

# Digital Heritage and Innovation, Engagement and Identity

Berlin, 12-13 November 2015

**RICHES Workshop**  
"Community-Led Redesign  
of Cultural Heritage"

## **Palazzo Pretorio in Pontedera (Italy)**

Community Participation in  
the Redesign of Urban Built  
Heritage

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# The case study

- This case study was conducted in the framework of RICHES project task 5.2 *Cultural Heritage and Places*, by partner PROMOTER SRL
- The aim of the research is to examine how the built heritage environment interacts with citizens and the processes of changes in a territory



**RICHES**

RENEWAL, INNOVATION AND CHANGE:  
HERITAGE AND EUROPEAN SOCIETY



# About Pontedera



- The industrial town of Pontedera is a living moment of change, where Cultural Heritage is strictly linked to the re-thinking of the town economic model and future strategies.
- Palazzo Pretorio is a historical building, representative of the city cultural heritage, and it represents this context of change.

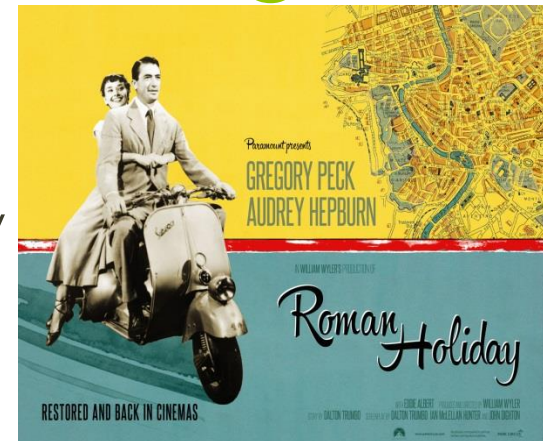
# Introduction

- Area inhabited since the Paleolithic, with **commercial vocation** because of its position.
- In 1924 Rinaldo Piaggio took over a plant in the area near the town and moved here part of his well-established company **Piaggio**, producing aircrafts, and, later on, personal vehicles.



# Industrial vocation, in danger

- The **economic boom** of the 60s expanded the market and the Pontedera plant' production grew exponentially. **Vespa** became a symbol of welfare and freedom.
- Today, Pontedera still hosts the **headquarter of the Piaggio** company, and is characterized by **numerous satellite activities** and smaller mechanical companies.
- Unfortunately, **negative trends in the international market are impacting** in this area.



# What happened?

- economic crisis → big contraction of the sales for the motor industry (esp. 2008-2009) → price competition in the sector → plant delocalization to countries where labour costs less, purchasing of mechanical components abroad ...
- ... this all affected employment in the plant and the survival of satellite activities.

# Change: the economic model

- Therefore, **it is necessary to differentiate the economic activities of the area, moving from an industrial-based economic model to other solutions** that necessarily leverage on the main characters of Tuscany:
  - culture
  - high quality food & wine
  - tourism

# Change: the public administration

- Next to this, the phenomenon of the **spending review** is impacting on the public administration (PA), forcing to a reduction of public funding (and, consequently, services), and pushing the PA to seek for other economic models.
- The Pontedera Municipality is trying to develop **cultural policies** to make the city of the Vespa a place for creativity and culture.



# Moving to a culture economy

- The Museo Piaggio is certainly the **most important cultural attraction of the town**
- The Pontedera Municipality is pursuing since over a decade a path for discovering and enhancing **contemporary art and culture**, especially with urban design
- The theatre foundation based in Pontedera, **Fondazione Pontedera Teatro**, has becoming recognized at national level because of its experimental activity in theatre production



The famous Vespa signed  
by Salvador Dalí, hosted  
at Museo Piaggio



The mosaic wall by Enrico Baj, also part to the 54th  
edition of La Biennale International Art Fair in Venice.

# Challenges

- Pontedera itself as a city has not an original vocation towards massive cultural tourism (lacking famous monuments, big museums, well-known landscapes); leveraging on its optimum geographical position however it can **become a centre of services to attract visitors**, also from abroad.
- Next to this, it is felt the **need to create new ways to engage with citizens, entrepreneurs, immigrants, associations of the territory**, also in the light of sustaining a community-building process that – in a moment of big change for the town - needs to be renewed and enhanced.

# Seeking for opportunities

- Great attention is paid by the Municipality to catch opportunities which may sustain or encourage the development of cultural and societal activities, making Pontedera a pole of attraction for the local community - **modern, lively and open to mix local traditions with new technologies and trends.**
- One of these is certainly the **project of re-use of Palazzo Pretorio**

# A new life for an ancient building



- Palazzo Pretorio is the oldest building in town, dating back to XIII century; it got its current structure with the bell tower (now clock tower) and the loggia during 1500; in its long lifetime it hosted the governors of the town; also it was used as a prisons.
- More recently, Palazzo Pretorio hosted a section of the Courthouse of Pisa.

# In the heart of the town

- The building is placed in the center of the town, and is the corner stone in a cross for two small but elegant roads, that are the vital heart of Pontedera's commercial activities, hosting many shops, bars, and services.
- In September 2014, the section of the Courthouse was closed, and **the building was left empty**, depriving the town of a pole of attraction with possible economic implications.
- The building is property of Pontedera Municipality and **the challenge now is to identify a new usage** for it.

# Looking ahead

- Transforming Palazzo Pretorio into a **living cultural resource** could be a significant step to a new culture economy model for the city, linking to the already available spread resources (museum, theatre, urban contemporary art, creative industries, etc.)
- Since 2013, Promoter Srl presented to the Mayor the proposal to transform Palazzo Pretorio into a center for digital culture, creativity, business innovation and open participation.
- The Municipality, interested on that proposal, opened a participatory process to re-think Palazzo Pretorio and define its future



# PartecipiAMO Palazzo Pretorio

- A participative iter for the re-use of Palazzo Pretorio was launched by the Municipality involving:
  - Citizens and District Councils
  - Cultural associations and Citizen Forums
  - Local associations for youth and sport
  - Local retailers / shopkeepers, and representatives of local accommodation facilities
- to **enhance the culture economy of the area**, in fact, it was **necessary to raise a (common) awareness that the (common) cultural heritage is as resource belonging to everybody and benefitting everybody** - which is a concept that risked to be underestimated by the citizens, not having the city a cultural vocation already acknowledged.





In the period between 30 November 2014 and 31 January 2015, a series of **user-segmented workshops** were organized to collect ideas and requirements for the re-use of Palazzo Pretorio.



## Many ideas were discussed

### Citizens and District Councils

Museum of the Town and historical archive

Work Museum

Mix of public and private activities such as:  
bookshop, library, bar and grill, retailers, cultural  
and artistic activities, community/leisure centre,  
children library

### Local associations for youth and sport

Museum of the Town, Museum of Sport,  
Memory Museum

Palazzo Pretorio as the seat of all the sport  
associations in town

Palazzo Pretorio as the headquarter for  
coordinating all the associations in town

Available spaces at no cost for cultural activities  
(laboratories, exhibitions..), to be sustained via  
the commercial activities in the Palazzo (shows,  
literary caffè..)

Volunteer personnel for managing some of the  
activities in the Palazzo; seeking for funding also  
at international level

### Cultural associations and Citizens Forum

Multifunctional cultural centre

Moving the local art centre "Otello Cirri" to  
Palazzo Pretorio

Polyvalent rooms available for events and  
meetings; seat for local associations

Social centre, community coffeehouse,  
hostel

### Local retailers / shopkeepers, and representatives of local accommodation facilities

Focus on having back people and attractions  
in the heart of the town

Polyvalent centre for art and culture, with  
commercial activities

Wine and food market, services

School of Crafts and Trades

Music, entertainment, drink and food

Cultural and professional activities that make  
the Palazzo live everyday

# Brainstorming about Pontedera

- In February 2015, Promoter researchers met a **delegation of the Municipality**, including the Mayor, the Councillor for Education and Culture, the officer for Education, Culture and Social Policies, the referent for Cultural Activities and other experts
- The group collectively discussed on the themes of **Culture Economy, promotion of place, commodification of built heritage environment, opportunities and threats** faced by the Municipality in general terms and in particular regarding the process of re-use of Palazzo Pretorio

# Key notes from the brainstorming

- It is a misconception that the citizenship in industrial small towns isn't attracted or doesn't care about the local cultural heritage and initiatives
- It is important for the Municipality and for the citizens to believe in the local culture economy
- It is worth to develop Public-Private partnerships where local entrepreneurs invest on the territory
- Art and culture represent the true opportunity for Italy's economic growth

# SWOT Analysis

- The participants in the brainstorming session were invited to think about Pontedera and the Palazzo Pretorio in terms of SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

### Strengths

- It exists already an established commitment of the town for **contemporary art**, to leverage on
- Valuable **geographic position** in the axe Florence-Pisa
- Well known **trademarks**, specific for the area (Vespa e Piaggio)
- The on-going **social processes** related to immigration produce demographic growth
- Limited dimensions of the local economy which allow for **effectiveness** of focused actions

### Weaknesses

- Limited dimensions of the local economy which may cause **lack of resources** and investment possibilities
- **Limited awareness** of the potential and strengths of the area, by business enterprises
- **Hesitant approach** towards digital technologies, lack of awareness of the potential of the digital to enhance the culture economy of the town

### Opportunities

- **Social inclusion processes** which will drive to openness towards different cultures
- **Cultural enrichment possibilities** for both the natives and the immigrants (new citizens)
- **Expansion of the cultural activities** linked to the Piaggio Foundation

### Threats

- **Budget and sustainability** challenges
- **Scepticism and distrust** in the Municipality by the population, essentially due to a fear of the unknown
- Risk of unsuccess due to **non-innovative proposals**

We are discussing about **culture economy and cultural development** of the town, but this term doesn't refer only to cultural heritage assets, to buildings, and artworks and erudition.

Fostering a "cultural development" is also **creating occasions for the citizens** to meet, to reflect, to talk and discuss, to interact and integrate with the new citizens (immigrants), **to share a sense of "belonging"**.

This is certainly the most important meaning of the concept of "community-building".

(Silvana Canovai, Councillor of Culture)

## Next steps

- Following the participative process, a **Call for Proposals** was launched by the Municipality, taking into account the results from the public consultation.
- No flats will ever be derived from the Palazzo, because its mission is to be the vital heart of the town, **belonging to everybody and being participated and used by everybody**.
- The Municipality particularly welcomed ideas presenting a **multifunctional approach**. The building is very large and it offers various possibilities to differentiate its usage.



# The winning proposal has been announced last Saturday

16 **CRONACA PONTEDERA** LA NAZIONE SABATO 7 NOVEMBRE 2015

## LA CITTA' DEL FUTURO

**L'IMPEGNO**  
LA SPESA SARA' DI 750MILA  
EURO: 600MILA PER I LAVORI E  
150MILA PER L'ARREDAMENTO

**PER 30 ANNI**  
OGNI ANNO IL GESTORE DOVRA'  
ORGANIZZARE 5 EVENTI  
O DARE 45 MILA EURO

### IL SIMBOLO COMMISSIONE AL LAVORO PER VERIFICARE SE L'OFFERTA E' IDONEA A TUTTI I REQUISITI

# Ex Pretura, c'è il nome di chi la farà rinascere

## Chiuso il bando, solo la società City Group di Pontedera ha risposto al Comune

di MARIO MANNUCCI

UNA SOLA società ha partecipato al bando per gestire una parte di Palazzo Pretorio, da due anni orfano del tribunale che sotto vari nomi lo aveva caratterizzato per secoli e che ha lasciato in eredità soltanto i giudici di pace. Si chiama City Group ed è formata, con Renzo Marinai presidente, da un gruppo di professionisti - architetto Giuseppe Colucci di Colucci&Partners, ingegner Lorianco Cecconi, Mps di Cecina, architetto Matteo Ferrini - e imprenditori. A cominciare da Daniele Bini di FilmCafè che ha realizzato anche il bagno di lago Amalia oltre ad altre iniziative commerciali e ricreative.

«VOGLIAMO dare un contributo di qualità per rilanciare il centro città, che ne ha davvero bisogno - dice l'architetto Colucci - un po' come abbiamo fatto per i laghi Braccini. La filosofia è la stessa anche se l'ambiente è ovviamente molto diverso». Di City Group, dunque, l'unica offerta per prendere in gestione per 30 anni una parte del palazzo più storico e coevo della città stessa, al co-

sto 'una tantum' di 750 mila euro. Dopo un anno di percorso partecipativo e di manifestazioni d'interesse aperte a tutti e corredate da visite al palazzo, il comune predispose e lanciò il bando nel settembre scorso con data di scadenza ieri l'altro. L'unica risposta è da ieri al vaglio della commissione comunale che dovrà verificare se l'offerta è valida e in linea con le richieste. Ci vorrà qualche giorno per-



ché c'è da esaminare una lunga serie di documenti sia tecnici che finanziari, ma sembra che tutto, almeno per ora e per quanto riguarda sia il piano finanziario che tecnico, stia andando bene. Per cui la nuova vita de Palazzo Pretorio dovrebbe essere 'targata' City Group.

**LA PARTE** economica, come detto, prevede un impegno di 750

**L'ARCHITETTO COLUCCI**  
«Dopo il rilancio dei laghi Braccini, vogliamo dare un contributo al centro»



mila euro da parte del gestore, di cui 600 mila per i lavori di messa in sicurezza e a norma dei locali e 150 mila per l'arredo. Al secondo e terzo piano resteranno in funzione i giudici di pace e vi sarà trasferita anche la sala espositiva Otello Cirri, attualmente in via della Vecchia Stazione, mentre le carceri e la terrazza dell'ex ora d'aria per i detenuti dovrebbero essere riservate ad attività e visite turistiche, visto anche il forte interesse che il

pubblico ha dimostrato nelle iniziative già svolte.

**IL PIANO TERRA** diventato seminterrato dopo la costruzione seicentesca del loggiato un tempo adibito a mercato delle granaglie, e il loggiato stesso, saranno invece destinati ad attività enogastronomiche e culturali. Un abbinamento oggi di gran moda, nonché punto centrale di questa operazione di rilancio del Palazzo, prevede servizi di ristorazione, bar esposizione e incontri. Si potrà dunque gustare un aperitivo sotto il loggiato, chiuso da vetrate, prima di visitare una mostra, partecipare alla presentazione di un libro, e così via.

Il gestore dovrà anche organizzare 5 eventi culturali annui oppure affidarli al comune pagando 45 mila euro. La gestione trentennale prevede comunque incontri triennali di verifica. L'augurio è che vada tutto bene, cosa non facile perché molti palazzi storici di questo tipo non sono riusciti a coniugare, in altre città, interessi e risorse privati e pubblici, come Pontedera ha cercato di fare, per ora riuscendoci.

**ANTICHE MURA** Il palazzo pretorio di Pontedera ex tribunale. Sopra, l'architetto Giuseppe Colucci

## Follow us on

More news about the re-birth of Palazzo Pretorio will come on RICHES blog, hosted on the online magazine **digitalmeetsculture**

DIGITAL MEETS CULTURE .net  
www.digitalmeetsculture.net



Promoter is the editor of **digitalmeetsculture**,  
media partner of RICHES project

# Many thanks for your attention

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