

Flying high

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MILITARY

Architectures and conflicts

n°4

Giovanni, Marco Chiri & Donatella Rita Fiorino
Foreword by Paolo Mellano

M I L I T A R Y

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My initial idea was for this book series to be in one way or another 'essential'. My opinion was that I could have guided it and developed at least a few of the topics covered in it, only on the condition that it would be truly 'useful'. But useful to whom? Who would really feel the urge to read these short, printed texts? Certainly I didn't – and still don't – have the ambition to contribute substantially to the theory of the project nor to elaborate on themes that are so eccentric that they raise the interest and curiosity of only a few academics in the field. On the other hand, I admit that the mere idea of writing one – or more – strictly educational texts bored me.

Returning to the basis of the discipline and using them to rebuild a way of working has, in a way, a fundamental value and – though this may seem audacious – is highly exciting.

GMC

back **to** basics

MILITARY. Architectures and conflicts
by Giovanni, Marco Chiri and Donatella Rita Fiorino

Images by Daniela Corona, Manuela Serreli, Claudia Piredda, Alice Agus

Foreword by Paolo Mellano

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Foreword

by Paolo Mellano

“Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays”

Friedrich von Schiller

Flying High

Since I moved into my new house, I have spent my evenings watching the flight of swallows, imagining what one can see from up there and relating it to what I see from my terrace – this game of gazes from above was the basis of military tactics ever since cartography existed (and perhaps even earlier). Analyzing it along an ideal timeline can make us fully aware of how much the landscape we all know and live in today is the output or the result of subsequent decisive actions. A whole of transformations imposed by man with violence, following aggressive acts carried out on the territory we live. Let us think of the founding act of the city of Rome, for example. The plow led by Romulus to trace its walls cuts through the earth and draws a trace that will become a border. Alternatively, to the walls of Lucca, created to protect a city and shelter it from what was happening beyond the fence, and then handed down almost intact to us, so that today we can use them for a walk, far from car traffic. In 1989, the fall of the Berlin wall (erected in one night for cutting a city and a people in two) marked the end of an era and sanctioned the rebirth of a nation (not to mention the new Europe). Again, the dams which keep the lands of the Dutch polders away from the sea or the cutting of an alpine forest to make room for a ski slope. Or a bridge that connects two sides of a plateau or a tunnel that crosses a mountain. Those facts are all forms of deliberate violence imposed by man on the territory, marking the landscape and lifting indelible scars. Over time, those scars are attenuated by Nature, which returns and often

re-appropriates what was stolen from it. Over time they remain stronger, highlighting the transformations that have occurred as they were willing to cancel the past.

Nevertheless, it cannot erase History, as Gian Marco Chiri and Donatella Fiorino well explained in the pages of this volume.

The signs of the fortifications or the battles, the wounds inflicted on the territory both by the apparatuses and war machines (and not only by war) are indelible traces. They allow us to recall what happened, but also – as the case may be – to look ahead and transform the signs of violence into new, more welcoming human-scale landscapes more related to contemporary needs.

The places that the generals of the past armies had chosen to place the sentries and the sighting and defense positions to catch the enemy's moves in advance today are reported in the tourist maps as privileged points to admire the landscape. If regenerated by a careful restoration project, they can become new places to live and enjoy with pleasure and merit.

Indeed, the point is right there, in that 'if'. That subordinate conjunction insinuates a new process (a wise and careful project of restoration, recovery, redevelopment and re-functionalization) which, by definition, will be violent again. It is true, but it will have to lead a ruin, a building, a monument or a landscape, which today have lost its identity and is abandoned and unused, to a new *raison d'être*, to new meanings, to new identities.

The project for these places must first and foremost be based not only on full knowledge of what that architecture was but also on "how and why" we are facing today that precise architecture (since William Morris told us so, any transformation made by man to the territory is architecture). Then, based on history, it must propose a coherent, dignified, and respectful modification of what has been congruent with what will be.

The case studies dealt with in this volume are symbolic, on the one hand, of the richness of the military landscapes that characterize the Italian territory, in particular of this northern part of Sardinia, and on the other, of the extraordinary nature of the fortified places that represent them: ports, creeks, forts, casements, cisterns, etc. they are a sample of uncommon military buildings of great touristic, cultural and landscape interest. However, they must be handled with care: those in charge must be aware that what they are about to transform represents a value, carries traces of the past, once had a role, a function and dignity of being that. Although they may appear lost today, they have the potential to be regenerated in a recovery program that will bring them back to life. To give strength to these presences, which are rich in meanings and signifiers, we must look with both our eyes and those of our clients simultaneously. Moreover, with those of potential and future users, look at our troubled, rugged, raped landscapes; we must study and plan with our uncertain knowledge while maintaining – this is fundamental – an awareness of the places, in order to propose those changes that we want to wish for the things we care.

Education and research: reviewing and updating what is there, wisely designing what is missing.

The architectural project should be looking beyond the already-said and the already-done, finding breakthroughs, and opening new windows to the landscapes of life. One has to try to fly high, like swallows in the sky of these warm early summer evenings.

Paolo Mellano

MILITARY **Architectures and conflicts**

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ListLab was established in 2007 and has elaborated on the idea of an international editorial laboratory with a multidisciplinary approach to architecture, planning, arts, photography, and design. **List Group**, found in 2021, aims at creating networks and promoting debates and cultural exchange, but also organize events from which new knowledge about architecture, cities, and landscape can develop. Today, List Group is composed of **ListLab**, the publishing house, **Blacklist**, the graphic design studio, **Instaura**, the informational weblog, and **Us/Them/Yours**, a creative agency that aims at a multimedia approach to information.

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When reading the events that have crossed the Archipelago of La Maddalena, one can be legitimately surprised. La Maddalena is understandable on a globe. Every time history chose a parallel or a meridian to divide civilizations and nations, the island was there in the centre: between Europe and Africa, between the West and the East. Disregarding this geography is neither possible nor meaningful. La Maddalena was not only a stronghold or a port, but it was also much more: a battleship anchored off the northern Tyrrhenian to garrison those routes that the Phoenicians already traced to connect the East to Massalia. As a garrison of that point, the Bocche di Bonifacio, the island kept the Pillars of Hercules of the modern era. Everything in La Maddalena refers to this relationship. These traces, these artefacts are now useless: the deserted coastal forts, the empty barracks, the abandoned batteries, the workshops and the building sites, the heroes' hermitages, the dictators' prisons, are the mirror of a much larger world than the archipelago and much more complex and dangerous than those who visit this paradise for tourism want to forget about it for a week or two. And yet this extraordinary landscape system can find meaning and purpose in the world of today, far from the war needs that have produced it over the centuries.



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