

“MILANO EXPO 2015: A SUSTAINABLE CITY AFTER THE CRISIS”

Milano doesn't have to make the same mistakes as other cities like Siviglia, Lisbon, or Hannover by creating an absurd amusement park of pavilions to be demolished at the end of the exposition or that inevitably fall into ruin in a desolate, uninhabited area. Such a project would also destroy almost two million square meters of precious agricultural territory.

The time has come to take courage in hand and recognize that the BIE's conception of the exposition is anachronistic, especially after the recent failures. This becomes even more obvious if the event is realized in a time of economic crisis involving the entire planet, and with very serious consequences for all those nations, both rich or poor, that will participate in the event.

The situation inevitably obliges the re-negotiation of the program with the BIE. This could happen by immediately committing ourselves to obtaining the support of the participating countries. Some of these countries have already expressed the will to avoid wasting resources by not constructing their own pavilion. They would instead privilege a commitment to the best possible presentation of the event's cultural contents.

We are all aware of how Milan's environmental degradation has a negative effect on our lives more than in other European cities. Everyone, without distinction, pays the elevated price it has on the quality of life and health. We therefore think that the sustainability issue must be addressed urgently and can no longer be postponed.

The EXPO2015 Candidature dossier had rightly indicated a series of measures and proper conduct (no one, however, seems to want to take them into consideration) that had the objective of guaranteeing intervention sustainability. We propose that Milan asks to invest all of the resources destined to EXPO in a virtuous direction towards both social and environmental sustainability using all of the existing edified and urbanized areas, instead of wasting huge capital investments, territory, jobs and projects to construct an amusement park of more or less sustainable pavilions in the midst of an economic crisis.

Let us begin by not constructing a new settlement that creates further unbalance with ulterior pollution and traffic congestion as a consequence. Let us offer EXPO2015 visitors a city that has already overcome the crisis because it has recuperated its streets, its public spaces, its monuments, its architecture and the largest number possible of existing buildings in an environmentally sustainable way. This includes even demolishing and reconstructing those that are irrecoverable, but adhering to a rigorous planned policy.

We are encouraging construction techniques that take advantage of both incentives already existing or that develop more specific ones. The objective is obtaining self-sufficient energy from renewable energy sources such as solar hothouses, photovoltaic panels, geothermal probes, heat pumps and every other energy-saving system that scientific and technological development offers today or will offer in the near future.

If this would happen, EXPO2015 Milan could become the example of a city which doesn't invest public and private funds with the sole purpose of a contingent relaunching of investment and employment, but uses the EXPO event as an opportunity to re-qualify its general habitability. Such a choice offers a new EXPO model as an intelligent reply to the crisis.

Our aim is that the (maybe) 29 million expected visitors not be confined in an absurd amusement park, but have free access to the entire city and its hinterland . They can visit the existing Rho –Pera Fair pavilions where they can walk the long gallery and admire its roofs, enormous solar collectors, an initial part of the entire Fair re-qualification project to become energetically self-sufficient.

They could visit the greater part of the national stands at the two already existing Fair complex, and for those excluded because of the lack of space, there are other already existing spaces such as the monumental hangar in Viale Sarca, the ex-Ansaldo factory buildings, the new Vigorelli Velodromo, the Pomodoro Foundation, the Permanent Exhibition, the Castello Sforzesco, the Triennale, the Museum of Science and Technology. Other expository structures for EXPO use could be developed in Milan's seven universities and all of the other city museums and then left to them for immediate reuse.

The enormous number of expository space in the Fuori Salone could also host the various exhibits dedicated to the seven secondary themes, the six more specific areas, plus the two hundred twelve complementary themes, for a total of 485 projects agreed upon with the participating countries that could become an exhibition circuit not only in the city, but extended to the Lombardy Region.

EXPO2015's theme is "Nourishing the planet". It was chosen intelligently because it stimulates a very necessary radical change of mind on how to better the world's quality of life. Both nourishment and sustainability belong to the same theme and the tutelage of the planet's resources is an unbreakable commitment. The crisis obliges us to utilize resources differently – a new kind of agriculture capable of satisfying dramatic needs in the hunger hemisphere and changing the unhealthy and wasteful alimentation in the wealth hemisphere.

Milan has an important innovative project – the South Milan Agricultural Park that was created in 1990. These forty seven thousand hectares of Milan's territory could represent an advanced solution to an important recent issue, more precisely, the evermore pressing request for a different kind of alimentation, and, as a result, a different kind of agriculture. This "new" agriculture has the task of re-constructing a virtuous relationship between the city and the countryside. The forty farmhouses in the park (twenty of them around Milan and publicly owned) could be restored using a rigorous sustainability criteria. They could be profitable for an extended agricultural tourism with low cost lodging and restaurants.

The farmhouse and farm area recuperation should correspond to a different way of producing, such as short food processing chain for fruit and vegetable crops. New agricultural jobs would be created and allow for a more dignified hospitality for the numerous immigrants employed in agriculture, thus respecting, in addition, social and intercultural sustainability objectives.

Just like the farm area, re-qualification can also correspond to the urban area. Intervention motivated by sustainability criteria such as energetic self-sufficiency, could be applied to the 90,000 vacant apartments and the 300.000 unused square meters in the service sector in Milan. These buildings could host both exhibition spaces and low-cost food services managed by various exhibiting countries, with the objective of attracting young visitors and encouraging their participation in the EXPO.

Residential structures and food services at controlled prices would remain at the end of the exhibition and become student or youth residences that welcome young travellers to a new Milan, a Milan which invests to become that not to be ignored destination, a part of a new learning experience which is travelling as a need to know the world, favoured recently by low- cost air travel.

Recuperating the existing, that which is already built and urbanized, is a political choice and an alternative to the waste of agricultural land and buildings. At the same time, it promotes widespread intervention in the city which extends across the South Milan Agricultural Park to the entire Region.

Transportation must also be re-qualified in the vast territory that the EXPO includes. Instead of new and more or less spectacular means of transport for arriving at the new pavilion amusement park, all of these resources could be concentrated on re-qualifying the existing. EXPO could be the opportunity for completing current work in progress, and planning a new transportation network, if possible, that helps post-EXPO Milan realize its ambition to be a European capitol in a minimally adequate way.

The visitors could then have the sublime experience of moving in silent, non-polluting means of transport connected to the various sites distributed in the entire metropolitan area. They could sleep in hotels or hostels scattered over a vast area – in the South Park or in the historical center – both economical and extremely comfortable because they were constructed respecting environmental sustainability. They could experience the big event relishing excellent biological and biodynamic foods and become reacquainted with their original flavours. They could learn to nourish themselves in a healthy way and thus prevent serious illnesses that come from wealth, often not less serious and devastating than those that are caused by hunger. They could explore the agricultural ring of cultivations organized by recuperating the farmland and up-dating and renewing ancient zootechnical and cultivating practices. (We are thinking about extensively repropounding the water meadows that historically characterized those areas endowed with springs.) It could be a living agricultural testimony of a renewed relationship between the city and the countryside.

At the same time visitors could have the chance to visit our artistic heritage and our important monuments, rendered energetically self-sufficient, instead of the absurd national pavilions. At the end of their visit they would be able to realize how much their stay in Milan has left an “Ecological Footprint” as compared to their own country.

EXPO funding would serve as an incentive to recuperate vacant buildings. In exchange for such exemplary intervention that respects environmental sustainability and energetic self-sufficiency, incentives could be summed to the tax reductions legally admitted for energy saving (55%). Such an occasion would allow for a vast participation of private investors and a diffused and diversified presence of many operators, consequently reducing those strong interests involved in vast concentrated construction.

All of this would contribute to establishing controlled rents and urban politics that re-qualify the existing instead of encouraging new construction. A great number of small and medium- sized building sites would increase employment much more than that which occurs in big construction intervention.

This strategy doesn't concern Milan alone, but also adjacent communities. In fact, the whole metropolitan area would have environmental advantages. Thanks to energy saving there would also be positive long-lasting economic effects that would allow for economically recuperating, in a reasonable period of time, a substantial sum of the billions invested.

The same metropolitan area could then be identified with EXPO, with its new hospitality and different large-scale alimentation, its energetic and alimentary self-sufficiency, its renewed urban spaces through a re-launching of public art, its new consumer culture, and its essential re-

qualification as a cultural leader by not creating a monstrous architectural bidonville outside its limits.

Those who sign this petition therefore ask, as a first act towards re-formulating the EXPO2015's program and its renewal, that construction not begin on the destined site near the actual Fair. This would avoid the destruction of agricultural land, the waste of resources and a horrible collection of pavilions to be demolished at the exhibition's end.

They ask that the available resources be used for intervention that complies with the urgent need of environmental sustainability for the city and its surrounding territory. If this strategy is applied to Milan and to the surrounding communities, it will create the framework for a future sustainable metropolitan area.

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