

**Strategic investigations addressed to the restructuring of the ex-NATO area in Comiso, Sicily**

by Daniela Ciaffi

Tutor : Alberto Bottari

Why focus on the former NATO base at Comiso? The whole story started with a curious piece of news dated may 1999: thousands of refugees escaping from war in Kosovo were housed in Sicily.

As a volunteer in the ex military base I started to investigate the relationship between the main urban area in Comiso and the territory where the refugees were hosted, a previous military area isolated from the surrounding fields both on the maps and in reality.



A reporter described that infrastructure as "a five star lager" thanks to the evident diversity of this site with respect to the context. However, there is evidence that this isolation is coming to its end.

Plans for the whole restructuring of the site were already under development when the six thousand came from Kosovo. This event opened the doors of the strict enclosed zone to the local and regional community. As a result, after five months hospitality the first step for the territorial recapture was taken.

The way in which it happened added new value to the site in terms of historical souvenirs. Witness for all this are the people who lived this experience: refugees, volunteers and personnel of the Civil Protection organization.

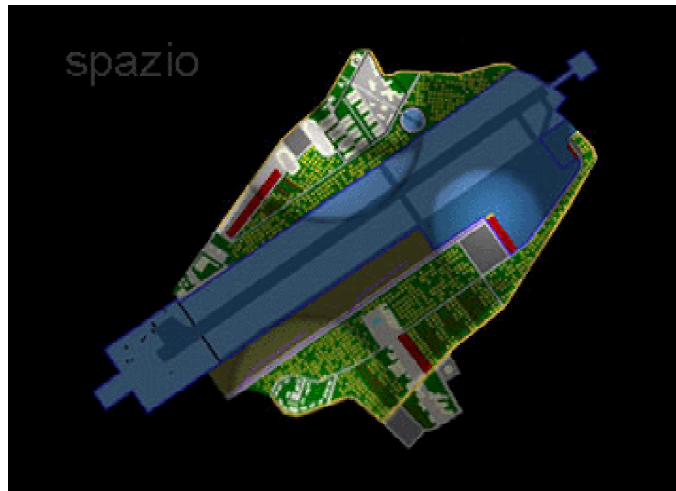
The interactive path that we propose primarily tends to get to know the geographic and historical context as well as the people and institutions who showed interest in a radical planning process.



Gesualdo Bufalino, a well known sicilian writer, wrote a short story on this subject ("Cruise for breakfast") after being guest of the NATO Army in 1980. The CD reports Bufalino's live, efficacious and impressive testimony.

The wide set of experiences and knowledge were essential for the final project. The Master Plan for Comiso's Airport recently presented was adopted as a reference point. Our approach lead to a different proposal, willing to exploit all the existing resources both at local and at regional level. The MPCA made some proposals that are acceptable in the short term. For example, one of the possible solutions was to assign a large area to an Ukrainian company that would provide the maintenance of airplanes. In the end, this company decided to conduct business in Portugal!

Our proposal addresses the airport utilization for commercial and tourist purposes: we aim to offer an effective export base for precious first fruits and early vegetables of the region and to exploit the barycentric positioning with respect to the dense network of archaeological, architectural and natural richness of the Iblean region. The project involves new proposals for a joint effort, at different levels, of local, regional and Mediterranean communities.



For further Information, Daniela Ciuffi, e-mail : [ciaffi@ciaoweb.it](mailto:ciaffi@ciaoweb.it)