

Survey, communication and valorization of the automotive heritage

Original

Survey, communication and valorization of the automotive heritage / Maspoli, Rossella. - In: TICCIH BULLETIN. - ISSN 1605-6647. - ELETTRONICO. - 69:(2015), pp. 7-8.

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/2651546 since: 2016-10-02T23:30:16Z

Publisher:

TICCIH

Published

DOI:

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Number 69

3rd quarter, 2015

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View of the De Bosscherwaarden brick factory, Netherlands

From wastelands to creative hotspots. The changing appreciation of industrial heritage in the Netherlands, c. 1975-2015: Karin Stadhouders has started a PhD-research project at the Centre for Global Heritage and Development at Leiden University, Netherlands, investigating the (re)discovery of industrial heritage sites. It focuses on the ways in which local interest groups and engaged artists reshape places, from the initial "rediscovery" of abandoned industrial sites and landscapes as places of value to their deliberate redevelopment and reuse for new purposes.

Opinion

Valuing industrial heritage in the Anthropocene

Dr Inger Birkeland
Telemark University College, Norway

On the 5th July, 2015, UNESCO inscribed Rjukan-Notodden Industrial Heritage Site on the World Heritage list. This represents great opportunities for the local communities of Rjukan and Notodden, located in the interior southern part of Norway. According to the proposal, the site is a unique expression of new industrial developments during the second industrial revolution, based on hydroelectric power production, industry, transport system and urban communities. However, the development of industry here depended totally on the presence of the water landscape, so that the cultural and physical features of this landscape is here a total production system (Birkeland 2015).

How are we to value industrial heritage in the Anthropocene? The Anthropocene refers to the human-dominated geological epoch that we are now living in. It is a concept that covers the last 250 years' immense human impact on the earth where global warming, environmental degradation and unsustainable development are huge warning signs.

Worldwide

Survey, communication and valorization of the automotive heritage

Rossella Maspoli, Arch. Ph.D Professor of Architecture Technology, Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino, Italy

Car-driven phenomena

Changes in mobility were, globally, a key theme of the second industrial revolution. Relevant transformations were made to the infrastructure and structure of western roads and cities, to accommodate motor cars and to respond to the changing in lifestyle. The 'car-driven phenomena' have had a great impact on the environment and the landscape, from the adaptation of existing roads and buildings to the needs of cars to the growing development of motor-related building types and to the contemporary trend in urban planning for sustainable mobility.

An exemplary case-study is the city of Torino [Turin], the 'Italian Motown', where the development and crisis of the automotive industrial district has required a complex change of social, economic and technological models.

Re-development following the industrial decline is characterized by the transition from the 'city to make' (the industrial city) to the 'city to know', focused on research centers, creative industries, high tech productions and sustainable infrastructures. Emerging automotive industrial trends are in R&D, environmentally-friendly technologies, sustainable fuel sources and types of design with built-in recyclability.

The 20th-century's motor industry has left an indelible mark, ranging from the 'mere' industrial and technological aspects to the more cultural, having influenced not only design, architecture and landscape, but also music, visual arts and fashion.

Since the '60s, the movement for historical vehicles has highlighted the importance of maintaining and respecting the historical features of artefacts, the 'Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens' and important motor museums were founded. The automotive heritage concerns different types of artefacts: infrastructures and landscape, sites and architectures, motor and car design, trademarks and patents, vehicles and components, companies and actors, artistic and cultural testimonies. Furthermore, an integrated and multidisciplinary approach is essential to the study of the potentials as driver for cultural re-development.

At the beginning of the crisis phase in the '80s, public opinion and decision-makers were not sensitive to valorizing the architectural heritage and landscape of the motor vehicle, and the imaginative scenario was that of a 'green city' in opposition to a 'gray city' of factories, smoke and pollutants.

The scenario of the 'historic automotive heritage' emerges in relation to a new prospect of territorial brand, valorizing the industrial past in relation to innovative re-development.

Different UNESCO designations In the case of 'Motown', the architectural heritage consists of a few sites recognized of high architectural value – Ford Piquette Plant at Detroit [see *TICCIH Bulletin #64*], Lingotto at Torino, Fort Dunlop at Birmingham ... - and many sites of architectural-testimonial value, which may be designated heritage assets.

Reference to the 'automotive heritage', the framework of the UNESCO initiatives concerns the designation of Outstanding Universal Value ('World Heritage List', 'Intangible Heritage', 'Memory of the World'), and the 'Creative Cities Network', in perspective to develop international cooperation among cities that have identified creativity – from the past to the future - as a strategic factor for sustainable social, economic and cultural development.

In the designation of Torino a UNESCO Creative City, the car industry, the material traditions, the creative design, the technical innovation during 150 years are defined as cross-elements of knowledge to be transmitted in order to promote the identity conscious re-development, to increase the cultural/creative production, to train the local attraction and the tourism. The designation of 'Creative City' promises to be an opportunity to preserve and to emphasize the historic and modern 'car brand heritage'.

'Automotive heritage' and the industrial tourism

The automotive industry was absent from the international heritage arena until the end of the '90s. The approach changed with the opening of highly attractive industrial 'car corporate brand' sites, the Volkswagen Group's 'Autostadt' in Wolfsburg and after BMW, Daimler, Opel and Audi in Germany, Toyota in Japan and FCA in Italy have opened centers offering more interaction between the firms and their customers. Nowadays, the automotive sector shows promotion strategies, and success is related to the long-lived and high symbolic value of the products.

The collective consciousness - and not only the 'spectacularization' - of the 'automotive heritage', is connected to educational and informational programs and to the storytelling of the automobile industry and labor; it is a condition to promote conservation policies and to vivify the memory with new languages. The international perspectives of the 'historic car heritage' network regards the knowledge integration, the improvement of accessibility and interaction design, the extension of heritage points and routes. Emergent research and dissemination topic is related to industrial tourism and innovative and creative industries, based on automotive traditions.

Worldwide



The FIAT Lingotto plant was converted by Renzo Piano, here showing the route up to the famous test track on the roof.
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