Usina Tamoio: Art, Memory and Heritage

Usina Tamoio was established in the first half of the twentieth century by Italian immigrant Pietro Morganti, in Araraquara, Brazil. The mill became the largest sugar factory in the country and, over time, at the same speed of its expansion, became an authentic Company Town. Besides its architecture and urbanism, this investigation analyzes the existing artistic elements that stand out: an obelisk with two low-reliefs of sugarcane workers scenes, statues of an athlete and a goddess in the stadium complex, and of a Brazilian Indian. These elements represent a collective legacy and symbols of cultural identity of Brazilian industrial heritage.

Disciplinary approach: Art, Architecture, Historic preservation

Session: 20th century company towns and urban planning, from creation to preservation

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In 1917, the Italian immigrant Pietro "Pedro" Morganti (1878-1941) purchased the whole property of the existing Engenho Fortaleza, located eight kilometers from the city of Araraquara, São Paulo, Brazil. It was called Usina Tamoio and was part of the Compagnia Unione Agricola, always of Morganti's ownership.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Araraquara's economy was based on coffee production that led to the railroad arrival and the consequent improvement of the outflow of agricultural products. During the same period, new agro-industrial investments were undertaken such as the Usina Tamoio, which, with its sugar cane plantation, was the largest sugar mill in the country: their annual production in 1924 corresponded to 4 200 000 kg of sugar and 700 000 liters of alcohol. In addition, the plant was crossed by a railway network of over 40 km. (ZINGARO. Compagnia Unione Agricola. In: Rivista Gli italiani a l'Estero. 1924)

Initially, besides the main industrial building, the Usina Tamoio had some houses. Over the time, and at the same speed of its expansion, the industrial complex became an authentic Company Town. In the 1940s it had a railway station, a school, an ambulatory, a sports stadium, a square and a church whose shape recalls the baroque aesthetics. It is interesting to remark that the typologies of residences differed by the quantity of rooms and the use of finishes, reflecting the hierarchical level of each employee. In its golden phase, the community had a working population of approximately three thousand people and sheltered until ten thousand residents. (CAMPAGNOL, Gabriela. Usinas de açúcar: habitação e patrimônio industrial. Tese USP, 2008)

Beyond the architecture, artistic components must be highlighted, such as the obelisk located at the square in front of the church, where two bas-reliefs scenes of sugar cane workers are portrayed. In addition, statues are also present: an athlete with a discus and a goddess both in Greco-Roman style, in the stadium complex, and an Indian with his bow stretched with the arrow that was gifted by the company employees to its founder, near the main industrial building and chimney. These architectural and artistic elements are aspects of urbanity and symbols of cultural identity and collective memory of the local community.

After being inactive for more than ten years, in 1969, the Usina Tamoio was sold to the Grupo Silva Gordo. In 1990, it became part of the Grupo Corona, being finally, in 2005, acquired by the Grupo Cosan. (CAIRES, Angela. Usina
Tamoio: lugar de trabalho e de vida. In: Revista Uniara. 2015) During these property changes, 94% of the houses built by the usina were gradually demolished. In 2016, a preservation request was opened by the municipal government, but this process must be interrupted due to a park project proposal, which foresees the preservation of the church, two houses, the sports stadium and its surroundings, the square and the obelisk. Today a significant part of the complex of buildings had fallen into complete disrepair.

The still existing buildings represent an important legacy of Brazilian industrial heritage due to their representative architecture, history and value to memory. The importance of preserving the spaces of Usina Tamoio, which have suffered degradation processes and may continue to be destroyed by the lack of understanding of the significance of this industrial heritage, is at risk.

Therefore, this work intends to continue the studies of this industrial heritage, already launched by few researchers, providing new information, and making the authorities and the local society aware of the importance of preserving history and memory of a heritage that represented and is still representing part of the Araraquarense legacy.

**Keywords**: Industrial Heritage, Company Tows, Sugar Mills

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■ **Author | Biographical notice and main realizations/publications (300 words)**

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Currently lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland. She received her bachelor’s degree in Architecture and Urban Design from Brazil’s São Paulo State University in 2007, completed by a period of studies at the École d’Architecture de Paris La Villette, France. She accomplished her master’s degree in 2010 in Conservation and Enhancement of Historical
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