



Sailer, G. & P. Scaglione

Dolomiti GeoScape. Geography + Geology = Landscape

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Against the background of the Dolomites' designation as UNESCO World Heritage Site, Gregor Sailer's and Pino Scaglione's bilingual (Italian and English) book documents the ambivalent human-environment relationships within the *Cradle of Alpinism*, as the area is often called. The first 168 page volume of a planned series on the Dolomites highlights features outside the virgin natural complex, revealing sites formed by human activity. The Dolomites – a carving?

The reader of the three-part publication is first presented with a conscientious selection of photographs on the Dolomites' nature, settlements and infrastructure, with new insights beyond the picture postcard idyll. Without the snow cover, the mountain landscape seems bare and fragile. The frequently grey and cloudy sky of the images produces a pensive or even depressed atmosphere, making the reader think about the state of *nature* in these mountains. Photographs of the valley floors show urbanized strips, acting as pseudo-rural leisure landscapes, where lovely steeples are buried by an avalanche of cold and monotone hotel buildings. However, these latter elements represent a break-through in overcoming poverty in the Alpine valleys. Skiing infrastructure without skiers and avalanche protection dams without snow: the first part of the book wordlessly points out the ambivalent use of (protected) mountain areas.

The second and third parts are more about architectural and planning topics. Professors and students of the Atelier Around Dolomites (University of Trento) critically debate the use being made of the protected

area and its surroundings and broach the subject of *Dolomiticity*: a space of polycentric and sprawling rural valleys, where “the search for a contemporary hotel gets its best results when conducted in an isolated valley, rather than in a Ladin valley, where new construction and restructuring of old hotels prevail”, as Thomas Demetz mentions. The final part of Dolomiti GeoScape consists of interesting students' contributions to the UNESCO World Heritage Site. On the one hand, the reader is informed about the transformation of mountain villages during recent decades, visually supported by creative maps. On the other hand, possible future trends are discussed: *Dolomites on payment* refers to a possible toll, paid to enter the Dolomites, where post-modern and solvent lifestyle visitors are offered dining areas and panoramic lounges – a concept reminiscent of the *everything-on-demand* mentality.

In sum, a reader interested in protected mountain areas finds a carefully designed and visually attractive publication focusing on architecture and landscape studies, which makes the viewer question existing kinds of use in sensitive mountain regions. With respect to future issues, maps should be equipped with a scale bar and completed with indications of sources and references.

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