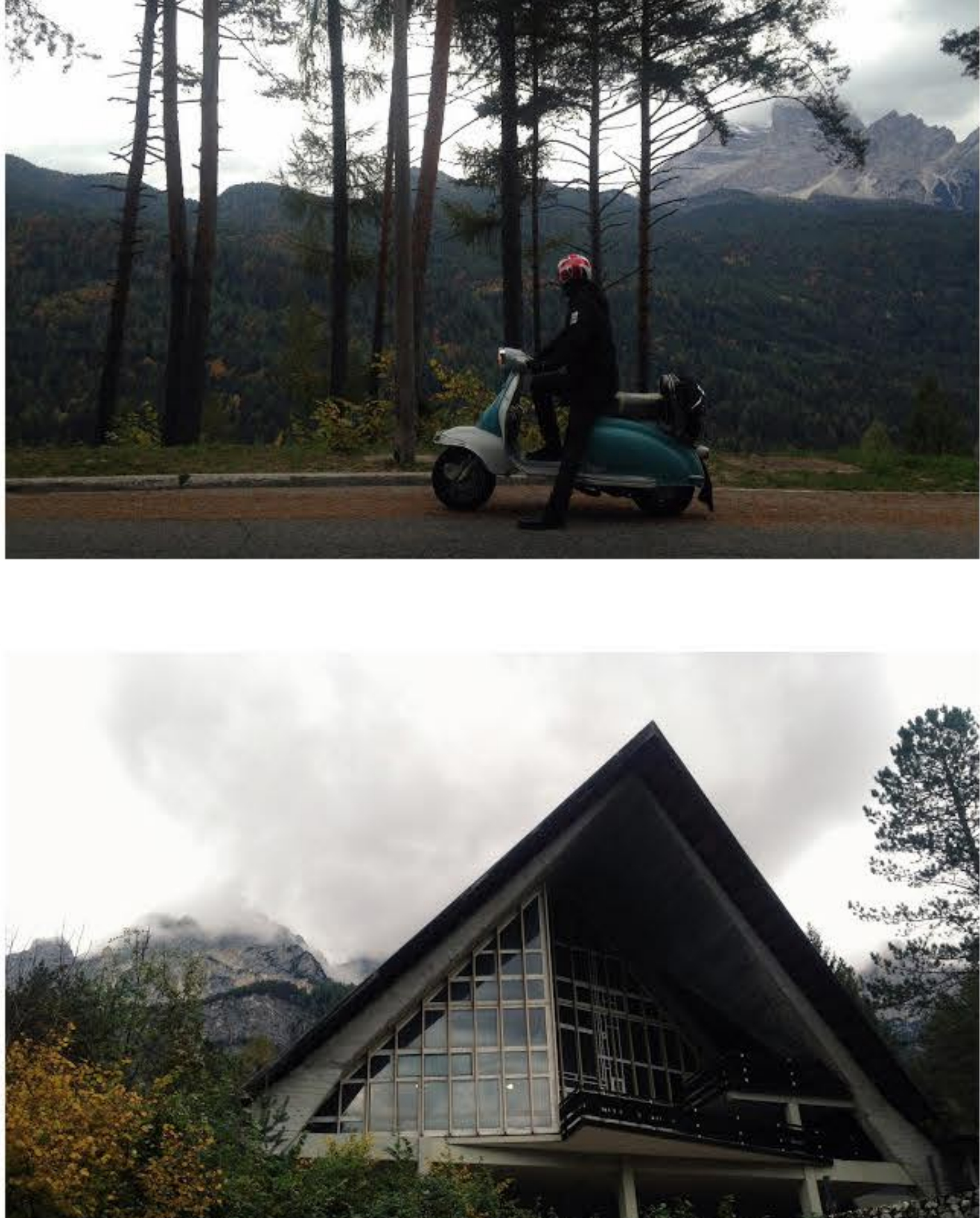


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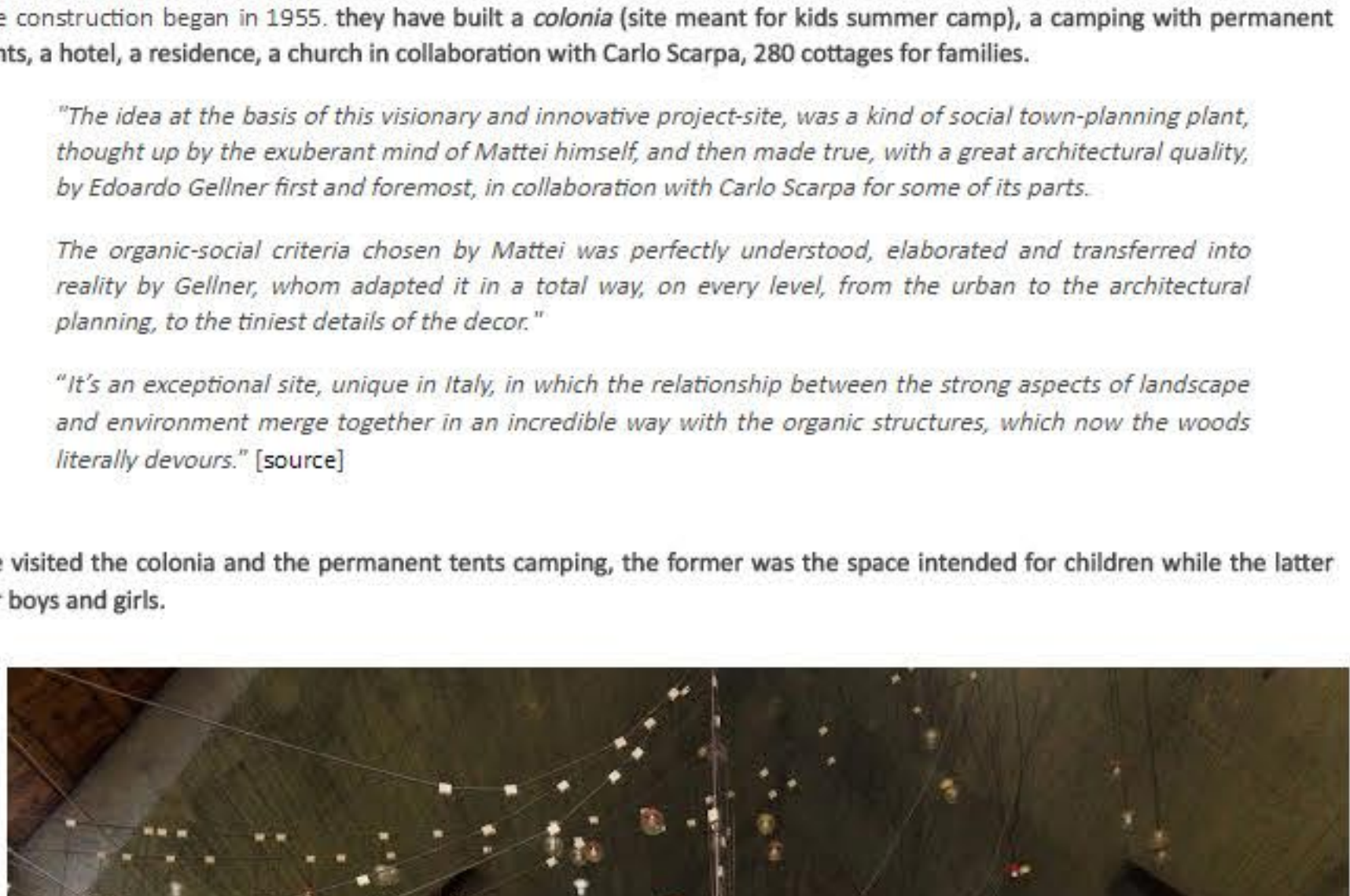
{slow travels, two vintage wheels and countryside charm, based in Italy with love}

ENI village in Borca di Cadore. October, Saturday 10th



i've been wanting to visit the ENI village for a long time. it opens to the public just on special occasions, and i was thrilled to finally see a guided tour organized by Progetto Borca on a day we could attend.

we rode to **Borca di Cadore** (near Cortina d'Ampezzo, in the amazing **Cadore** mountains) by lambretta. given the cold and gloomy day, it was kind of risky, but everything went well. places like this one, that we consider the most special and interesting, we really want to visit them by scooter.



to properly understand the place a brief historical introduction is needed.

Enrico Mattei was a visionary entrepreneur who made history in post WW2 Italy. he was head of the ENI group, now a multinational gas and oil company, from its foundation in 1953 to his unsolved mysterious death in 1962.

Edoardo Gellner was an architect who studied in Vienna and Venice, mentored by Josef Hoffmann and Carlo Scarpa. after WW2 he worked in Cortina, becoming an expert in architecture on mountain sites and gaining visibility with Cortina Winter Olympics in 1956.

Mattei chose Gellner to be the man to plan and carry out his project of the construction of a holiday village for the ENI group, as the goal was to "express the ideas of progress and modernity that were Eni's signature in the 50s", "Mattei identifies in Gellner the most suitably personality to give voice to these planning requirements". [source]

the guiding principles were inspired by Mattei's utopic idea of society: high quality for everyone, with no hierarchical distinction. workers and managers enjoyed the village in the same way, they called it **ENI social village**.

"The trust that Mattei placed in Gellner allowed the architect to plan his project using an architectural register which didn't formally evoke the rustic architecture of a mountain area: he expressed innovation instead, morphing the construction site into a downright technological lab. The result is an urban workshop, architectural and structural, which offers numerous solutions to different planning scopes." [source]

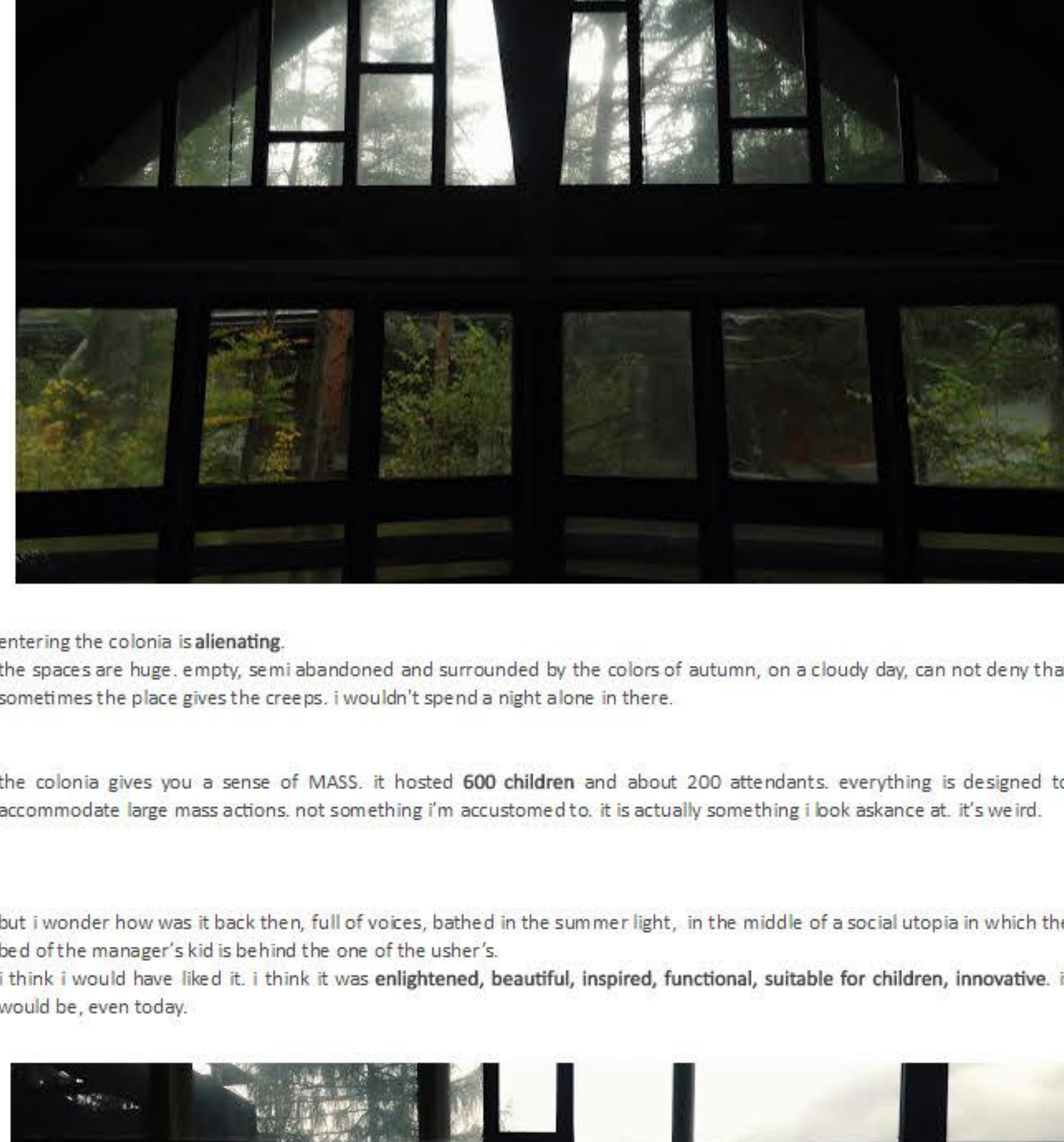
the site is located at the foot of **mount Antelao** (you can peek it in the second picture), and has a stunning view on **mount Peilmo** (first picture). the construction began in 1955, they have built a **colonia** (site meant for kids summer camp), a camping with permanent tents, a hotel, a residence, a church in collaboration with **Carlo Scarpa**, 280 cottages for families.

"The idea at the basis of this visionary and innovative project-site, was a kind of social town-planning plant, thought up by the exuberant mind of Mattei himself, and then made true, with a great architectural quality, by Edoardo Gellner first and foremost, in collaboration with Carlo Scarpa for some of its parts.

The organic-social criteria chosen by Mattei were perfectly understood, elaborated and transferred into reality by Gellner, whom adapted it in a total way, on every level, from the urban to the architectural planning, to the tiniest details of the decor."

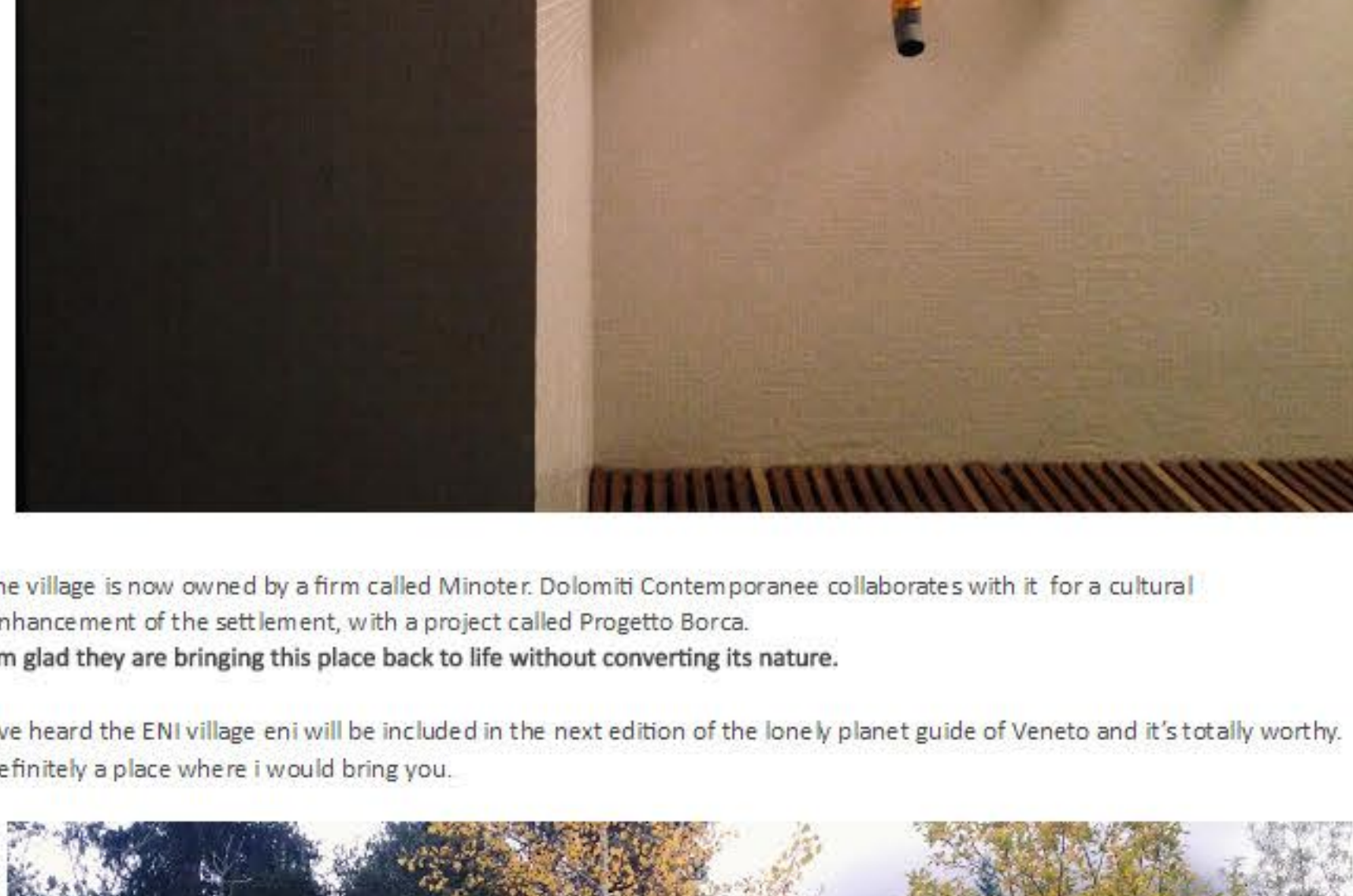
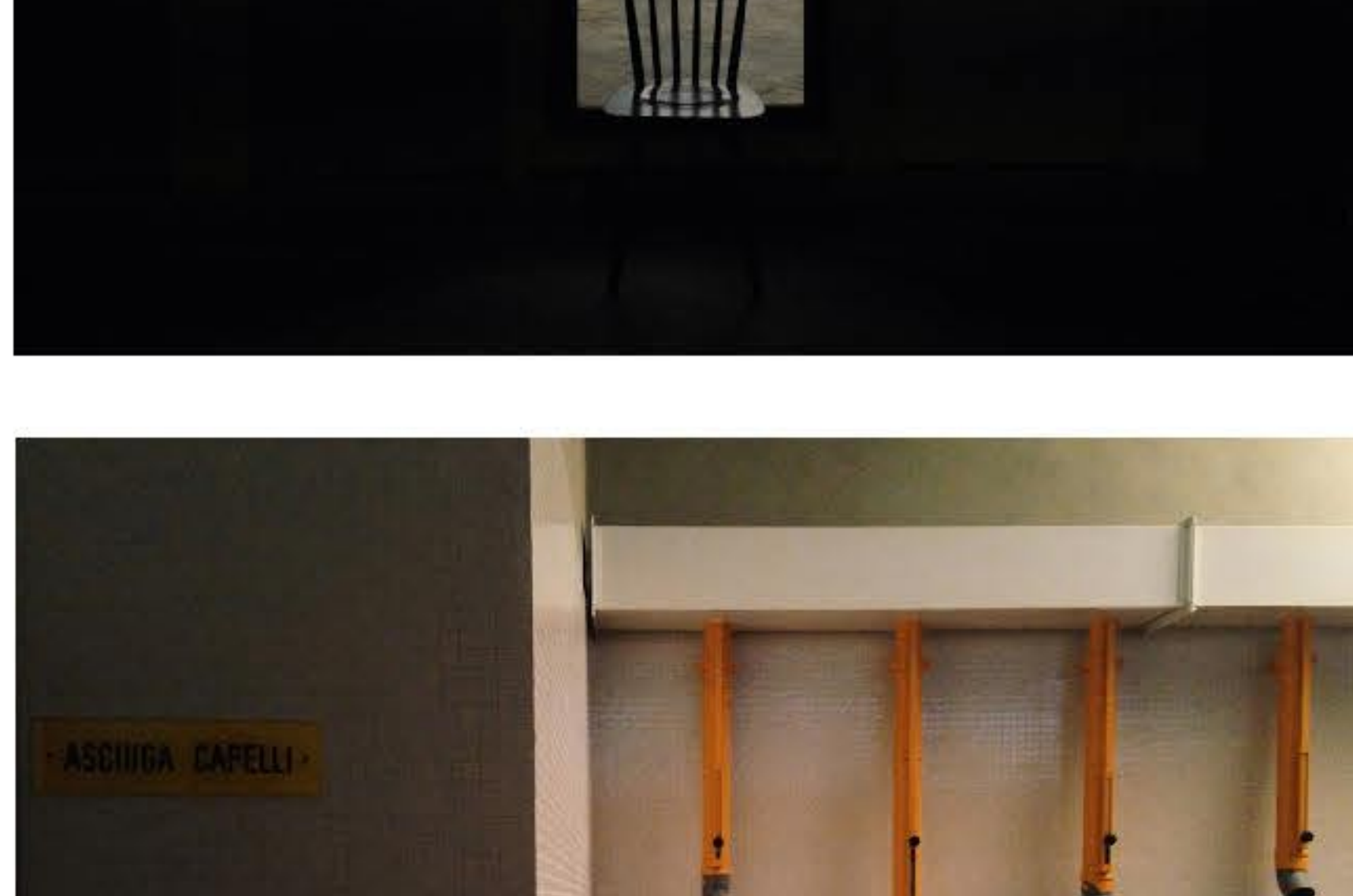
"It's an exceptional site, unique in Italy, in which the relationship between the strong aspects of landscape and environment merge together in an incredible way with the organic structures, which now the woods literally devours." [source]

we visited the colonia and the permanent tents camping, the former was the space intended for children while the latter for boys and girls.



being born in the middle 80s we have an instinctive aversion to reinforced concrete, when it comes to aesthetics (haven't you?), and if i say "mountain architecture" you'd probably think of wood. (would you?). i know i would.

not in the 50s, reinforced concrete was modernity and Gellner, who designed the ENI village down to the tiniest decor detail (his chairs are amazing), played with it in a way that sublimely suits the surrounding landscape. he was lucky enough to have the chance to work on this project from zero, there was nothing there except the forest, and no other buildings around to consider as a context: the only context was the landscape, that he brought out beautifully. i must say that, despite the reinforced concrete, he nailed it, the village rocks. it works for me, a person who grew up in the 90s, i find it extraordinary, futuristic, crazy.



entering the colonia is alienating.

the spaces are huge, empty, semi abandoned and surrounded by the colors of autumn, on a cloudy day, can not deny that sometimes the place gives the creeps. i wouldn't spend a night alone in there.

the colonia gives you a sense of MASS. it hosted 600 children and about 200 attendants: everything is designed to accommodate large mass actions. not something i'm accustomed to. it is actually something i look askance at. it's weird.

but i wonder how was it back then, full of voices, bathed in the summer light, in the middle of a social utopia in which the bed of the manager's kid is behind the one of the usher's.

i think i would have liked it. i think it was enlightened, beautiful, inspired, functional, suitable for children, innovative. it would be, even today.



the village is now owned by a firm called **Minoter**. **Dolomiti Contemporanee** collaborates with it for a cultural enhancement of the settlement, with a project called **Dolomito Borca**.

i'm glad they are bringing this place back to life without converting its nature.

i've heard the ENI village eni will be included in the next edition of the lonely planet guide of Veneto and it's totally worthy, definitely a place where i would bring you.



if you want to know more about the ENI village and Progetto Borca, here's some links, valuable sources where i found most of the informations i've used for this post:

>> www.progettoborca.net/eng/history/
>> www.progettoborca.net/eng/anna-de-salvadoruna-scheda-sul-villaggio-eni/
>> www.dolomiticontemporanee.net/DCe2013/?cat=94
>> www.villaggioeni.com/#!about/c:10Rk [italian only]

still want more? i'll leave you with two completely different videos about the village:

>> architecture: **il caso Gellner** | **Passpartout Rai 3 2008/2009** [italian only]
>> fashion: **Diana + Diana** | **Lazzari a/w 2014**.