From 'Colonia' to 'Sylva'

Adaptive Release of the Abandoned Summer Camp at Ca' Roman

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Abstract

Ca’ Roman, located at the southern edge of the Venetian Lagoon, is a unique landscape where ecological processes, abandoned architecture, and human activities coexist. Over decades of abandonment, the former summer camp, military fortifications, and wartime bunkers have gradually been absorbed by spontaneous vegetation, creating a hybrid environment in which the boundaries between nature and culture, artefact and ecology, become increasingly blurred.

This thesis investigates Ca’ Roman through the concept of ‘Sylva’, understood as an intermediate condition where natural and anthropogenic processes overlap and continuously transform one another. Within this perspective, abandonment is not interpreted as decline but as a productive process capable of generating new ecological relationships, spatial qualities, and forms of coexistence. The resulting landscape is neither entirely natural nor entirely artificial, but a dynamic environment shaped by succession, decay, adaptation, and human presence.

Based on this understanding, the project adopts adaptive release as a design strategy. Rather than restoring the site to a previous state or imposing extensive interventions, the proposal seeks to preserve and work with the existing Sylvan condition, allowing ecological processes to remain active while introducing minimal and carefully integrated architectural additions.

The design transforms the abandoned summer camp into a bird research institute combined with public education, cultural, and recreational facilities. Through the adaptive reuse of existing structures, the project establishes new relationships between scientific research, environmental awareness, and ecological conservation while maintaining the site's evolving natural character.

Ultimately, the thesis proposes an alternative approach to regeneration in which architecture acts not as a mechanism of control over nature, but as a mediator within ongoing ecological processes. Through the transformation of Ca’ Roman, the project explores new possibilities for the coexistence of cultural heritage, wildlife, and human activity within fragile environments.