

The awaiting Ghost Town around Malpensa

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On one side there are thousands of cubic metres of houses that have been abandoned for years, on the other sides woods and moorland that maybe one day will be asphalted and covered with warehouses. Towns around Malpensa are living a strange paradox: in order to better understand this strange reality, local mayors (Mauro Cerutti for Ferno and Piergiulio Gelosa for Lonate) have received this morning, Wednesday 3rd October, a delegation from the provincial council, led by territory provincial councillor Piero Galparoli. He says: "In order to have an idea of what Malpensa 2000 was and of what Malpensa will be thanks to Master Plan."

They went to Santa Maria in Ferno, the rural church next to the strips, where, in front of wonderful fourteenth-century fresco, the priest stops the celebration, when a very noisy airplane takes off. After arts, the delegation went among the crumbling houses in relocated areas, abandoned by inhabitants a decade ago. Last week, Ferno's mayor Mauro Cerutti mentioned black masses and orgies, to describe the deterioration and the neglect: today he has underlined: "We found candles and rabbit heads, we gave the photos to the police." In the wonderful room of Saint Michael's mediaeval monastery in Lonate Pozzolo, the mayor summarised the problem, saying that: "Malpensa asked for a sacrifice from our communities, but it hasn't been repaid yet. We don't talk about money, but about areas recovery." In substance: the houses have been abandoned for ten years, but they have not decided what to do yet. The areas are unusable for residence, but they could host productive and logistic activities. In conclusion, the most involved mayors (Ferno, Lonate, Somma Lombardo) would appreciate the perspective.

There is another side of the coin. While thousands of square meters are unused, people keep on building and programming all around the area. "In relocated areas there can be only productive areas, but now the Malpensa Master Plan is to create new warehouses in Via Gaggio natural area and in Sant'Antonio (a hamlet of Lonate city) warehouses are being built," summarised Gianpaolo Livetti, Rifondazione provincial councillor. That is the point, also for the mayors: before expanding airport logistic areas eating new territory, already urbanised areas should be recovered. Is the problem clear to everyone? "I believe that in Gallarate and Busto Arsizio many people think people who live near Malpensa are against development. In fact, we only ask a correct development and an adequate planning" says Mario Aspesi, Cardano al Campo ex-mayor and Pd provincial councillor.

New rules? "I think that by December, in Rome, some decisions will be taken" says Giorgio Puricelli, PdL regional councillor (resident near here, in Samarate), referring to environmental evaluation dossier led by Ministero dell'Ambiente. "Master Plan

development must be led so that productive and commercial activities in the stopover do not thwart with the area around the airport.” This is many people’s worry. “We don’t want to sell areas for development that isn’t good for the territory.”

The problem is that rules are not written: in the Region, Pdl councillors (in majority) a few months ago asked for a new Piano d’Area Malpensa (Malpensa Area Plan). It should fix the roles and define the relations between the airport and the area all around. A Piano d’Area Malpensa that does not exist, that maybe will be done and that, in any case, risks to be completed after the company development plan of airport stopover: the Master Plan that is being analysed in Rome. Meanwhile, here we are talking about the matter. Even if (it is said as simple observation) seeing the provincial delegation arriving today is curious, since suggestions moment about Master Plan has already been closed and the plan is already in Rome: “We already proposed it last spring” clarifies Gianpaolo Livetti, promoter of the initiative together with Mario Aspesi. Maybe Aspesi is right, when he says that in Busto and Gallarate the problem is ignored or never interpreted. When we talk about delocalization, many common citizens (and even some councilors) repeat thousand times a sentence: “With all the money they gave to owners...” As if it solved the problem, as if it was not a scandal: that purchase of the areas became useless. This is the reality: a real abandoned city without function and other areas that will be abandoned in the future, while the airport is expanding.

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