

## **An overview of the cultural sites in Ivrea**

In recent months there has been a great deal of discussion in the town and in the media about the political decisions concerning the town's cultural sites: the Garda Museum, the Civic Library, the MAAM Open-Air Museum of Modern Architecture, the Castle, the red brick factory.

Another important topic has been the town's urban development, the location of a number of public offices and services in the area south of the Dora river, and the potentially negative impact this could have on the town centre.

As debate continues, both issues must necessarily be seen in the context of the national economic situation and the lack of attention and consequent risk of a lack of investment in "culture".

In the discussion, the considerations and intuitions of the Citadel of Culture project are certainly valid and important, but they need to be reviewed in light of the objective data and inserted, with suitable adjustments, into a wider and more detailed plan.

After examining the various proposals, the project for the layout design of the Garda Museum, which is to become a key cultural reference for the town and the local community, has been assigned. By the end of this year, the designers (the architects D. Giachello, E. Cagnotti, P. Corvetti, M. Gini) will present the preliminary project based on the winning proposal, the recommendations of the town council and a series of suggestions in the Citadel of Cultural scheme. The executive project will be presented in early 2011.

Meanwhile, we have continued to discuss the location of the library, listening to the views of the library manager, users, social and political groups. As a result of these talks, we believe that Piazza Ottinetti should be enhanced as a cultural centre (a meeting place, a museum, a reading room) with special areas for children, for businesses and possibly also more housing. Within this vision, some of the activities of the library should stay in Piazza Ottinetti, and obviously the spaces housing them will be restyled and modernised.

Given the archaeological excavations and structural considerations, the square's internal courtyard will be renovated and a pedestrian link created with the upper part of the town, thereby restoring a number of important central locations.

Moving on, THE CULTURE FACTORY project to convert an important area of the town into a cultural site is the result of a joint effort by the city council, the Olivetti Historic Archives Association, the Spille d'Oro Association, the Olivetti Museum Promoter Committee, the Canavese industrialists federation, the Adriano Olivetti Foundation, and the Natale Capellaro Foundation with the [Tecnologic@mente](#) laboratory museum.

The so-called "red brick factory" and the old ICO factory can be converted for public use, creating a new cultural site based on an innovative approach, which could house the Olivetti museum together with the functions of the civic library system.

In other words, the red brick factory will become a "workshop", a tangible expression of today's new knowledge society, in which the Canavese, given its history and the new initiatives that continue to flourish there, can and must play an important pilot role.

The various sections (for example, machine designs, which are currently in a state of near total abandon, and the science section of the former Olivetti library) should not only attract the interest of researchers and scholars, but also foster a local community culture among all residents and visitors, young people in particular, to encourage participation in an integrated civil community committed to living side by side and working to create the future of the area.

Other sections will be devoted to corporate culture and the study of urban planning and Olivetti architecture.

This new cultural site will be located close to the local high schools and the local university campus, and will interact with the sites in the town centre – the civic theatre, Piazza Ottinetti, the Garda Museum and the upper part of the town (diocesan library, cathedral, castle) – making it possible to restore Ivrea's unique historical legacy and industrial culture. This highlights Ivrea's new urban condition, with a strong physical link between the two banks of the Dora river, constituted in part by the footbridge.

We believe this integrated cultural fabric can also be the driver for the enhancement of other important locations in the town, such as the Olivetti buildings of architectural significance, the National Corporate Cinema Archive, the Olivetti Historic Archives, and support us in our efforts to achieve recognition of the Ivrea industrial landscape as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Another function of the "Knowledge Plaza" will be to condense, document and promote the values of the Canavese district as a whole, and to act as a showcase for the area's special features (the amphitheatre formed by the Ivrea and La Serra moraine, the Parco della Polveriera park) and local industry, crafts, food and wine.

By restoring an area of great historic interest to house important public functions, we aim to create a centre of national and international interest that will revitalise the Ivrea brand and thus attract business and investment.

While the town council will, of course, have to take the lead role, the project should also involve private economic players and public bodies, without whose support it might fail to move forward.

We also intend to work on the upper area of the town: in the past few days, we have received 25 projects for the carnival competition. Starting with the renovation of the castle square, the competition was organised with a view to enhancing the routes and sites of the carnival, and so involve the entire town centre.

The town council has also been working with the Public Land Office in the past few months on possible ways to enhance and make greater use of Ivrea's castle.

The specific purpose of all these initiatives is to restore to Ivrea and its residents, as well as to the outlying area and the Canavese as a whole, important parts of their history.

We hope they will encourage private legacies to be made available to the town, such as the Olivetti art collection now owned by Telecom or other private archives, and thus restore a uniquely important heritage to the town.

Moreover, we believe these activities are consistent with the work undertaken by private bodies and local cultural associations to make the Canavese an area with a wealth of offers and a forum for debate.

Our vision of cultural sites is in line with the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto of 1994, which explains the importance of investing in culture.

*Freedom, Prosperity and the Development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.*

*The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.*

...

*Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.*

The Mayor of Ivrea  
Carlo Della Pepa