

Architecture of fitting social houses and collective life in fragmented alpine territories

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In recent years, Alpine architectural discourse has shifted from large-scale applications to more site-specific, context-sensitive interventions. It has been observed that most of these transformations occur in fragile mountainous regions, where they are facing depopulation, reduced services, and the fragmentation and dispersion of social life, which challenge inherited models of public space. In this context, architecture is no longer tasked with portraying the idea of growth, but rather functioning under conditions of constraint, scarcity, and uncertainty. This study investigates the notion of “fitting” as functional principle for architectural design in the inner areas of the Alpine Region. Instead of viewing the theme of ‘deterioration’ as a failure, minor and modest interventions can redefine the relationship between the built environment and social life. The emerging concept of the Alpine Social House” is conceived not as a predefined architectural typology but as a spatial tool that mediates between fragmented settlements, local governance, and day-to-day practices.

The Autonomous Province of Trentino offers a significant context in which these questions can be observed, particularly in its hyper-peripheral valleys, characterised by dead-end geographies, fragmented settlements, influence of Italo-Germanic dual culture, and limited access to centralised services. Shaped by steep, challenging terrain and seasonal conditions, these environments require flexible communal spaces that can accommodate diverse needs. Architectural expression is characterised by its versatility rather than specification, and by its ability to support a variety of patterns and social life. The concept of fitting is not just a matter of contextual compatibility.