



The current condition of the Grande Silos Granario, Gravina.

ITALY

CONCRETE GRAIN SILOS AT RISK FROM 'FACADISM'

Edoardo Currà, President of AIPAI, and Antonio Monte, Vice President of AIPAI, TICCIH ITALIA

An important historical document, the Grande Silos Granario in Puglia, southern Italy, is in danger of being demolished, or perhaps worse, of being constructively emptied! The Silos Granario is an important memory of the well-known Battle of Grain launched in 1925 to support national wheat production and a symbol of the functional architecture of the 1930s.

A building permit issued by the municipality of Gravina authorised a sterile façadism to the entire factory, limiting conservation to only the structures of the elevations and allowing internal demolition. Moreover, the intended use is ill-suited to the structural typology of a silo, having above all decided to build a condominium of traditional

flats, without even going through the post-industrial interpretation of the loft.

The affair is incredible, considering that it takes place in Apulia where there is a specific Regional Law for Industrial Heritage that AIPAI helped to draft: the Law n° 1 of 2015. The city of Gravina in Puglia, 150 km east of Naples, could lose a valuable testimony to the social, economic, and industrial development not only of the city, but of the entire region. This loss would be aggravated by the fact that the silo is the only one left intact in southern Italy.

AIPAI - TICCIH Italia supports a daily battle for the Silos, as for



The Grande Silos when first opened in 1938.

many assets, and has done so through two direct actions: on 25 October 2019, AIPAI sent to the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the Metropolitan City of Bari, a Request for declaration of cultural interest, on the basis of the construction characteristics and the archaeo-industrial peculiarities of the silo, in order to avoid the demolition of the structure and start a process of protection of the asset. Subsequently, on 11 April 2021, since the partial demolition project had in any case been authorised, AIPAI activated a more intense action asking that the main prescriptions, that are incompatible with the permission to demolish the interiors of the building, be respected: preserving in the executive project the peculiar constructive-architectural features; respecting the prescriptions of L.R. n. 1/2015 on the industrial heritage; preserving machines and equipment (circular distributor group for filling the cells, the distributor belts, etc.) in order to safeguard the components linked to the conservation of the memory of the places.

Despite its state of neglect and decay for many years, the silos were characterised by both a precise architectural language and

technical-constructive innovations. The use of reinforced concrete, the Monnier and Hennebique patents, influenced the engineers and architects who designed and built the silos between 1932 and 1940. It is moreover a structure rich in history, architecture, and memory: an emblem of the rural economy of the Murgia area as it is an integral part of the agricultural landscape of Gravina and the surrounding area.

The 'Battle of Grain' imposed the need to have large buildings constructed on Italian territory to store grain. Beginning with the notorious Law of 10 July 1932, which encouraged the construction of silos and granaries, both imposing mechanised structures and modest installations were designed and built. Technologically advanced installations were built in the centres of major wheat production and in some large cities, including Venice, Rome, Piacenza, and Foggia. Between 1932 and 1939, seven hundred and sixty installations were built for the storage of wheat.

The 'Grande Silos Granario' of Foggia was inaugurated in 1937 and



One of the rotating distributor units for filling cells in the Silos, with the characteristic Hennebique reinforced concrete structure.

was considered one of the largest grain silos in Europe, capable of storing up to 45,000 tonnes. Gravina was known as the granary of Apulia and the 'grandiose building' was built to replace the traditional underground storage, through 'Pianidelle fosse' (plains of pits) distributed in numerous centres of Terra di Capitanata and of the Tavoliere. During the Second World War, the silo was destroyed in its upper part and later partially rebuilt.

The 'Società Anonima Magazzini Generali dell'Italia Meridionale ed Insulare', set up by the Banco di Napoli, promoted the construction of two silos in Apulia to store the large quantities of Apulian grain coming from the countryside in the provinces of Foggia, Bari, Matera, Stigliano and Taranto. The one in Foggia, mentioned above, was completed at the end of 1936, while the one in Gravina was built between 1932 and 1934 and was one of the first in Italy to be built after the 1932 law.

Obviously built near the existing railway station, the silos stored 6,000 tons of wheat from local production and from nearby Basilicata. The imposing architectural work is 26 metres high and consists of two hundred and twenty-two cells which were directly filled with wheat through four hoppers and distribution conveyors. The

perfect integration between the silo structures and the machinery makes the whole object a machine-building in which it is impossible to separate the structural components of the silos and the reinforced concrete hoppers from the mechanical pathways of the wheat in the sifting, storing and bagging process.

The structure was equipped with an ultra-modern mechanical system supplied by the well-known OMI-Officine Meccaniche Italiane of Reggio Emilia, and was driven by closed, independent, externally ventilated electric motors. As far as we know today, it is the only one of the many silos built in Italy that is still complete with machinery (see, for example, the one in [Foggia](#), which was completely destroyed). Today, original machinery can still be seen inside, including the circular distributor unit for filling the cells, the distributor belts and other machines that deserve to be recovered and preserved.

The case of the Silos in Gravina is a typical example of how a building is one with its industrial function. Recovery can therefore only take place through a design culture interested in exploring these values, which are also a guide for the identification of a compatible use.



CONTENTS

REPORT

- **LINGOTTO: TEST TRACK OR ROOF GARDEN:** *Edoardo Currà and Jacopo Ibello*

WORLDWIDE

- **HOW TO ASSESS A PLACE WHICH IS UNIQUE - SAYNER HÜTTE IRONWORKS:** *Florian Fichtner*
- **THE RAILROAD GRIP BAG AND ITS ROVING LEGACY:** *Z P Liollo*
- **PRE-FABRICATED COFFEE PLANTATION HOUSES:** *Ana J. Mejía Robledo*
- **THE STAKEHOLDERS OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE REUSE:** *Dora Chatzi Rodopoulou*
- **PERSPECTIVES AND MEMORY MAKING IN HYDROPOWER COMMUNITIES:** *Felicia Söderqvist*
- **CONCRETE GRAIN SILOS AT RISK FROM 'FAÇADISM':** *Edoardo Currà and Antonio Monte*
- **SWISS RAILWAY CONFERENCE:** *Toni Häfliger*
- **BARWON RIVER AQUEDUCT:** *Miles Oglethorpe*

CONSERVATION TECHNIQUES

- **RESTITUTION OF HISTORIC MORTAR AND COLOR COATINGS:** *Jéssica Aparecida de Paula and Vinicius Martins de Oliveira*

TICCIH NEWS

- **TICCIH 2021 BECOMES TICCIH 2022**

EDUCATION

- **RAILtoLANDCULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF RAILWAYS:** *Ana B. Berrocal Menárguez and Clara Zamorano Martín*

EVENTS CALENDAR LINKS



The possible new use for the famous roof track on the Lingotto FIAT factory in Turin. Sky Drive proposes a circular 'High Line' as part of a green scheme for the neighbourhood. The Italian industrial heritage association AIPAI/TICCIH Italia uses the Bulletin to express concern about this and another reuse proposal which run counter to TICCIH's conservation principles.

HARNESSING THE UNIQUE POTENTIAL OF OUR INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Dr Miles Oglethorpe, TICCIH President

Greetings from your President! It's mind-numbing to think that it is over a year since many of us went into our first CoVid19 lockdown. So much has happened since then, and not a lot of it has been good.

This issue contains several contributions from current and recent doctorate students, and we expect that the Bulletin will continue to provide a space in which early-career research can be publicised. Colleagues supervising research projects can encourage their students to explain their work on this platform.

For me, the last few weeks have been a time for reflection. Many organisations are going through a process of 're-imagining', focusing not only on post-pandemic recovery, but also trying to learn from the ordeal that we have all suffered and to emerge in a stronger position than before. I have written previously about the extraordinary digital revolution that has been a life-saver over the last year and has transformed the way we live and work. Whether we like it or not, very little is going to remain the same and in some respects that is a good thing.

Without doubt, the biggest issue facing us all is our climate crisis. The pandemic has radically altered patterns and volumes of human consumption and changed behaviour. Some of this transformation will be temporary, but some of it will not. In Scotland, our attention is now turning towards the challenge



TICCIH

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
CONSERVATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

BULLETIN

NUMBER 92 · 2nd Quarter 2021
ISSN 1605-6647