

The last “off-site” house has been demolished

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Around Malpensa, the demolishing of houses is considered a moment that has to be celebrated.

It should be a paradox, and partially it is, without any doubt, to celebrate the collapse of a block of buildings. Here the problem is widely known: these are the “off-site” houses, the dwellings that are uninhabitable due to the noise of Malpensa Airport. The houses have been bought by Regione Lombardia from the owners and in large part, they have been demolished and burnt to the ground, returning to green spaces (at least for the moment.)

During the final strike of the pickaxe on the last block of buildings (located on the Gallarate-Ponte di Oleggio street, within the borders of Lonate Pozzolo) there was the former regional Minister for territory, Viviana Beccalossi, who for the occasion wore a white helmet, in order to command the hammers for construction work.

“I inherited an area of Malpensa that was still characterised by ‘non-existent houses’ and these were a bad invitation card for Expo”, said Beccalossi.

100 houses have been demolished in the first batch (spring 2014), then another 104. “A programme agreement costed EUR 172 million for the purchase of the buildings and EUR 7.8 million for the demolition of them.” Allocated money used to recover the mistakes of the past including the difficult coexistence between the airport and the houses (that were built near the airport, although not always) in order to follow the economic growth, said Beccalossi.

And additionally, after a certain point, without considering the coming future, which is the development of the airport with the project “Malpensa 2000”: a symbol that in the ‘80s was considered futuristic and optimistic, which now has already become a memory, or in part, an old scenery.

“An historic day”, said with one voice the mayors of Somma Lombardo and Ferno, Stefano Bellaria and Filippo Gesualdi, assisted by the Prefectural Commissioner of Lonate (Lonate is without administration, after the arrest of mayor Rivolta, who was hit by an enquiry concerning the governing of the territory.) “After many years, we are finally able to see the results, although it seemed impossible”, said Gesualdo. “From tomorrow, we are able to think about the future of these areas.” Mayors and regional Councillor are confident. If till now we have worked in one voice, it could be also done in the second phase, the one concerning the reuse of these areas.

Now we have to figure out what should be done with these big areas that now are almost green spaces, with few houses that are still inhabited or used as associations places (the “exodus” of the “off-site” house was voluntary). How many to build and where? At the moment, the plans are still vague, although there are some maximum references, which are beginning to be shared.

No one, for example, is talking about volumetric (will it be the same as the demolished building? “we haven’t gone into details”) but someone is beginning to postulate the functions. “In general terms, there are three different vocations”, explains the mayor of Somma, Stefano Bellaria.

“For Case Nuove, considering the closeness to the airport, we are thinking about an advanced service industry at the service of the airport, to which we want to link the reinforcement of the aeronautical school, that is now working. For Lonate we’re thinking about an industrial investment, given that there are many different decentralized areas. While talking about Ferno, we’re thinking about a restoration of the green areas, due to the closeness to the built-up areas.”

This is a scenery that, briefly, is shared, but at the moment is restricted to the informal comparison. One thing is sure: no more residential buildings will be built there.

Anyway, we are now “celebrating” the last building by demolishing it. “In Italy, where the bureaucracy is really strong, I was lucky to deal with helpful people”, said Beccalossi while claiming worthy her work. (she also went there during the last campaign for the administrative election, where in Ferno, the two centre-rights are at war with each other.”

We praise the technical document for the directness that is curated by the prefecture (in order to avoid infiltration risks, considering the precedents of the zone, where ‘ndrangheta that is *Mafia-like criminal organization in Calabria*, could be found) and even the restoration of the ruins: “over 90% will be recycled.”

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