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Requalification, symbolic value and audience engagement of automotive heritage. The Turin case study. Italy.

*Original*

Requalification, symbolic value and audience engagement of automotive heritage. The Turin case study. Italy / Maspoli, Rossella. - ELETTRONICO. - (2022), pp. 1-6. ( Industrial heritage reloaded. New territories, changing culturescapes Montreal August 28th - September 3rd, 2022).

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2974998 since: 2023-01-23T13:20:31Z

*Publisher:*

TICCIH

*Published*

DOI:

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Member of TICCIH, board member of AIPAI - Italian Association for the Industrial Archaeological Heritage (2006-2020).

Since 2005 the research regards the historic and modern industrial heritage, the knowledge of his technological rather than aesthetic value, the adaptive reuse. She is, inter alia, coordinator in the research projects: "Torino automotive heritage framework", for the dissemination and communication of the mobile and immovable automobile culture (2018-in progress), the exhibition "Lingotto lives&relives (2020) and "Promenade of the art and industrial culture" (2012-15). Head for the Politecnico in nomination of Torino UNESCO Creative City (2014-in progress).

She has edited over 150 publications, selected: The heritage of motoring: the enhancement and prospects of UNESCO nomination, In: General states of industrial heritage Conférence, Venice (2020); Conservation, enhancement and tourism of the architectural heritage of the car industry. From the Turin case to the international "mo-town", In: Patrimonio Industriale (2018); Temporary reuse, sustainable regeneration, adaptive recovery of the post-industrial and service heritage. In: The New Frontiers of Conservation. Conveyances, contaminations, crossbreeding, Arcadia Ricerche (2017); Valorization of the automotive heritage. In: TICCIH Bulletin, n. 69 (2015); Industrial heritage. Conservation, patrimonialisation, sustainable transformation, In: Il progetto sostenibile (2014); Maspoli R., Spaziante A. (eds) Factories, villages and memories, Alinea (2012).

## Documents

 Maspoli TICCIH 2022 Full text.pdf (702.66KB)

## Sessions in which Rossella Maspoli participates



**Monday 29 August, 2022**


Time Zone: (GMT-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

4:30  
PM

Requalification, symbolic value and audience engagement of automotive heritage

UQAM, pavillon J.-A. De Sève (DS) - DS-R515

**Speaker** Rossella Maspoli (Politecnico di Torino, Department of Architecture and Design DAD) |

🕒 4:30 PM - 4:50 PM | 20 minutes  Part of: Planning Instruments for Industrial Heritage Reuse and Regeneration through Citizen Engagement III  
Paper

# Requalification, symbolic value and audience engagement of automotive heritage. The Turin case study. Italy.

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## Key words

Audience engagement and edutainment, Motor-town, Industrial Heritage Reloaded

## Abstract

The present study analyses the high symbolic value linked to automotive heritage, outlines the conservation and reuse of the architectural sites, the enhancement of others tangible and intangible cultural testimonies. It examines the loss of industrial memory values and identifies audience engagement strategies having the aim to historicize and re-appropriate of the memory, according to objectives of the immobile and mobile heritage conservation, and of re-construction of community sense in citizens as well as in cultural tourists.

The reference is to the case study of the Turin area, in Italy, which has been one of the most important “motor-towns” in Europe since the early 1900s, and in it to the well-known Lingotto factory, which has assumed a high symbolic value of innovation in automotive manufacturing, since the 1930s.

## 1. Introduction. Symbolic values & adaptive reuse

Individual and collective mobility connotes – in local/global perspective – the twentieth-century transformations. The automobile is an integral part of live and notwithstanding; it has a fundamental role in the development of the economic, social and cultural milieu.

The production crisis and the relocation lead to the industrial abandonment in the cities of the automobile production tradition, since the 1980s. The urban “empty places” are initially considered as sites of decay and social criticality (Danzero, 2001). The deindustrialisation has determined the phases of indiscriminate demolition as well as reuse, often characterized – in Stuttgart, Wolfsburg, Turin, Coventry, Gothenburg, Paris – by the loss of industrial legacy signs, the total removal of machinery and work evidences, as well as by the replacement of essential elements of the architecture.

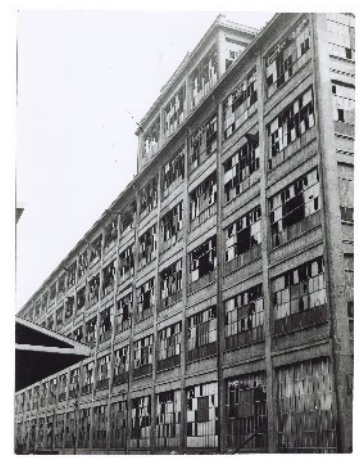


Fig. 1 - 3. Lingotto factory, Turin, Italy.

1910-27, construction. 1925, enlargement of the north side (FIAT Historical Archive)

1980, strikes before the closure of the plant (Vera Nocentini Foundation)

Early 1980s, abandonment (Historical Archive of the City of Turin)

The “transition” of traditional automobile manufacturing sites has followed diverse, contradictory models. A part of this industrial heritage becomes, in forty years’ time, an essential resource for sustainable change towards the city of tertiary and commercial development, knowledge economy and the creative industry, opening to heritage-led regeneration. The culture of “green city regeneration” and ecological transition is no

longer considered in opposition to the conservation, performance recovery and adaptive reuse of artisanal and industrial sites. The end of the season of the mechanical factory and the change in labour roles also characterize the transformation of the social role of the automotive industry. At the same time, the automotive sector is reconfigured through processes of internationalization, innovation and know-how in the fields of automotive and mobility services, from design to research&development and higher education. The advanced production systems that are currently present in historic motor-towns no longer constitute environmental critical factors. They concern the flexible factory and automation, industry 4.0, R&D and Manufacturing Technology Centres for sustainable and self-driving vehicles (Maspoli, 2018).

In the current transition phase, the conditions for a broader and endorsed “historicization” - intended as “making historical”, introducing goods and events of the previous age of the automotive in the enhancement of the bimillennial history of territory - have therefore emerged.

Actually, the “collective memory” of heritage places is not homogeneous and is not always shared. The heritage is composed of plural and sometimes dissonant memories and associations. After the end of an industrial era, it is important to make the elements of the stories accessible and available to the new generations of citizens and immigrants. Since they no longer have an identity relationship with the traditional and local industrial culture, we must promote the rediscovery of the past for community rebuilding.

The strategies of the post-industrial valorisation require the development of the cultural attitude in sharing knowledge and competences. Diverse values and significances become an opportunity, when are accompanied by informative and scientific programming, bridging divides and deepening social cohesion.

The heritage memories, moreover, may represent the continuity and the guarantee for the stakeholders that the core values of the territorial brand are authentic and true.

Beyond the role of automobiles in the modern societies, the emotional connection and the fascination of historic automobiles drive growing interest in the entire heritage. The attractions and events of preservation and promotion of historic vehicles are key elements in sustaining both the social and the financial viability of the tourism industry. The vehicles' tourism regards, in fact, the global involvement of millions of people, international organizations and schools.

Audience development tools must *adapt* to the perception of the different target users, according to the outlined perspectives. The memories of the automotive heritage must be accessible and attractive to museums and “open-air museums” visitors, in relation to historic sites, objects, testimonies, multimedia data and representations.

## **2. The research approach. ‘Torino Automotive Heritage Network’ (TAHN)**

The heritage of industrial automobile culture is immovable and movable, tangible and intangible, according to historical, architectural technological, testimonial, social, and scientific values.

In these perspectives, the project TAHN envisages the construction and the enhancement of a cultural system of the automobile legacy in the territory. TAHN is a project by a university – Politecnico di Torino, by a museum - Museo Nazionale dell’Automobile di Torino (MAUTO), by an archive and research centre - Institute for Memory and Work Culture (ISMEL), by the City of Turin and a Tourism Organisation – Turismo Torino.

The references are to resources consisting of archives, patents, technologies, technical and architectural drawings, work and enterprises documentations, car collections, architectures of car factories and company towns, landscapes transformed by the car, sites of heritage led regeneration.

The movable heritage of the automobile primarily consists of the wheeled motorized vehicles, including construction documentations and components. The immovable heritage is represented not only by new building typologies of factories - that reflected both the needs of the technology but also the evolving architectural styles - but by representative offices, supply sites, service stations, garages, showrooms and mechanics’ workshops as well as the transportation infrastructure and the works of art in keeping with the expansion of roads services.

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The main disciplinary fields involved are the manufacturing techniques and building construction history – with attention to the introduction of reinforced concrete –, the rehabilitation of the heritage, the conservation of historic vehicles – with reference to the Turin Charter of the FIVA –, the systematization of the historical archival heritage.

TAHN's research plan intends to address the potential conflict between scientific and tourist communication, by outlining a multi-level IT platform, with the aim of integrating different existing sources and data bases and of data disambiguation.

The logical structure of the research can be viewed in three different ways: maps, cards (Census and Catalog analysis) and timelines, through the interconnection of a Data Base Management System (DBMS).

The smart approach is linked to the construction of a georeferenced urban map of the Automotive Heritage, which contains the data initially surveyed on historic factories, museums, archives, schools, elements of the corporate city and related information on visitability, accessibility and safety.

A first level is the access to a virtual / real tour with interactive and personalized experiences for finding information on sites - starting from Census analysis -, itineraries and tourist guides for visiting the immobile and mobile heritage.

The Census primarily concerns the recognition by location (geolocation), brands (denomination of historical companies), time (years of activities).

The Catalog of immovable heritage associates the main descriptive data fields relating to site chronology (dates of constructions, extensions, transformations), historical-architectural, technological and testimonial characters; current state (conservation of architecture or vestiges, demolition, transformation); main manufactured or preserved historic elements (vehicles, brand elements).

The accessibility and organization of historical heritage platform will be integrated with the storage and sharing of the contents expressed by the individual user in an asynchronous way (the "visitor's folder"), integrating a Content Management System (CMS).

The THAN project of tour concerns in several areas and phases: Historical factories and vestiges of production; Car and mobility design centers (companies, schools); Historic automobile tourism routes in the region; Heritage of automobile infrastructures and landscape.

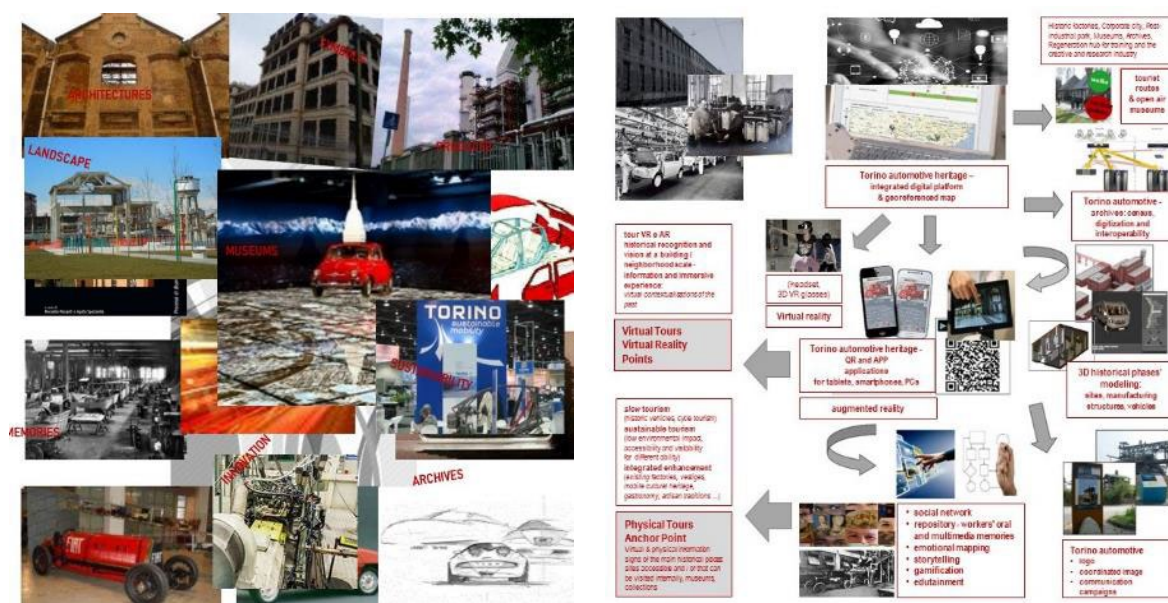


Fig. 4 - 5. Concept map and configuration diagram of the Torino Automotive Heritage Network (THAN) project

In the case of Turin, the historic factories - from the early 1900s to the mid-century - are still present mainly in some districts: San Salvario, San Paolo, Mirafiori (the greatest factory and the company town), Northern Turin (historic ironworks, factories, post-industrial parks). The still existing properties, preserved and transformed, represent about 40% of the total. The rest of the heritage is documented, registered and cataloged, and can be returned in virtual and augmented reality.

### **3. Audience engagement and edutainment of automotive heritage**

Finally, the study regards the socio-economic potential of industrial tourism in terms of citizens' awareness and international audience engagement.

The preconditions to take on a "collective memory" of the industrial past are the recognition within the specific territory and the social consciousness. Furthermore, they are the condition to promote conservation and valorization policies, combining the scenario of the historic automotive heritage in social-economic prospects.

The enhancement opens, in fact, a relevant perspective in terms not only of local identity, but also of international positioning, for the development of tourist and settlement attractiveness.

The user targets that emerged for the Audience Development Plan of the research (Maspoli, 2020) are:

- Old automobile workers
- Young inhabitants, new immigrants who are looking for an inclusive identity
- School population of different ages
- Historic motoring enthusiasts and collectors of historic cars (users of visits to sector museums, trade fairs, events, association events, rallies, races and historic vehicle circuits ...)
- Industrial heritage tourists (visitors of architecture and historical memories of industry, company headquarters)
- Tourists in the cultural city
- Convention participants and tourists of major events (sports, entertainment, exhibitions...).

The attention is on storytelling and living history, in relation to the divulgation of cultural and scientific values. In this field, the European Commission promotes the potential of digital engagement of wide audiences and of empowerment of the younger generations (EU, 2020). The capacity of attraction to heritage themes become fundamental in historical-scientific communication.

In this perspective, the "edutainment" is a hybrid form to create an attraction that seeks to create a synergy between the educational value and the narrative perspectives, using multimedia technologies, living history and exhibition products. It is an innovative development of public museums in order to be economically viable and competitive in social inclusion and tourism. It is a chance for the private sector to advertise the educational value in order to appeal to a diverse audience and to reinvent their identity, as a historic memory place and not just as a standard place of retail and entertainment (Ritchie, 2003).

Edutainment doesn't appear as an increasing "Disneyization of culture", it must be used to its full potential, in awareness and raising life-long education for a specific cultural heritage.

Heritage must also be a vivid and real experience, in particular for the younger generations.

In the Turin case, the former Lingotto factory takes on a high symbolic value, recognized by wide audiences. It is one of the most famous European factories in '20s, called by Le Corbusier "one of the most impressive sights in industry" and cited by Banham, influential on the architectural industrial progress. The development of the local automotive industry in the 1940s and 1960s, has gradually overlapped the image of the main companies - FIAT and Lancia - and factories - Lingotto, Mirafiori - the national industrial image. The car models have assumed an essential value for mass-motoring, as well as in other European realities.

The Lingotto, actually constitutes an essential point of reference for the territorial integrated project of the automotive heritage enhancement.

The brand identity for its economic relaunch – as a center for trade, tertiary sector, hospitality, culture, entertainment and high education – significantly links to the rediscovery of the industrial-past, after thirty years of post-industrial recovery.

The edutainment approach has concerned the dissemination of scientific research results to the wide public through a multimedia exhibition — “Lingotto vive & rivive / Lingotto lives & relives” (2020), a preview of the Tahn project— inside different parts of the shopping center, in the preserved factory.

The local partnership between municipality, corporations, sector associations - such as the "Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens /FIVA) and the Automotoclub Storico italiano (ASI) -, research and safeguard institutions becomes an important perspective for an integrated approach. The aim is to increase the level of involvement - through physical/virtual tours and social networks - claiming and checking the cultural value of communication and dissemination.



Fig. 6 - 7. Lingotto factory, Turin, Italy.  
2003, end of the first multifunctional transformation (R. Maspoli)  
2020, end of the extension of the shopping arcade (R. Maspoli)

The audience engagement involved the rediscovery of the heritage of industrial architecture outside the museum site. The public was heterogeneous, of different ages and origins, also made up of most of the visitors to the shopping center.

The exhibition communicated the historical-cultural recognition and the "relive" the site (“resurrect like the phoenix”) and had an innovative function in the construction of the brand image of the shopping center, as an attraction with an educational function.

The exhibition had more than 100,000 views on social networks: in two weeks, with more than 2,000 interactions and more than 32,000 views on Instagram.



Fig. 8 - 9. Former Lingotto factory, Turin, Italy. 2020 “Lingotto vive & rivive / Lingotto lives & relives”, Exhibition

The success and the involvement are highlighted by the testimonies of the visitors collected online and in person. Many emotional memories concern the elderly people that experienced the reality of the Lingotto factory (the workers, those who sold coffee online ...), from the 50s to the 80s, and then to the “Turin Motor

Show” on the same site, from 1972 to 1984. In parallel, the testimonies concern the generations who did not know the industrial past directly, but were generically aware of its existence and have a demand for knowledge in relation to family or neighborhood remembrance ("it takes a place .. says the writer") or in search of identity in the relationship with the past (" ... it makes you go back in time, but it makes you feel in the future "; " ... a piece of history not to be forgotten. This space is for the future").

#### **4. Conclusions**

The edutainment process meets the need for awareness and historical and scientific information about Lingotto and the heritage of cultural value. The historical and architectural site contents are communicated in strictly connection with the emotion, perception capacity and interaction by the users.

The AR/VR softwares for cultural heritage may be designed as edutainment applications. The virtual gamification models may present an entertaining way to engage users in exploring historical artefacts, to motivate them to learn more and to increase the sense of community belonging. The digital revolution is changing the ways in which people know, understand, use, and visit heritage sites.

The Turin Automotive Heritage is a project focusing on the use of innovative tools to improve the value of culture from the bottom, proposing an alternative way of cultural heritage enjoyment, open to participation and social interaction.

Digital technologies, including social media, can build platforms for heritage education, foster awareness of heritage sites, and provide support to the cultural industries and the industrial tourism.

However, there is a language gap to overcome between the traditional heritage experts (“information users”, such as curators, conservators and historians), technical experts (“information providers”) involved in heritage digital multimedia (Haddad, 2015) and heritage users (such as inhabitants, city users and tourists).

The aim is to integrate interdisciplinary research in digital interaction and mixed reality technologies, to a sound theoretical basis and innovative methodological approach in patrimonial, museological, cognitive, and learning sciences.

The TAHN research considers an evolutionary historical dynamic, focusing on past and present patrimony, but prospecting the future. Industrial and technological monuments, living industry and research, material documents and intangible heritage, such as cultural activities inspired by industrial development are included.

Finally, the Turin case can be considered a territorial stage in a future International route of automotive heritage to conserve and explore the industrial history and illustrate the geographical and social impact through attractive anchor points, guided tours, digital platform, multimedia presentations and outstanding events.

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