
Motorway architecture

Preservation challenges for the heritage of Italian large-scale infrastructures

Architectures d'autoroutes. Enjeux de préservation pour le patrimoine des grandes infrastructures en Italie

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Introduction

- 1 Motorway architecture is part of the continuously expanding concept of Italian cultural heritage. Nevertheless, these late 20th century buildings have been demolished or considerably modified due to commercial needs and changed normative requirements. The refurbishment projects have repeatedly compromised the features and qualities of these constructions, thus betraying their identity. These design approaches are the result of the absence of recognition of these buildings within the 20th century heritage. The values of Modern Architecture remain frequently complex to assess, and thus to share, because of the scarcity of knowledge and the lack of historical perspective. This last issue makes the evaluation of the cultural values of these buildings at the institutional and operational level problematic.
- 2 Despite the heightened interest in the research field of preservation, there is some evidence to suggest that 20th century heritage is being continually less considered and less safeguarded by the Italian legislation¹. The *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio* (Cultural heritage and landscape code) identifies diverse types of heritage which can be protected through slightly different procedures.² As for architectural heritage, the code provides the protection of a building for its artistic or historical *intrinsic value*.³ In 2017 this law was partly modified⁴ extending the lapse of time between the construction of a private building and the possibility for its *Dichiarazione di interesse culturale* (Declaration of cultural interest) up to seventy years.⁵ The same regulation had already been applied to public constructions. Moreover, listing procedures based on the assessment of an artistic or historical value can only be carried out if the designer is no longer living.

The current 70-year time frame was justified by the necessity to guarantee an appropriate perspective for a critical assessment of a building. Hence, late 20th century architecture, like almost all motorway constructions, is not safeguarded by the law despite what happens in most other countries⁶. However, the code also provides the opportunity for protection based on the *relational value*, that is the connection to the history and the culture of the nation.⁷ In this case, the significance of a building lies in the acknowledgment of its testament to the national identity rather than in its architectural quality. Although this procedure can be applied without any time frame and with the author being alive, few 20th century buildings have been protected⁸. Moreover, the code was recently revised again. In September 2020, a law on digital simplification and innovation established that, as for interventions on sports centres, the need to guarantee their functionality takes precedence over their conservation.⁹ This law may cause the partial loss of great examples of sporting facilities built in the 20th century. As an example, the Stadio Artemio Franchi by Pier Luigi Nervi in Florence run the risk of being demolished. In reaction, a petition has circulated for its protection leading to the organisation of a design competition for its renovation and conservation. The law may also be taken as a precedent to issue new regulations on other building typologies, thus weakening the effectiveness of the *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*¹⁰. Besides the code, 20th century heritage may be protected through the copyright law.¹¹ However, the aim of this procedure is only to defend the private interests of the author rather than safeguarding the building in itself.¹²

- 3 This essay aims to contribute to the growing area of research on highway architecture¹³ by exploring public policies and procedures regarding refurbishment interventions on relevant late 20th-century motorway restaurants. The research uses a qualitative case study approach to investigate the connection between the acknowledgment of their cultural value and the resulting operational practices. The study provides an overview of the role played in such renovation projects by stakeholders, professionals, authorities, and the community. The lack of protection by the *Ministero della cultura* (Ministry of culture, abbreviated as 'MIC') has caused a considerable loss of the original materials of the buildings. In addition, it has led to the complete modification of the constructions, and in so doing, betrayed their former architectural concept. Hence, future research should define an innovative approach towards the preservation of these futuristic buildings and structures, by managing both the requirements for their contemporary use and conservation issues.
- 4 The paper first gives a summary of the history of motorway restaurants in Italy, by highlighting their significance within the late 20th century Italian architecture. The essay also reports the results of a study by the author which compared the original features of these buildings with their current state. The section has been then divided into three subsections aimed at examining three different case studies [fig. 1]. The first subsection deals with the interventions carried out on the highway service building in Novara (A4 motorway, Piedmont). In the second subsection, the refurbishment project on the rest-stop in Soave (A4 motorway, Verona, Veneto) is described. The third subsection presents the reconstruction of the motorway restaurant in Lainate (A8 motorway, Milan, Lombardy). Finally, in the conclusions, the paper summarises the main research findings and offers proposals for further research.

Figure 1



Italian motorway network. Selected case studies, 2020.

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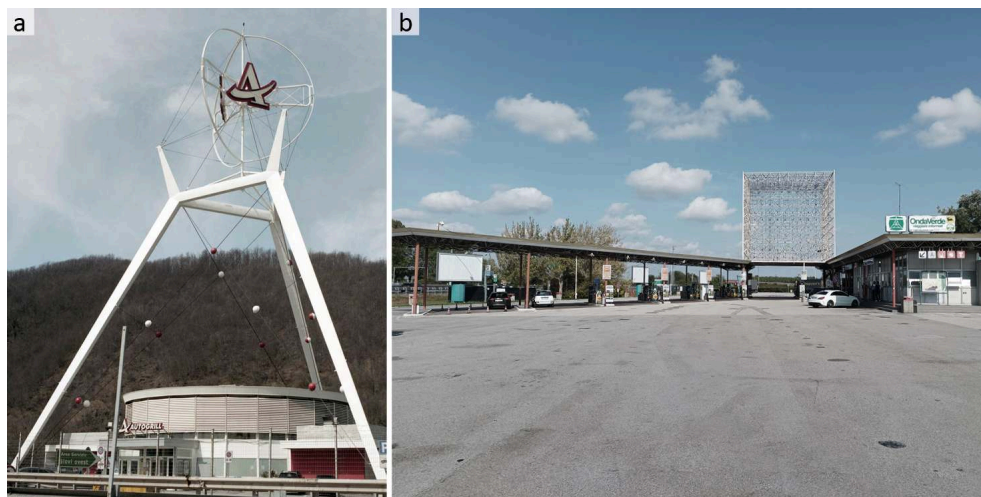
Motorway restaurants in Italy. Players involved in renovation interventions

- 5 The creation of a motorway network (1955-1975) was one of the crucial issues of the Italian post-war reconstruction. The infrastructural plan aimed to profoundly modernise the country by boosting its socio-economic development. Motorways contributed to the national unification and to the establishment of a new Italian identity.¹⁴ Highway engineers and architects used their construction as an occasion to experiment with new bold design solutions.¹⁵ These projects became a driving force and an innovating factor for the subsequent productive and executive processes. Well-known Italian architects and engineers, such as Melchiorre Bega, Angelo Bianchetti, Costantino Dardi, and Pier Luigi Nervi, challenged themselves with the creation and development of new modern architectural typologies, like petrol stations, rest stops and motels. However, one of the distinguishing aspects of the Italian motorway architecture was the conception of highway service chains. Service chains were a feature of the American highways, whereas rest-stops in Europe were constructed with diverse architectural languages and were usually run by different restaurateurs. Mario Pavesi (1909-1990), one of the most enlightened confectionary industrialists, was the first to envisage a highway service chain in Italy. His restaurants built along the motorway were called *autogrill*¹⁶ with reference to the American highway *grill rooms*. The Italian buildings were designed with increasingly cutting-edge technology and advertising.¹⁷ The most distinguished rest-stop typology was the bridge-restaurant. It

was conceived as an overhead structure which spanned the carriageway in order to be accessible from each side of the toll road. *Autogrill* (1958-1972) evolved to become remarkable emblems of faith in progress, avant-garde, and *Italian style*. Hence, these innovative motorway restaurants inspired similar buildings in the international context.

- 6 The current study by the author offers some important insights into the understanding of what remains of this important past. Through archival and historical research, the original features of these *autogrill* are being compared with their current situation. The majority of the buildings have been demolished. The remaining motorway restaurants have been largely modified, but some of them are still identifiable, although they have been subject to interventions of renovation. Few motorway restaurants or petrol stations have been considered in national or regional censuses of relevant late 20th century architecture.¹⁸ Only the motorway restaurant in Ronco Scrivia (A7 motorway, Genoa, Liguria) by Angelo Bianchetti [fig. 2a] and the highway petrol station in Mestre by Costantino Dardi (A57 motorway, Venice, Veneto) [fig. 2b] have been protected by the code.¹⁹ The interventions on the other toll way service buildings have thus been mainly regulated only by the *Testo unico delle disposizioni legislative e regolamentari in materia edilizia* (Law on building matter)²⁰, without the need for approval by the MIC. The renovation projects have been carried out with no aim of preservation, and they have therefore considerably altered the main features of the original restaurants causing the loss of most of the original materials and elements.²¹ The following case studies have been selected to identify the main preservation and conservation issues for these buildings. These three rest-stops were all designed by Angelo Bianchetti for Pavesi company. Each identifies the position of a specific player (companies, professionals, public authorities, community) involved in the processes of their renovation.

Figure 2



The *autogrill* by Angelo Bianchetti in Ronco Scrivia, 2018 (a) and the petrol station by Costantino Dardi in Mestre (Italy), 2021 (b).

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The project: managing companies and designers. Autogrill in Novara

- 7 The bridge-restaurant in Novara was constructed in 1962 and replaced the first motorway rest-stop built in Italy (1947). In 2017 *Chef Express*, the current catering company, engaged Massimo Iosa Ghini for its renovation.²² The main structure has been enclosed by a silver fir shell. A key aspect of the project was the use of vegetation to improve the aesthetics of the terraces and of the lateral entrances. The interiors and the furniture have been totally changed to offer diverse food or retail services, responding to different types of demands.
- 8 The analysis of the case study demonstrates how the takeover of the bridge-restaurant was particularly significant for the storytelling in the marketing of *Chef Express*, since the first *autogrill* was built in Novara. This occasion was interpreted as an opportunity to connect the past and the future. The company aims at turning its *autogrill* into new symbols of economic growth, like Pavese did during the years of the post-war economic boom. Hence, *Chef Express* decided to make the building the first of a new generation of rest-stops. The area was thus named 'Number 1'. Motorway service areas have been either enjoyed or despised over time. In contrast to previous times when these buildings were mere crossing points, travellers nowadays demand high-quality services. Even though their initial use remains, the way of travelling and eating has transformed alongside habits and lifestyles. Market liberalisation has led to the need to diversify and expand the companies' products in order to be preferred over their competitors.
- 9 This example is crucial in highlighting how the reconsideration of the relationship between catering companies and travellers is a matter of architecture and may entail radical renovations. In Novara, the interiors had already been compromised by previous interventions. Massimo Iosa Ghini considered them to be a blank space. Since the company offers a huge variety of products, he designed a sober architectural layout where the signs of the different food and retail areas could be easily recognisable [fig. 3b]. The atmosphere is therefore completely different from that proposed by Angelo Bianchetti in the 60s, when the materials were chosen for their expressive qualities [fig. 3a].

Figure 3



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Novara (Italy). Interiors in the 1960s, Pavese postcard from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a) and in 2020 (b).

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- 10 In the absence of protection by the MIC, corporate image needs took precedence over conservation issues. The architect affirmed that if the use of the building was unchanged, the designer had to “evolve” this construction through its regeneration. Hence, the renovation was regarded as the possibility for an “evolution”, and thus an improvement, of the former rest-stop. This aspect is even more evident when analysing the exteriors. Since customers are now attracted by features linked to well-being, comfort and sustainability, storytelling in their marketing promoted the adoption and display of energy efficiency systems. After the fire in 1984, the façades were restored considering their original features [fig. 4a] which had been a landmark until recently.²³ Iosa Ghini decided instead to operate in discontinuity with the past. The adoption of the new shell was his strategy both to hide thermal systems and insulation and to show the energy saving intent of his project [fig. 4b]. In a recent interview²⁴, he expressed how even this passive sustainable design is a social issue. The aim of the project was not only to reduce the amount of energy required, but also to decrease the rate of carbon footprint. Low-carbon footprint products have thus been adopted to decrease the impact of the interventions on the environment. Despite a general attachment to the original design, energy savings took precedence over heritage preservation. This intervention has led to a profound distortion of the former features of the building and to the complete loss of the identity of the rest-stop.²⁵ Unfortunately, this energy-saving design is likely to be adopted for all the next refurbishment projects on motorway restaurants managed by *Chef Express*.

Figure 4



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Novara, Italy, in the 1960s, Pavesi postcard from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a) and in 2020, after the refurbishment by Massimo Iosa Ghini (b). The new shell hides the original concrete structure.

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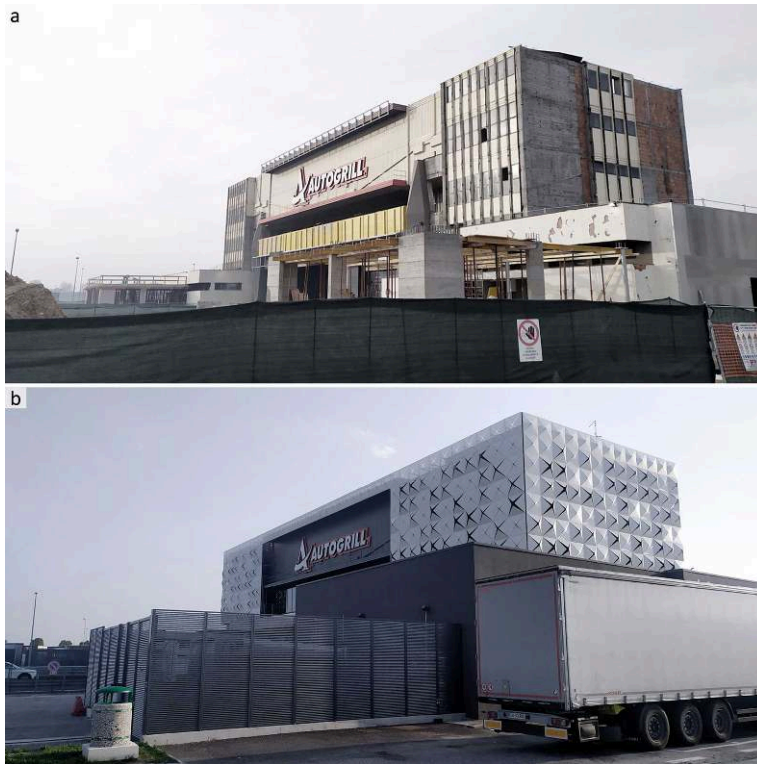
The project approval: public authorities. Autogrill in Soave

- 11 The renovation project of the bridge-restaurant in Soave, designed in 1969 and named 'Scaligera', was conceived in 2020 by Autogrill S.p.a., the most famous Italian motorway service company, with the *Design for all* fundamentals in mind. Interiors were planned to make the different areas easily identifiable and enjoyable. The two lateral pavilions were extended and modified to accommodate changed standards for both utility spaces and customers' services, such as sanitary premises, shops and bars. Two escalators were placed inside the lateral buildings to make access to the upper floor easier. This design choice entailed the partial demolition of the main façade and of the roofs. The overhead structure was refurbished. Finishes and plant systems were totally substituted. The fronts were completely revised. The bridge-restaurant was enclosed with a new shell made of perforated aluminum tiles. In the lateral pavilions, most of the glass windows were replaced by a new wall to allow the arrangement of the shelves of the ground-floor markets. Finally, two concrete walls were added at the extremities of the supports of the bridge, to comply with updated seismic requirements.
- 12 This case study could demonstrate how the multiplicity of authorities involved in the project approval does not guarantee a different outcome in the refurbishment interventions on these buildings. As for 'Scaligera', the process did not include the MIC since the site is not protected by the code. However, the building permit was authorised by the city council, instead of the director of the municipal office in charge,

because it would not have complied with the current city planning regulations.²⁶ Hence, all the documents referring to the intervention and discussed during the assembly are freely accessible on the website of the municipality.²⁷ Due to the complexity of the project, the municipality had to involve lots of other authorities before the final approval.²⁸ Since there were not any constraints set by the code, preservation and conservation issues were left undiscussed. In the minutes of the city council meeting, the expansion and *restyling*, as they called it, is instead seen as a catalyst for the local manufacturing activities. The assembly recognised the crucial role played by this project for the development of the local community's economy. However, the renovation of this building did not have a wide appeal with the general public. The project was thus not promoted by either local or national newspapers nor architectural journals. In addition, it did not receive any public praise or criticism.

- 13 The project of restyling and expansion [fig. 5b] has seriously compromised the features of Bianchetti's design and caused the loss of original building materials and components [fig. 5a]. Before recent interventions, the state of decay of some architectural elements was noticeable. However, despite some modifications, the original aspect of the building was still well recognisable.²⁹ As for the lateral pavilions, the former façades were mainly characterised by the presence of two levels of glass windows placed at different depths [fig. 6a]. This configuration allowed a unique play of shadows and reflections. In addition, the glazing permitted viewing of the interiors. Indoor and outdoor spaces were thus fluidly connected. Finally, four lanterns enriched the top of the buildings, as *acroteria* of the modernity. The recent project did not take into consideration these distinguishing characteristics of Bianchetti's design. Moreover, the current modified lateral façades lack architectural qualities [fig. 6b]. Their dark grey painted plaster only displays the sustainability of the renovation, an aspect which was likewise fundamental for the project in Novara. Furthermore, the lanterns were eventually not preserved.

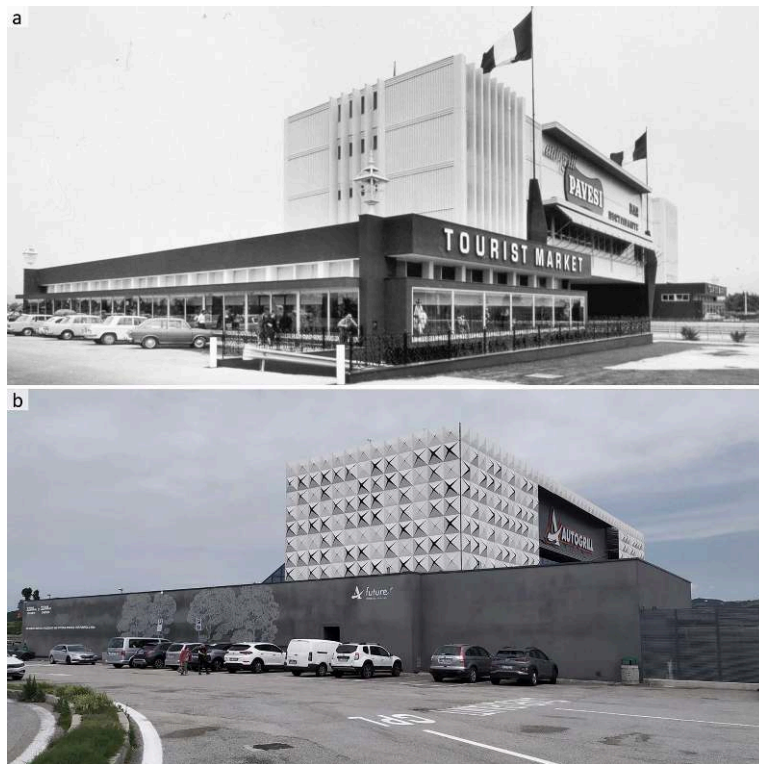
Figure 5



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Soave, Italy. North-east side in January 2020, during the interventions (a) and in 2021, after the refurbishment and the expansion (b). The recent intervention caused the loss of original building materials and components.

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Figure 6



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Soave, Italy. North-west side in the 1960s, photo from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a) and in 2021, after the refurbishment and the expansion (b). The lateral pavilions were considerably transformed and lack architectural qualities.

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- 14 A certain degree of transformation is acceptable in motorway buildings. It is within their very nature to host ever-evolving functions with requirements which change over time. However, the new shell was designed in total discontinuity with the previous features of the building, as with the *autogrill* in Novara. The former fronts were tripartite [fig. 7a]. The two extremities featured narrow windows and a metal cladding with half pilasters. The overhead building was held up by two concrete transverse walls, displaying a polyhedral shape on the façades, as if they were embedded in the bridge structure. As with the windows of the lateral pavilions, the inclined surfaces enabled a sort of play of shadows. In addition, these walls were detached from the lateral pavilions to allow the view of the landscape behind. The new project completely betrayed the tripartition of the former façade [fig. 7b]. Moreover, the previous cladding was regrettably removed [fig. 5a]. The new concrete walls, designed to meet the seismic safety requirements, were built between the supports and the lateral pavilions [fig. 8b]. These new walls were placed exactly in line with the polyhedral extremities of the supports, thus completely distorting the original perception of the structural elements. A sketch by Angelo Bianchetti [fig. 8a] shows how these polyhedral walls were one of the distinguishing features of his design, even if it represents a slightly different proposal from what was eventually constructed. Nevertheless, the new shell has unfortunately concealed these peculiar supports, along with the former façade.

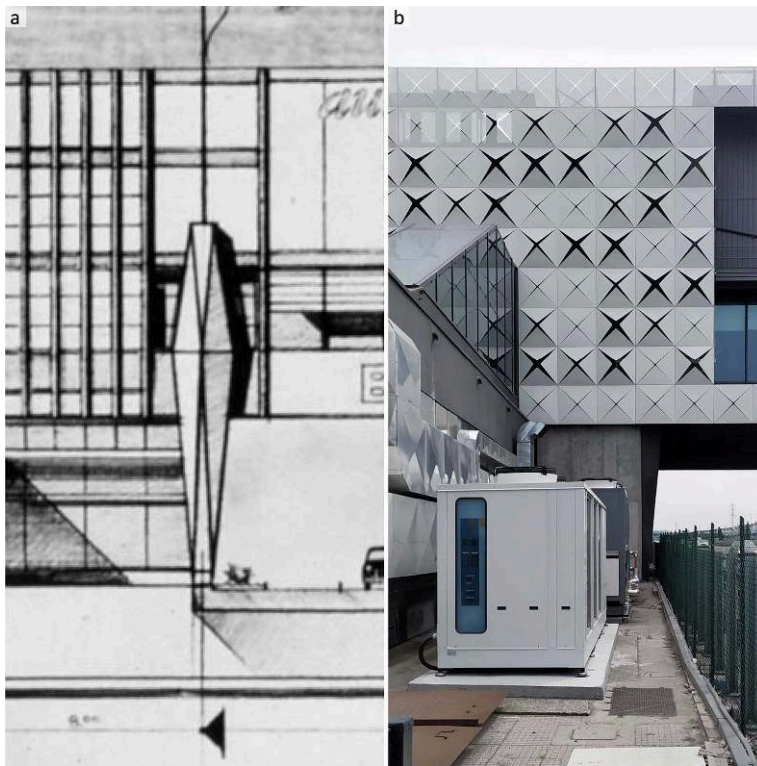
Figure 7



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Soave, Italy, in the 1960s, Pavesi postcard from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a) and in 2021, after the refurbishment (b). The main façade is hidden by the new shell. Two escalators were placed to access to the upper floor easier.

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Figure 8



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Soave, Italy, detail of the polyhedral concrete supports. Sketch by the architect, 1960s, photo from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a), and current state, 2021, after the refurbishment (b). The supports are hidden by the new shell and enclosed by concrete walls.

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The resonance of the interventions: press and community. Autogrill in Lainate

- 15 The last case study concerns the recent reconstruction of the *autogrill* in Lainate service area, named 'Villoresi Ovest' and designed in 1958. After the construction, it had quickly become an Italian icon in the international context because of its publication in *Life International* magazine in 1960. The refurbishment devised in 2020 by Andrea Langhi, was based on energy efficiency requirements³⁰. It entailed the demolition [fig. 9b] and subsequent reconstruction of the restaurant pavilion [fig. 9c]. The steel structure was replaced by a new one. The glazing, which had already been changed in recent times, was substituted with new insulated glass window frames with UV filter films.³¹ Regarding the exteriors, the project included conservation interventions for the overhead steel structure, which was the key feature of the original building [fig. 9a].

Figure 9



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Lainate, Italy, in the 1960s, photo from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a), after the demolition in 2020, photo taken from <https://bit.ly/3l2hmav> (b), and current state (2021) (c). The steel overhead structure has been preserved.

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- 16 In addition to the reconstruction of the building, the new project interpreted the layout of the interiors in a diametrically opposite way compared to the previous situation. The crystal chandelier placed in the centre of the pavilion was an important characteristic of the original project of the rest-stop [fig. 10a]. It lit up the bar counter until recently, and the eating area was situated around it.³² Along with the external structure, the company decided to preserve and restore the chandelier as the symbol of the motorway restaurant, but the positions of the bar and of the eating area were inverted [fig. 10b]. The interiors were designed with particular attention to sustainability and innovation, like in the previous case studies. Pavements were designed with *Active Ceramic* tiles, which prevent biofilm formations, whereas the furniture was made of WASCOFFEE®, an eco-friendly material patented by *Autogrill S.p.a* company and developed from the waste of coffee sold in the restaurants of the chain.³³

Figure 10



Autogrill by Angelo Bianchetti in Lainate, Italy. Interiors in the 1960s, photo from J.J. Bianchetti Archive / Como (a) and in 2021, after the reconstruction of the building (b). The positions of bar and eating area have been inverted.

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- 17 The rest-stop was partially dismantled although it was the most documented and appreciated building among the earlier motorway restaurants. The Italian journal *Domus* reported how the service area was «the most iconic service stations of the Italian economic boom period» and a remnant «of a futuristic manifesto for architecture».³⁴ The online site *Exibart* heavily condemned the demolition of the building, reminding us that it was a symbol of the spirit of that age, when people were fascinated by the futuristic theme, and thus by the journey by car and its rest-stops, because it represented fast-growing progress.³⁵ Moreover, it was one of the emblems «of the promise of social prosperity» and the image of the Italian gamble on motorways for a better future. Therefore, the site stated that the tangible symbol of that history was definitively lost and only its memory was remaining.³⁶
- 18 The research on this intervention points out that recent positive media attention given to interventions on motorway heritage could be a further source of risk for the buildings which will be refurbished in the future. «The most photographed autogrill in the world has come back, the most instagrammable ever», proclaimed the *Autogrill S.p.a.* company.³⁷ As it can be observed, the advertising statement stressed the importance of the image and its role in the narrative of the interventions. Furthermore, the newspaper *MilanoToday* commented that the building was «reborn» with «the same», «identical» shape (MilanoToday 2020a).³⁸ These two examples evidence the common feeling that since the image of the building was given back, also the building was considered to have come back, even if its original materiality has been lost. Hence, although the rest-stop was reproduced even with very different materials and elements from the original ones, local and national press as well as the community have greatly

welcomed the intervention. However, the examination of specific words in the press and social networks, shows that there has been a broad misunderstanding. *Autogrill S.p.a.* presented its intervention by asking people if Bianchetti's «iconic geometry» of the «legendary» *autogrill* was recognisable and pledging it had come back with the «original 1958 design».³⁹ In reality, the new design recalls Bianchetti's one, but it cannot be considered original in any way. In addition, the aforementioned *MilanoToday* newspaper described the intervention as a *ricostruzione conservativa* (preservative reconstruction) « [...] in full respect of the original design of the building, with a slight aesthetic reinterpretation».⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is a contradiction in terms since an intervention of reconstruction cannot be regarded as preservative by any means. This is even more contradictory if there has been a reinterpretation of the original design.

- 19 The *Corriere della Sera* coupled two different concepts of the project, that of conservation and energy-saving improvements, which could be regarded as antithetical. The ancient chandelier is «shining again», but the current essence of the building is «green».⁴¹ The compliance to the current energy efficiency requirements was a common theme in both the press and the storytelling of the company. *Autogrill* stressed the importance of the renovation «to keep up with the times» and so the need for a «great attention to sustainability».⁴²
- 20 Finally, the company recalled how Pavesi's building was a symbol of rebirth and modernity of the country. For this reason, it named the rest-stop 'Autogrill 1958'. Similarly to the rest-stop in Novara run by *Chef Express*, *Autogrill S.p.a.* company used this glorious past as the main theme of its narration. The hope is that the renovated building could represent «a symbolic bridge between past and future, a tangible signal of the will to restart of Italy».⁴³ The corporation, as well as the community, believes that the reconstruction of this monument is a ray of hope, given the period of crisis due to Covid-19.

Preserving motorway architecture

- 21 The present study was designed to explore the connection between the acknowledgment of the cultural value of motorway architecture, and the subsequent operational practices. The research demonstrates how these exemplary symbols which once heralded the future are today a heritage in danger, because of the lack of legal protection. Moreover, this heritage may be considered a “manifesto of misunderstanding”. The current incomprehension of the identity of these buildings is a harbinger of their loss. Hence, even if they pose significant problems because of material decay, they run the risk of disappearing mainly because the current projects respond only to communicative and regulatory requirements and do not take into account the identity and qualities of such heritage. These buildings are considered obsolete due to their aesthetics and their energy performances. «Increasingly stringent requirements have rendered many buildings from the modern era outdated and obsolete – even if they are still performing well according to their original specifications. This leaves the way open for demolition⁴⁴ [...]». The essay thus portrays how the current ecological, economic, and social transition is playing a decisive role in these recurrent interventions. For this reason, research contributing to strategies for the preservation of such heritage seems even more crucial.

- 22 Preserving motorway architecture means preserving a design innovation, resulting from the focus of the modern era on travelling. These constructions left us an intangible heritage, that is an ambition of modernity which is still present and powerful. Although the current study is based on a small sample of case studies, it suggests that the *relational value* of these buildings has become increasingly acknowledged by both the community and the managing companies. *Chef Express* corporation declared that the aim of its refurbishment in Novara was «to give again to this place the importance it deserves in the minds of the travellers [...] and to bring it to the future without distorting its historical value».⁴⁵ In reality, the recognition of the cultural values of these buildings currently concerns only intangible aspects, rather than the qualities of their design and materials (intrinsic value). Motorway heritage therefore has to tackle both the risk of threatening distortions and that of total reproductions. These kinds of interventions reflect a countertrend compared to the cautious approaches identified in the Icomos Madrid-New Delhi document on conservation of the 20th century cultural heritage (2017). The cultural significance of these pioneer buildings has only been partially recognised only as a means of enhancing the current marketing proposals of the companies.
- 23 The recognition of the significance of the highway landscape «leads us to appreciate the need for a project that will safeguard and give our heritage of road architecture the value it deserves»⁴⁶. In order to promote carefully-considered interventions on these buildings, further studies should explore their intrinsic values, by broadening knowledge of their design and transformation processes and by identifying the qualities to be preserved. Hence, the preservation strategy for motorway architecture starts from the research and the dissemination of its cultural values.

NOTES

1. CARUGHI Ugo, « La tutela del patrimonio architettonico italiano del novecento », *Recupero e conservazione*, n° 145, 2018, p. 57-63, available online, <https://www.recmagazine.it/magazine/145.html> [link valid in February 2023].

2. The *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*, Dlgs (Legislative decree) 42/2004, establishes all the Italian regulations on preservation, conservation, enhancement, interventions on cultural heritage and landscape. In this paper, the term 'code' will be used solely when referring to this law. At the articles 10 and 11, the code identifies the diverse kinds of cultural heritage, by differentiating them according to the type of object/building and its property. The Ministero della cultura (Ministry of culture), abbreviated as 'MIC', is in charge of the protection of the cultural heritage.

3. An *intrinsic value* is a quality which lies in a given object/building in itself. The code identifies different kinds of values: artistic, historic, archaeological and ethno-anthropological. For further study, see Dlgs 42/2004, article 10, paragraphs 1 and 3, letter a.

4. CARUGHI Ugo, « Architettura del '900 a rischio/1: le modifiche al Codice dei beni culturali e le sue ricadute », *Il giornale dell'architettura.com*, 2017, [online], <https://www.giornaledellarchitettura.com>

ilgiornaledellarchitettura.com/2017/09/20/architettura-del-900-a-rischio1-le-modifiche-al-codice-dei-beni-culturali-e-le-sue-ricadute/ [link valid in February 2023].

5. The *Dichiarazione di interesse culturale* by the MIC determines the presence of a cultural interest in a given object/building. The time lapse is regulated by the same law, according to the type of object/building and its property. The declaration is mandatory before a private building can be protected as heritage. As for public buildings, they are directly protected by law after seventy years from their construction, but the Ministry can verify whether there is a cultural interest through the *Verifica dell'interesse culturale* (Cultural interest check) and possibly proceed with the declaration. For further study, see Dlgs 42/2004, article 10, paragraph 5, and articles 12 and 13.

6. CARUGHI Ugo & VISONI Massimo (dir.), *Time Frames: Conservation Policies for twentieth-century Architectural Heritage*, Londres, New York, Routledge, 2017.

7. The *relational value* is referred to the connection of a given object/building to the political, military, literary, artistic, scientific, technological, industrial, and cultural history. The MIC can also assess its ability to be a testimony to the identities and histories of public, collective, and religious institutions. For further study, see Dlgs 42/2004, article 10, paragraph 3, letter d.

8. CARUGHI Ugo, « La tutela del patrimonio architettonico italiano del novecento », *Recupero e conservazione*, n° 145, 2018, here p. 62, available online, <https://www.recmagazine.it/magazine/145.html> [link valid in February 2023].

9. L (Law) 120/2020, article 55-bis, *Semplificazioni per interventi su impianti sportivi* (Simplifications for interventions on sporting facilities).

10. CARUGHI Ugo, « Per demolire e ricostruire si comincia dal Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio : poi toccherà agli impianti sportivi », *Recupero e conservazione*, n° 160, 2020, p. 84-85, available online, <https://www.recmagazine.it/magazine/160.html>, *Id.*, « La tutela disinvolta », *Il giornale dell'architettura.com*, 2020, [online], <https://partnership.ilgiornaledellarchitettura.com/2019/06/13/la-tutela-disinvolta/>, *Id.*, « Non svincoliamo gli stadi dalla tutela », *Il giornale dell'architettura.com*, 2020, <https://partnership.ilgiornaledellarchitettura.com/2019/06/09/non-svincoliamo-gli-stadi-dalla-tutela-2/> [links valid in February 2023]].

11. L 633/1941, *Protezione del diritto d'autore e di altri diritti connessi al suo esercizio* (Copyright protection and other rights related to the scope).

12. CARUGHI Ugo, « Tutela innovativa per il novecento », *Recupero e conservazione*, n° 157, 2020, p. 70-73, ici p. 71, available online, <https://www.recmagazine.it/magazine/157.html> [link valid in February 2023] ; PICCHIONE Maria Giulia, « La tutela delle opere di architettura contemporanea », *L'Architetto italiano*, n° 4, 2004, p. 44-46, here p. 45.

13. TRASPORTI & CULTURA, *Architetture lungo le autostrade*, 2020, n° 58, [online], https://issuu.com/trasportiecultura/docs/t_c.58.architetture_autostrade_compressed [link valid in February 2023].

14. MENDUNI Enrico, *L'Autostrada del Sole*, Bologna, Il Mulino, coll. « L'Identità italiana », 1999.

15. GRECO Laura, *Architetture autostradali in Italia. Progetto e costruzione negli edifici per l'assistenza ai viaggiatori*, Roma, Gangemi, 2010

16. Since the name *autogrill* is borrowed from a foreign language, in Italian language the plural form remains the same as the singular one. Hence, in this essay the term *autogrill* refers to both the singular and the plural forms.

17. BENETTI Alessandro, « The bridge-type autogrill, infrastructure and icon of the Italian highways », *Domus*, 2020, [online], <https://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2020/07/27/infrastructures-and-icons-the-bridge-type-autogrill-by-angelo-bianchetti-and-mario-pavesi.html> [link valid in October 2022].

18. As for the national census, the MIC identified the following rest-stops: Bagno a Ripoli (A1, FI), Cantagallo (A1, BO), Fiano Romano (A1, RM), Fiorenzuola d'Arda (A1, PC), Frascati (A1, RM), Mestre (A57, VE), Padova (A4), Ronco Scrivia (A7, GE), Serravalle Pistoiese (A11, PT), Varazze (A10, SV). Lombardy region also included the rest-stop in Dorno (A7, PV) in its regional census.

For further study, see <http://architetturecontemporanee.beniculturali.it/architetture/index.php> and https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture/schede/3m080-00086/?view=luoghi&offset=0&hid=8.349&sort=sort_int [links valid in February 2023].

Buildings protected by the code can be found at the following link: <http://vincoliinrete.beniculturali.it/VincoliInRete/vir/utente/login> [link valid in February 2023].

19. The building in Ronco Scrivia was protected (Dlgs 42/2004, article 10, paragraph 3, letter a) because it was considered a testimony to the economic boom period and because the community is attached to it. The petrol station in Mestre was protected (Dlgs 42/2004, article 10, paragraph 3, letter d) because it is a testimony to the history of the public petrol company AGIP. Moreover, it is testament to the history of architecture because it represents an example of the experimentation with standardised elements in the late 60s.

20. DPR (Presidential Decree) 380/2001. The law legislates interventions of new construction or on existing buildings.

21. PERON Verdiana, « (Mega)structures' Resilience: Italian Motorway Bridge-restaurants between global/local Modernism », in TOSTOES Anna & YAMANA Yoshiyuki (éd.), *Inheritable Resilience. Sharing Values of global Modernities*, Actes de la 16^e IDC Tokyo 2020+1, Lisbonne-Tokyo, 29 août – 2 septembre 2021, Docomomo International/Docomomo Japan, 2021, vol. 3, p. 1040-1045 ; DI RESTA Sara & PERON Verdiana, « Conservation issues of exposed reinforce concrete in the Italian motorway bridge-restaurants of the late 20th century », in LA MANTIA Emanuele (ed.), *Maintenance Criteria of Existing and New Design Buildings in the 21st century*, Proceedings of the International Congress Concrete 2021, Venezia, Mestre, 11-12 may 2022, Campobasso, Università degli Studi del Molise, p. 145-154.

22. ROMANO Giuseppe, *Novara : la prima area di ristoro autostradale: storia, abitudini, architetture della sosta in viaggio dal grill Pavesi a Chef express*, Milano, Angeli, 2017, p. 87-112.

23. At the following link, Google Street View permits the comparison between the current situation and the previous ones: <https://goo.gl/maps/3HxdYqJXnMWKpDEFA> [link valid in February 2023].

24. ROMANO Giuseppe, *Novara : la prima area di ristoro autostradale*, op. cit., p. 99.

25. PERON Verdiana, « (Mega)structures' Resilience... », art. cit. ; DI RESTA Sara & PERON Verdiana, « Conservation issues of exposed reinforce concrete... », art. cit.

26. The *Permesso di costruire* (Building permit) was authorised by the *Consiglio comunale* (City council) as required by the LRV (Veneto Region Law) 55/2012, article 3. For further study, see DPR 160/2010, article 7 and DPR 380/2001, articles 12, 13, and 14.

27. COMUNE DI SOAVE, « Parere ai sensi dell'art. 3 comma 1 della L.R.V. 31 dicembre 2012, n. 55 per l'ampliamento di un fabbricato produttivo in deroga allo strumento urbanistico generale. Pratica SUAP numero 02538160033-19022019-1603 - Società AUTOGRILL ITALIA S.P.A. », 2019, <https://www.comunesoave.it/c023081/zf/index.php/atti-amministrativi/delibere/dettaglio/atto/G1XpFd0T6Zz0-A> [link valid in February 2023].

28. For further study, see L 241/1990, articles 14 and 14-bis.

29. At the following links, Google Street View permits the comparison between the current situation and the previous ones: <https://goo.gl/maps/L3C3f8ZTNncKwz6Q7>, https://goo.gl/maps/DMzwNhjqP7Agq6mz6_, https://goo.gl/maps/VD8S752UewSXFyQu7_, <https://goo.gl/maps/S4UYsHBzLkRtJmh56> [links valid in February 2023].

30. AUTOGRILL S.p.A., « Autogrill 1958: the rebirth of Villoresi Ovest: sustainability at the core of the renovation of the iconic Autogrill that symbolized the economic boom », 2020, [online] <https://www.autogrill.com/en/stories/rebirth-villoresi-ovest> [link valid in February 2023].

31. At the following link, Google Street View permits the comparison between the current situation and the previous ones: <https://goo.gl/maps/jedgYjTTuECP5AYRA> [link valid in February 2023].

32. At the following link, Foursquare permits to analyse the layout of the interiors before the intervention:
https://fastly.4sqi.net/img/general/width960/5536341_5UNW91JYXZ53cJNW6uUYoW6tNeEMKn1OOuaVM3aACTE.jpg [link valid in February 2023].

33. AUTOGRILL S.p.A., « WASCOFFEE®: giving coffee grounds a second life: from waste to innovative and sustainable furnishing », 2019, <https://www.autogrill.com/en/stories/wascoffeer-giving-coffee-grounds-second-life> [link valid in February 2023].

34. RICCI Giulia, « Lost icons of the 20th century: motorway service area by Angelo Bianchetti », *Domus*, 2020, <https://www.domusweb.it/en/news/gallery/2020/07/01/lost-icons-of-the-economic-boom-lainate-motorway-service-area-has-been-demolished-pavesi-angelo-bianchetti.html> [link valid in February 2023]. Original Italian: «La struttura [...] è stata parzialmente demolita: rimangono in piedi i tre archi autoportanti, manifesto di un'architettura avveniristica. Lungo l'Autostrada dei Laghi [...] fu inaugurato nel 1958 quello che probabilmente è fra gli autogrill più iconici del periodo del boom economico italiano.»; all translations by the author.

35. SIMEONE Mario Francesco, « Demolito lo storico Autogrill Villoresi Ovest, simbolo di un'Italia che non c'è più », *Exibart*, 2020, [online], <https://www.exibart.com/architettura/demolito-lo-storico-autogrill-villoresi-ovest-simbolo-di-unitalia-che-non-c-e-piu/> [link valid in February 2023]: « [...] simbolo spregiudicato dello spirito del tempo, caratterizzato dalla fascinazione per il tema di futuristica memoria della velocità del progresso e, quindi, al viaggio in automobile e alle sue soste. »

36. « Era uno dei simboli del Paese del boom economico e della promessa del benessere sociale, l'immagine della nuova Italia che correva veloce sulla scommessa delle sue strade asfaltate, lunghe e dritte e con i guardrail catarifrangenti. E adesso non c'è più, di quella storia non sono rimasti che molte fotografie, diversi ricordi malinconici e le macerie dell'Autogrill Villoresi Ovest [...] ».

37. «L'Autogrill più fotografato del mondo è tornato, più instaggrammabile che mai!», AUTOGRILL S.p.A., Post on Facebook, 23 november 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/AutogrillOfficial> [link valid in February 2023].

38. « Ora è rinato. E la forma è la stessa. Identica. », in « Ricostruito il simbolo del boom economico di Milano: è rinato lo storico Autogrill sulla A8 », *Milanotoday*, 2020, <https://www.milanotoday.it/economia/nuovo-autogrill-autolaghi.html> [link valid in February 2023].

39. AUTOGRILL S.p.A., Post on Facebook, 16 July 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/AutogrillOfficial> [link valid in February 2023]. « Riconoscete la geometricità iconica dell'architetto Bianchetti? È il mitico Villoresi Ovest! Ci stiamo rinnovando per essere al passo coi tempi ma non abbiamo nessuna intenzione di andarcene; torneremo con il design originale del 1958 e con una grande attenzione alla sostenibilità, sia dentro che fuori la struttura. »

40. « Ecco il nuovo Autogrill di Villoresi Ovest sull'A8 a Lainate: le foto dell'iconica struttura », *MilanoToday*, 2020, <https://www.milanotoday.it/attualita/autogrill-lainate-villoresi.html> [link valid in February 2023]. The translation in English is by the author. «[...] un importante intervento di ricostruzione conservativa [...] è stata condotta nel pieno rispetto del design originale dell'edificio, con una leggera rivisitazione estetica [...]».

41. TAGLIABUE Francesca, « Effetto nostalgia: la nuova vita dello storico Autogrill Villoresi Ovest », *Corriere della sera*, 2021, <https://living.corriere.it/tendenze/architettura/effetto-nostalgia-la-nuova-vita-dello-storico-autogrill-villoresi-ovest/> [link valid in February 2023]. «Il vecchio chandelier torna a brillare ma l'anima dell'edificio ora è green.»

42. AUTOGRILL S.p.A., Post on Facebook, 16 July 2020. See footnote n. 39.

43. «Anche oggi vogliamo che il locale rinnovato rappresenti un ponte simbolico tra passato e futuro, un segnale tangibile della volontà di ripartire dell'Italia, e di tutti noi, in questo momento complesso». The passage is part of an interview to Gianmario Tondato, CEO of Autogrill S.p.a.

44. DE JONGE Wessel, « Sustainable renewal of the everyday modern », *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, 23:1-2, 2017, p. 62-105, here p. 62, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13556207.2017.1326555?needAccess=true> [link valid in February 2023].
45. PONTE DI NOVARA, « Sul ponte sale Chef Express: il futuro è presente », 2017, <https://pontenovara.chefexpress.it/la-storia-del-ponte/> [link valid in February 2023]: « [...] per riconferire a questo luogo l'importanza che merita nella mente dei viaggiatori [...] e per accompagnarlo nel futuro senza stravolgere il suo valore storico. »
46. CACCIA GHERARDINI Susanna, *Tutela e restauro delle stazioni di servizio = Preservation and restoration of service stations*, Milano, Angeli, 2012.

ABSTRACTS

Nowadays, the facilities of large-scale infrastructures are subject to unprecedented preservation challenges. The protection of these buildings needs an innovative approach. This will be possible through the establishment of new public policies which acknowledge them within the 20th-century cultural heritage. In this field, the Italian motorway service chain was a unique experience in Europe. It was an emblem of a new post-war national identity as well as a symbol of architectural and engineering experimentation. These buildings (1958-1972) are currently threatened by invasive interventions caused by the non-recognition of their cultural value. The current study by the author is comparing, for the first time, the original features of the motorway restaurants with the current situation. The majority of the buildings have been demolished or significantly altered. The paper examines three case studies of great interest: the rest-stops in Novara, Soave, and Lainate. The essay highlights the link between recognition of the cultural value and subsequent operational practices, and also discusses the positions of the stakeholders. Moreover, the essay provides new insights into the stance of public policies and preservation procedures. The connection between knowledge and enhancement of these buildings is the key point of the research. Its final aim is to give theoretical tools and methods to guide future interventions on such heritage.

Les installations des grandes infrastructures sont aujourd'hui soumises à des défis de préservation sans précédent. Leur sauvegarde nécessite une approche innovante que rend possible la mise en place de nouvelles politiques publiques qui les reconnaissent au sein du patrimoine culturel du XX^e siècle. Dans ce domaine, la chaîne de services autoroutiers italienne a constitué une expérience unique en Europe. Elle a été l'emblème d'une nouvelle identité nationale d'après-guerre ainsi qu'un symbole d'expérimentation architecturale et d'ingénierie. Ces bâtiments (1958-1972) sont actuellement menacés par des interventions invasives dues à la non-reconnaissance de leur valeur culturelle. Cette étude compare, pour la première fois, les caractéristiques originales des restaurants autoroutiers avec la situation actuelle. La majorité des bâtiments ont été démolis ou considérablement modifiés. L'article examine trois études de cas de grand intérêt : les haltes routières de Novara, Soave et Lainate. L'essai met en évidence le lien entre la reconnaissance de la valeur culturelle et les pratiques opérationnelles ultérieures, et discute également des positions des parties prenantes. En outre, l'essai fournit de nouvelles perspectives sur la position des politiques publiques et des procédures de préservation. Le lien entre la connaissance et la valorisation de ces bâtiments est le point clé de la recherche. Son

objectif final est de donner des outils théoriques et des méthodes pour guider les interventions futures sur ce patrimoine.

INDEX

Mots-clés: resto-route, architecture d'autoroute, infrastructures, patrimoine du XXe siècle, politiques de préservation, Italie

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