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Graduated in Architecture in Politecnico di Milano in 2013. Phd student from January 2015. Now working on a research titled: *L’architecture du loisir dans l’après Seconde Guerre mondiale. Le cas des Alpes franco italiennes.* The conjoint thesis between Université de Grenoble and Politecnico di Milano is financed by a Contrat Doctoral du Ministère de la Culture and by the Vinci Bourse 2015 of the Université franco-italienne. Through an historic perspective and using both the tools of the architect and of the historian, the research studies the story of the construction of a territory, trying to understand the origin of the critical issues affecting it today.

**Between *lieu-image* and *lieu-réel*: the case of the construction of La Plagne ski resorts.**

*Contrairement à ce que l'on croit naïvement, le touriste ne recherche pas des lieux nouveaux à découvrir mais des lieux « réels » qui n'ont d'existence que par leur nom sur une carte ; il recherche des lieux-images qui sont localisés dans son esprit, qui habitent ou hantent son imagination. Dans et par le lieu réel, il projettera le lieu-image produit dans sa culture d'origine et il tentera de diminuer la « distance » entre le lieu réel et le lieu-image.* (Raffestin, 1986)

The proposed contribution inquires the process of construction of the so-called *lieu-image* on a real site, from the perspective of the architect engaged in the construction of a touristic settlement.

The object of study is the touristic landscape generated after World War II in the highlands of the French-Italian Alps. In a recent international conference entitled: Architecture for leisure in post-war Europe, 1945-1989, Hilde Heynen (2012) emphasizes the interest to study this period of “anxious modernism”, (Goldhagen, Legault, 2000) in which architects were asked to give a shape to the new spaces and facilities for leisure, in a moment when they weren’t themselves able to provide prompt answers.

In this case, the construction of new cities for leisure in the Alps between the 1960s and the 1970s, has been the occasion for architects to test not only new architectonic ideas but also models of urban planning (De Rossi, 2006). Referring to the evolution of the architectonic style of the ski resorts, some French scholars have recently theorized the rise and fall of the modernist utopia in the mountains, with a course that is similar to the destiny of the *grands ensembles* in the French cities. (Wozniak, 2004). They identify a breaking point in the beginning of 1970s, when a renewed interest for the natural environment and the traditional alpine construction provoke a change in tourist taste and in the production of architects, that came back to the image of the *village retrouvé* (Lyon Caen, 2014). In general, this production has been read as an architecture designed *hors du temps et hors du lieu* (Raffestin, 1986)

The story of the construction of La Plagne Ski resorts in Savoy designed by Michel Bezançon is a paradigmatic case to identify this evolution: inspired by the lecture of Joffre Dumazedier’s *Vers une civilization du loisir?* (1962) and trying to respond to different tourists’ tastes, the architect moves from the model of functional city in the designing of La Plagne Centre (1961) to the “megastructural” utopia of Aime 2000 (1969-1970), a sort of *unité d’habitation* with a compact and vertical distribution of services and dwellings. In 1972, then, he creates Plagne Village using the imagery of the ancient village.

Nevertheless, a research in the archives of the architect and of the SEATM (*Service etude pour l’Amenagement des Territoires de Montagne*, a government institution that financed and guided the project), shows how the idea of the architect continuously faces the geo-morphological, geological, climatic and administrative features of the site. In the case of La Plagne Centre, for example, the existence of an ancient mine underground obliges the architect to transform his original idea.

Using drawing and cartography as a tool to work on the archival documents, the contribution will thus demonstrate how the design of La Plagne is not only the result of a formal research, but an attempt to integrate an innovative idea of city with the critical issues of the mountain landscape. Bezançon himself, refers to his project for La Plagne Centre as «*realisée par approximations successives*» (Révil, 2011). Mountain thus works as a tasting ground that helps architects in becoming conscious of the nature of the site, not only as a neutral support for the project but as complex reality, result of the layering of different elements.