considering how other disciplines such as planning, geography are linked to local territorial development in the Alpine regions. - History and Heritage. The theme addresses the specific terms and temporality with which the concept of historical, architectural and natural heritage has developed in the Alpine regions, with attention to the different sources (archival sources, material evidence, oral history) that allow us to scientifically explore and reconstruct these characters. Attention to these issues should be framed in a solid relationship with the architectural project, the landscape, the environment. <p>This scholarship aims, therefore, to focus on methods, roles, visions and potential applications of design-oriented</p>

	<p>disciplines and of the architectural project and history/criticism within the Alpine territories.</p> <p>It also aims to provide support for studies that, by overcoming the issue of architectural "language", lend more attention to the interpretation of other structural issues: human settlements and urban structures; local social, economical, physical contexts; the relationship between pre-existence and innovation; the interaction with the landscape; and the specificity with which technological and design choices characterize mountain areas.</p>
Skills and competencies for the development of the activity	<p>Doctoral students involved in the program will be required to develop an in-depth knowledge of the Alpine environment, both from the point of view of the main theories and conceptualizations that support the current models of development of these territories, and of those design and research issues that are specifically related to the mountains. Candidates need to be able to communicate and deal with international actors (appropriate knowledge of a language spoken in the Alpine region, i.e. French or German, is welcome), as well as to relate to extra-disciplinary subjects operating in the area. More specific skills are to be discussed or developed in keeping with the specific research proposal.</p>