

D.T3.5.2

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCING MODEL FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE SECTOR IN PIEDMONT REGION

- ENGLISH SUMMARY -

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1. ForHeritage project

1.1. The goal of the document

The “ForHeritage - Excellence for Integrated Heritage Management in Central Europe” project was designed with the main objective of improving the competences of public and private cultural actors in managing central European cultural heritage.

One of the main goals of European projects, ForHeritage included, is to spread the lessons learned and amplify the results on the territories. For this reason, ForHeritage forecasted a specific action, the Work Package T3, called “Territorial uptake”.

Among the project results, the adaptation of the *ForHeritage toolkit* in the Italian territory and its testing on the Italian pilot case can represent useful lessons, summarized in this document.

1.2. ForHeritage: phases and actions

The project was structured in three different clusters of activities:

- The development of a set of guidelines, called *ForHeritage toolkit*, on the topics considered relevant in the innovative approach to cultural heritage management;
- The testing of some of the *ForHeritage toolkit* guidelines on the four pilot sites identified within the project;
- The territorial uptake in each region involved in the project.

The City of Cuneo has been one of the four organizations responsible for the implementation of Italian pilot projects, supported by Finpiemonte, IER, the LP and FOK on the Italian pilot action on Santa Croce palace.

1.3. Santa Croce Palace: a pilot project

The Santa Croce Palace is one of the main historical buildings located in the city centre of Cuneo. It is a building dating back to the 18th century with an important cultural vocation and that currently hosts some important cultural activities, such as the Library for Young People and Children. At the ground floor there are some empty rooms, seldom used by associations that require them for cultural activities and that have been identified as the ForHeritage Italian pilot site.

The rooms’ management is something the Administration of Cuneo tackled in the past but unsuccessfully: the main constraint is the fact that soon the remaining portion of the building, that will host the Civic Library of the City, will go through a deep process of renovation. The construction site will thus be very invasive and might hinder the successful management of the site.

However, ForHeritage was seen as an opportunity to find innovative management solutions for the pilot site and since the beginning of the project, local stakeholders have been involved in order to stimulate some considerations on the future use of the site.

As suggested by the testing of the *ForHeritage toolkit*, the City of Cuneo decided to try to implement a PPP management scheme, with the help of local stakeholders and with the support of project mentors.

Initially the City of Cuneo approached the Project Financing option for the revitalization of the pilot site, but being it recently revitalized, the work component of the revitalization was not relevant as usually requested by a project financing.



Therefore, the Administration shifted to another option, forecasted by the Italian legislation on Public Tendering, at the art. 151, comma 3 of Decree Law n. 50/2016, called Special Public-Private Partnership (PsPP). This scheme is a recently introduced tool based on a form of PPP that allows public organizations to find a sort of agreement with a private cultural actor in order to manage a cultural site for the common public interest.

In order to start the procedure for finding a private partner to start the collaboration with, the City of Cuneo published a call in September 2021. The call was meant to receive expressions of interest from private actors referring to the opportunity to start a PPP for the management of the Italian pilot site.

To the call, one expression of interest was submitted from the Fondazione Circolo dei Lettori, which is a regional foundation that promotes, through some Readers' Clubs located throughout the Piedmont region, reading, culture and books. The candidacy was valued positively and the City of Cuneo expressed its interest in moving further with that option.

2. The PsPP scheme's challenges

2.1. The City of Cuneo and the PsPP scheme

The Santa Croce Palace revitalization is not the only PsPP scheme that the Administration undertook. Previous to that, in fact, the Cultural Department of the city dealt with a PsPP scheme on another historical building, called Soverini Palace. The application of such an innovative PPP scheme was facilitated by a call meant to put together cultural associations and public owners of cultural heritage sites. Through the call, a theatre local company already managing the Soverini Palace submitted its proposal for the renewed management of the building in the form of a PsPP with the City of Cuneo.

Therefore, such initiative was a bottom-up one, compared to the one started within ForHeritage. The bottom-up method for the starting up of a PsPP is the most common in Italy even though there are some cases of top-down initiatives, like the one for Santa Croce Palace.

2.2. PsPP: past, present and future

Being the Italian cultural heritage very vast and extensive, an easy tool for its management is extremely needed, since many of the more traditional forms of concession and management proved not to be always optimal for the cultural exploitation of heritage sites.

2.2.1. Beyond the “separate” management of cultural heritage sites

The first challenge the PsPP schemes encounter is related to the use of the cultural heritage sites. They are meant to find the optimal function of the cultural sites according to the needs of the population and the need for preserving them.

In past times, the public owners of the cultural sites represented their only possible managers, but with the lack of public funds this situation started to change. With the Decree Law n. 42/2003, a new role for the private actors was foreseen: however very often the involvement of the private sector in the cultural heritage sites management lead to a misuse of the sites themselves. On one side, the public authorities pushed the conversion of the cultural heritage to museums, collections and archives, on the other side the sites managed by the private sector were mainly meant for a commercial use (e.g. relais, hotels, SPAs, etc.).



Such separation of management approaches was not ideal and very often ended up with the estrangement of the population from the cultural sites.

The PsPP schemes offer a new way for the dialogue between the two, with the goal to meet a common interest, the one of the community that should allow for a balance between public and private interests. This means not only re-thinking the whole management purposes but also to find forms of collaboration and dialogue that allow the partnership and the successful management.

2.2.2. Access and revitalization of the cultural heritage: the PsPP goals

The second challenge the PsPPs try to overcome refers to the importance of finding a balance among the different activities the revitalization of the site is meant to. Conservation and safeguarding are at the top of the revalorization objectives but it is growing in importance also the role of access and use of such places. It means that the revalorization should integrate both finalities in the management and, in order to do so, an eye should be focussed on people, the final beneficiaries of the restoration of abandoned heritage sites.

2.2.3. The new relationship between cultural heritage and communities

The third challenge PsPPs try to overcome refers to the change in the cultural heritage concept: in the past, little importance was given to the relationship between the sites and the communities, while the main goal of revitalization processes was on the conservation of the historical value of buildings and places.

An important change has been facilitated by the Faro Convention that identifies communities not only as consumers of the cultural heritage, but prosumers themselves. In this sense, the cultural heritage contributes to the sustainable development, to democracy, to diversity promotion, etc. The revitalization of cultural heritage should be part of a wider societal development.

This change is reflected in many recent cases of bottom-up culture, promoted by the community itself, such as the Banský art or Jorit Agoch in Naples. The Faro Convention underlines the importance more on people than on places: the convention in fact talks about a “heritage community”.

When talking about heritage revitalization, it's thus important to find a way to involve people in the process, as it is already happening in many other fields, such as environmental protection, community welfare, etc.

As last challenge faced by the PsPPs, it is recognized that such schemes simplify the procedures for finding a private partner for the management of public sites: however, this must not be the only reason for choosing to apply this tool in the management of cultural sites. The choice should acknowledge all other benefits the PsPPs can bring to the revitalization of historical assets.

3. PsPPs: *ratio* and functioning

The post-pandemic updates on Italian national legislation on different topics, one of them being the public tenders, were meant to simplify procedures in the public administration and ease the redevelopment of Italy. This is one of the reasons why the PsPP, through the above-mentioned updates, has been extended to local authorities, while it was previously meant for central institutions only.

The PsPPs represent a novelty in the Italian public tender panorama because they change the relationship between the public and the private sector in the cultural heritage management. Starting from the



community needs, the public owner of the sites and the private actor interested in the revitalization of the cultural heritage collaborate for a common goal and work on the same quality project. The PsPPs are characterized by four main elements, described below and showed in Fig. 1.

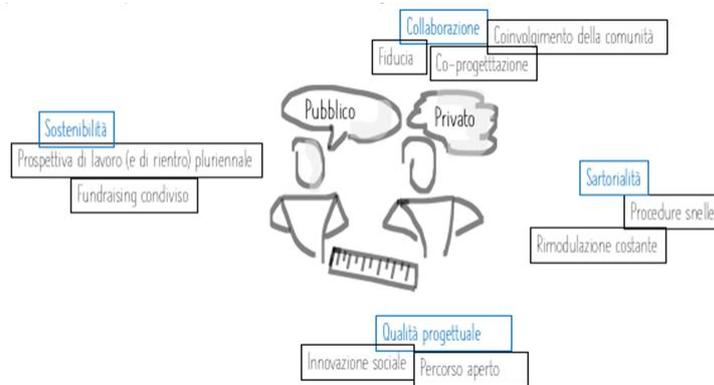


Figura 1: In blue, the four elements that characterize PsPPs

3.1. Collaboration

Trust between the public and the private actors is built thanks to the establishment of technical worktables where the two players co-design the management of the site. In this sense, according to the Wilcox ladder (David Wilcox, *The guide to effective participation*, 1994), PsPPs are placed at the top of the ladder, where the most participative approach is located. The collaboration idea goes beyond the public-private relationship: it should include also people in the process, earlier or later.

3.2. Tailoring

PsPPs go beyond the more rigid and traditional forms of management: they allow for a more flexibility and this is possible in any phase of the process. Not only, PsPPs allow for the tailoring of the project on the community needs and on the specific context the site is located within.

3.3. Project quality

Since the PsPP is an evolving process, its quality should be guaranteed for a long time. Not only, by allowing a good balance among conservation, social innovation and economical sustainability, quality is even higher.

3.4. Sustainability

Thanks to the long-term duration of PsPP agreements, sustainability should be eased because it allows for the investment return. In economic terms, the collaboration between the public and private sector should be reflected also in the possibility to raise funds jointly.

Being the PsPP an ongoing process that requires constant debate and collaboration between the two partners, sustainability is also guaranteed because challenges and mutation can be faced by re-thinking the project and changing it jointly in accordance with the context changes and needs. All agreements should be made together so that no part is left behind and common interests are met.



4. PsPPs: traps and possible cures

In order to evaluate the potential benefits and successfulness of such tool, the City of Cuneo interviewed some cultural actors involved in one way or another in PsPP schemes and organized a project stakeholders' meeting in order to discuss the potentialities and threats of PsPPs.

Since the tool has been recently extended to local authorities, there are few case studies in Italy of its application in the cultural heritage revitalization. Cuneo, through its two applications on Soverini Palace and Santa Croce Palace is one of the most active local administrations applying such innovative approach.

If the procedures for the setting up and application of PsPP schemes are clear and defined, there still much to do for what concerns the management of the whole process in order for it to be successful. This is why the City of Cuneo, in collaboration with Finpiemonte, has decided to share its experience and lessons learnt, through this document, in order to help the development of a more mature know-how.

Being so flexible and manageable, the risk PsPPs might face is the one of being too fragile. First, it's important that the choice of a PsPP scheme for the revitalization of a cultural heritage site is led by the willingness to change the approach and not by the more easiness of the tool. Both parties should be honest with each other and agree on a common objective.

But the PsPP schemes hide other risks that are explained below.

4.1. Fear of the tool

Being so innovative, the PsPPs might represent some unknown tool that public administration do not want to try. Other procedures are much more defined in the national legislation and allow the public administration to follow step-by-step the practice without any risk of mistake. Not only, the long-term duration of the PsPPs might represent a too strong commitment that the administration might not want to undersign.

Those fears might either avoid the use of such tool or hidden more traditional procedures with the PsPP façade: in order to avoid such situations the public owner of the cultural heritage should try to dive deep into the tool, trusting the private partner and with a more open mind.

Training courses and others' experiences might be useful in clarifying doubts and in encouraging the use of PsPPs.

4.2. Economic resources

Even though the long-term duration of the PsPP can guarantee an easier return of the investment, the collaboration between the public and the private actors should work also on the economic side. Fundraising should be a common responsibility and its management should be agreed in the worktables and stated in the agreement signed by both parties.

4.3. Competences

Since the PsPPs require a paradigm change, competences of both the public and the private partners differ from the ones required for the more traditional forms of management. Developing such new competences might also be part of the common process and it should be noted that requiring the private



partner to have them already at the beginning of the process could limit the participation to such procedures.

During the workshop with local stakeholders organized by the City of Cuneo and Finpiemonte, some thoughts arose on the competences needed.

From the private side what emerged was the need for:

- Technical competences in terms of context knowledge, legislation, experience in managing a cultural heritage site;
- Entrepreneurial competences in terms of business planning, fundraising activities;
- Flexibility and continuous monitoring;
- Listening and communication;
- Collaborative approach;
- Creativity.

From the public side, what emerged was the need for:

- Responsiveness;
- Symmetry, going beyond the control role played by the public organizations in the more traditional procedures;
- Trust in terms of risk acceptance and transparency throughout the whole process.

4.4. Rigidity

One of the risks that can be faced during a PsPP approach is that, being the cultural site no more under the only control of the public owner, some rigidity in the agreement might be searched in order to fix a perimeter of work.

However this is not the best solution: constant discussion, impact monitoring, process orientation should be the tools to be used in order to overcome possible problems, without being too rigid. This is why the agreement document is one of the most important players of the PsPP scheme: it should work as a programming document and should not state every single detail of the management.

The worktables between the public and the private actors should work as a governance tool for dialoguing instead of being meeting opportunities to handle bureaucratic issues. During the worktables (Fig. 2) the key goal is the co-design of the management in a fair relationship between the two players. Not only the public and private partners should attend them, they could also be open for superintendence and other authoritative organizations in order to design the management and restoration in a shorter time.

The community itself might take part in some of the worktables: its needs and suggestions could be taken into account in designing the management, as suggested by the Faro Convention.

4.5. Relationships

Since the PsPP requires a strong collaboration between the public and private partners, it could happen that, in case the two already know each other and have a built relationship, this can limit the smoothness of the PsPP. The PsPP, as mentioned before, requires a change in the roles and competences of both parties that, in this case, might have difficulties in playing different roles than the one they were used to before.



Figura 2: The worktables, composition and topics

Another relationship challenge is represented by the fast change of political reference, compared to the long term of PsPP agreements. The change in politic authority might put at risk what was agreed at the beginning of the PsPP, this is why it is very important that any changes in the agreement should occur only in serious situations. If worktables involve the community too, the risk of changing in what was agreed is lowered because there is a sort of historical memory.

5. Conclusions

It is not possible to list recommendations valid for any situation, being the PsPP a tool widely tailored on each specific case. However, what emerged from the analysis of past experiences and from the opinions of cultural actors is that this tool might actually represent an innovative approach useful for the successful revitalization of cultural heritage.

The worktables, the agreement, the changing in the role of both public and private partners and the involvement of the communities are some of the elements of PsPPs identified as very relevant for the optimal outcome of this form of management.

But first of all what should be understood is the change of paradigm between the public and private sector, based on trust, sharing and a common goal.