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## REVITALISING FONTECCHIO: A COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH TO HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND CULTURAL REGENERATION

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the post-earthquake recovery and cultural regeneration of Fontecchio, a medieval village in L'Aquila, Italy, through a community-led approach to heritage conservation. Fontecchio was the first Italian municipality to adopt the principles of the Faro Convention, emphasizing democratic participation and the recognition of cultural heritage as a living resource. Drawing on direct site engagement, participatory workshops, and documentary analysis, this study investigates how local communities contribute to the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, including traditions such as the Festa della Perdonanza. Findings demonstrate that community involvement not only facilitates the physical reconstruction of the village but also reinforces social cohesion, cultural identity, and sustainable territorial development. This case illustrates the potential of participatory heritage strategies to generate both practical and theoretical insights for heritage-led recovery in rural and post-disaster contexts.

**KEY WORDS:** Faro Convention, Community Participation, Heritage Recovery, Cultural Identity, Conservation

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## Introduction

Heritage conservation is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional process that extends beyond the preservation of monuments to include the active participation of local communities in shaping, maintaining, and interpreting cultural resources. This perspective is particularly salient in post-disaster contexts, where social cohesion, collective memory, and local identity are often disrupted. Fontecchio, a small medieval village in the province of L'Aquila, Italy, presents a compelling case of community-led heritage recovery following the 2009 earthquake. The village was the first in Italy to formally adopt the principles of the Faro Convention, which frames cultural heritage as a living resource and emphasizes the right of communities to access, manage, and contribute to its preservation.

Following the earthquake, Fontecchio implemented initiatives such as the Borghi Attivi participatory statute, which engaged residents, local institutions, and professionals in co-designing strategies for reconstruction, sustainable development, and cultural regeneration. These efforts focused not only on the physical restoration of buildings and public spaces but also on intangible heritage, including local traditions such as the Festa della Perdonanza, a medieval religious and civic celebration. The integration of these tangible and intangible elements highlights the potential of participatory approaches to reinforce cultural identity and foster community resilience.

This paper examines Fontecchio's post-disaster recovery process through a combination of field observations, participation in local workshops, and analysis of relevant documentation and publications. It investigates how community-led strategies contribute to sustainable heritage management and explores the broader implications of the Faro Convention's principles for rural and post-disaster contexts. By situating the case within contemporary debates on participatory heritage practices, the study aims to provide both practical insights for local development and theoretical contributions to the understanding of heritage as a tool for social cohesion and territorial regeneration.

## Literature Review

Community participation has emerged as a central theme in contemporary heritage studies, emphasizing that cultural heritage is not merely a collection of monuments but a living resource shaped by the values, memories, and practices of local populations<sup>1</sup>. Scholars argue that inclusive approaches to heritage management strengthen social cohesion, empower communities, and foster a sense of belonging, particularly in rural and post-disaster contexts<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge; Graham, B., Ashworth, G., Tunbridge, J. (2000). *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy*. London: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Waterton, E., Smith, L. (2010). The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 16(1–2), 4–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250903441671>; Corsane, G. (2005). *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203326350>

Post-disaster recovery literature highlights the importance of integrating social, cultural, and economic dimensions into reconstruction processes. Disasters often disrupt not only the built environment but also social networks and collective identity<sup>3</sup>. In these contexts, participatory planning and heritage-led regeneration can act as catalysts for community resilience, enabling local stakeholders to shape reconstruction strategies that reflect both historical memory and contemporary needs<sup>4</sup>.

The Faro Convention<sup>5</sup> has become a benchmark for understanding heritage as a collective resource. Its principles prioritize democratic access, community engagement, and the recognition of intangible heritage, emphasizing the interconnections between people, place, and identity. Recent studies illustrate how Faro-inspired initiatives foster collaborative governance models, where local actors co-produce cultural policies and contribute to sustainable territorial development<sup>6</sup>.

Religious and intangible heritage also plays a critical role in sustaining cultural identity and intergenerational memory. Festivals, rituals, and local traditions function as mechanisms for community cohesion and for reinforcing the social and symbolic value of heritage sites<sup>7</sup>. In rural contexts, these practices often intersect with physical conservation efforts, illustrating how cultural and social dimensions can mutually reinforce each other<sup>8</sup>.

Altogether, these perspectives point to the importance of a holistic approach to post-disaster heritage management—one that brings together physical restoration, participatory governance, and the protection of intangible cultural resources. The experience of Fontecchio, through its strong community involvement, adoption of Faro Convention principles, and revitalisation of local traditions, provides a concrete example of how such an integrated approach can be put into practice.

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<sup>3</sup> Cox, R. S., Perry, K. M. (2011). Like a fish out of water: reconsidering disaster recovery and the role of place and social capital in community disaster resilience. *American journal of community psychology*, 48(3-4), 395–411. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-011-9427-0>; Aldrich, D. (2012). *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226012896.001.0001>

<sup>4</sup> Labadi, S. (2013). *UNESCO, Cultural Heritage, and Outstanding Universal Value: Value-Based Analyses of the World Heritage and Intangible Heritage Conventions*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9780759122574>

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe. (2005). *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention)*.

<sup>6</sup> Camodeca, R., Almici, A., Vannini, M. C. (2022). The economic impact of universal design on cultural heritage contribution to SDGs: Evidence from Italian museums. In: I. Garofolo et al. (Eds.), *Transforming our world through universal design for human development*. IOS Press. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>; Giovane di Girasole, E. (2023). The Faro Convention, heritage communities and sustainable development: Towards collaborative approaches for cultural heritage management and enhancement, *Sustainability*, Special Issue on Communities and Heritage, MDPI AG, Basel.

<sup>7</sup> Picard, D., Robinson, M. (2006). Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds. *Tourism and Cultural Change* 8. Channel View Publications, Bristol. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845410490>; UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

<sup>8</sup> Galla, A. (1995). *Authenticity: rethinking heritage diversity in a pluralistic framework*, Nara Convention on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, World Heritage Bureau, UNESCO, Paris, 315-322.

## Material and methods

This study adopts a qualitative case-study approach to investigate the role of community participation in heritage-led recovery and cultural regeneration in Fontecchio. The research is guided by the principles of the Faro Convention, which emphasize the co-creation of heritage knowledge and the recognition of communities as active agents in cultural preservation.

### *Research Design*

A case-study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of a unique and context-specific phenomenon: the post-earthquake recovery of Fontecchio through participatory and community-driven approaches. The study integrates fieldwork, document analysis, and observation to capture both tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage, as well as the social and cultural processes involved in reconstruction and revitalization.

### *Data Collection*

Primary data were collected through:

- *Site visits:* Multiple visits between [insert years] enabled first-hand observation of Fontecchio's architectural and urban heritage, including the medieval "tower houses," defensive walls, and historic gates.
- *Participant observation:* Researchers engaged with local events, workshops, and community activities, participatory planning process and the Festa della Perdonanza, to observe community involvement and collaborative practices. One of the authors lived in Fontecchio for about eight years in the aftermath of the earthquake, actively participating in the town's reconstruction process.
- *Informal interviews:* Conversations with residents, local authorities, and project stakeholders provided insights into the perceptions, motivations, and experiences of participants in heritage-led initiatives.

Secondary data included municipal reports, official project documents, academic literature on participatory planning and heritage management, and publications related to the Faro Convention. Specific attention was paid to materials documenting the Borghi Attivi initiative, the Festa della Perdonanza, and post-earthquake recovery strategies.

### *Analytical Approach*

Collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and relationships across three dimensions:

1. *Community participation and governance:* Examining how residents, local authorities, and professionals collaborate in decision-making and planning processes.
2. *Heritage conservation and material interventions:* Evaluating the restoration of physical structures and integration of traditional and innovative conservation techniques.
3. *Intangible heritage and cultural identity:* Exploring rituals, festivals, and social practices that reinforce local identity and foster social cohesion.

### ***Reflexivity and Rigor***

Throughout the study, researchers maintained reflexivity, recognizing their dual role as observers and participants in workshops and events. Triangulation of primary and secondary sources, combined with direct observation, enhanced the credibility and reliability of findings.

By employing this structured methodology, the study provides both descriptive and analytical insights into how Fontecchio operationalizes Faro Convention principles, demonstrating the potential of small, rural communities to lead heritage-based recovery and regeneration in post-disaster contexts.

### **Heritage as Catalyst: Community Participation and Territorial Revitalisation in Fontecchio**

The authors of this article, personally visited Fontecchio on several occasions, experienced the reconstruction process first-hand, and actively participated in various workshops and activities aimed at revitalising the area. Valuable insights into the dynamics of local participation and heritage-led regeneration were gained through this immersive approach. In addition, a number of publications related to Fontecchio, as well as references to the Faro Convention, were considered as part of the methodological framework for analysing the case study.

Fontecchio<sup>9</sup> is a medieval village about 25 kilometres from L'Aquila, the regional capital of Abruzzo<sup>10</sup>, that preserves important architectural and urban features from the Middle Ages, such as the "tower houses", the defensive walls and the ancient gates that mark the entrances to the historic centre. In addition to its historical importance, the municipality is part of the Sirente-Velino Regional Park<sup>11</sup>, nella valle del fiume Aterno, created in 1982 with the aim of protecting the natural environment and the historical, cultural and traditional heritage that defines the identity of the area and its communities. In this context, Fontecchio is a compelling example of how small communities can become active agents in the preservation and revitalisation of their territorial assets through participatory practices.

In recent decades, especially after the 2009 earthquake<sup>12</sup> that severely affected L'Aquila and its surroundings, the town of Fontecchio has become a relevant case in the study of community-led development and participatory heritage practices. The disaster, which affected fifty-six municipalities<sup>13</sup> in the area known as the 'seismic crater', caused not only physical damage but also a profound disruption to the cultural and social fabric of local communities.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://comune.fontecchio.aq.it/>

<sup>10</sup> Fontecchio is a municipality located in the inner areas of the central Apennines, approximately 140 kilometers from Rome and 100 kilometers from the Adriatic coast. It is accessible via the A24 and A25 motorways and is intersected by the Terni–Sulmona railway line. The nearest airport is located in Pescara.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.parcosirentevelino.it/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://servizio-nazionale.protezionecivile.gov.it/it/pagina-base/il-terremoto-abruzzo/>;  
[https://ingvterremoti.com/category/terremoti\\_italia/il-terremoto-dellaquila-del-2009/](https://ingvterremoti.com/category/terremoti_italia/il-terremoto-dellaquila-del-2009/)

<sup>13</sup> <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=61>

The 2009 earthquake brought about a significant acceleration in the ongoing processes of social fragmentation in the municipality, which, like many inland areas of the Apennines, has long been subject to the effects of progressive depopulation, demographic aging, and the overall decline of commercial and productive sectors.

Despite these challenges, the municipality presents a relatively high quality of life thanks to its cohesive community and its valuable landscape and architectural heritage. In this context, Fontecchio's response exemplifies an alternative model of territorial regeneration - one based on civic engagement, shared memory and the reactivation of collective agency.

One of the most important initiatives in the post-seismic landscape is the *Borghi Attivi (active villages)*, *Statuto partecipato dei paesi d'Italia*<sup>14</sup> project, inspired by the British Village Design Statement (VDS) methodology. This model - originally developed in the UK to empower rural communities to shape their spatial and architectural environment - was adapted to the specific conditions of central Italy through the initiative of the Torre del Cornone Environmental Education Centre in Fontecchio. Working with five other municipalities<sup>15</sup>, coordinated by the Teramo WWF and several local associations and cooperatives, the project secured funding to implement participatory planning processes in the crater area<sup>16</sup>.

The project aimed to involve residents in co-designing strategies for the reconstruction and future development of their communities, prioritising local knowledge and shared values over technocratic or top-down approaches. Through structured workshops and collaborative mapping, participants were encouraged to articulate a collective vision for the future of their living spaces, based on a reflection of their identity, historical memory and everyday needs. The resulting document, *Guidelines for the Local Development and Aesthetics of the Village of Fontecchio*<sup>17</sup>, was formally adopted by the municipal administration in October 2012, committing a process of citizen participation that foregrounds place-based knowledge and aesthetic sensibility as planning tools.

The municipal administration has adopted development priorities identified by citizens, with a focus on sustainable mobility and, most importantly, social housing. The social housing experiment has enabled the hosting of artists from various parts of the world, offering them one of the uninhabited dwellings in Fontecchio. These spaces are thus revitalized and allow the artists to reside there for an appropriate period in order to work on their works. The issue of the 'ethical' use of public and private real estate assets, which were damaged by the earthquake and subsequently rebuilt, lies at the core of the Casa & Bottega project, with the ultimate goal

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.labsus.org/2011/11/uno-statuto-partecipato-dei-luoghi-per-fontecchio/>

<sup>15</sup> Santa Maria del Ponte, frazione di Tione; Pescomaggiore, frazione dell'Aquila; Civitella Casanova, provincia di Pescara e Fano Adriano, provincia di Teramo.

<sup>16</sup> Polvani, M., Ciancone, S. (2011). *Uno Statuto dei Luoghi per Fontecchio. Esperimento di Democrazia Deliberativa in un Comune terremotato dell'Abruzzo*, in *Amministrazione in Cammino*. Rivista elettronica di diritto pubblico, di diritto amministrativo, di diritto dell'economia e di scienza dell'amministrazione a cura del Centro di ricerca sulle amministrazioni pubbliche "Vittorio Bachelet", Rome.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/borghi-attivi-fontecchio/15668600>



of increasing the resident population. The project's main aim is to allocate certain buildings for social housing and to provide artisan workshops, community gardens and forest areas for communal woodcutting and grazing<sup>18</sup>.

In 2015, the Abruzzo Region adopted the project as an experimental, replicable, and sustainable process. The initial expected outcomes include: reversing the trend of demographic decline; implementing housing and social policies that enable economically disadvantaged individuals or households to exercise their right to housing; and creating new employment opportunities for the unemployed. The project also aims at the regeneration of parts of the urban fabric.

A deliberative democracy process was likewise applied in the drafting of the Reconstruction Plan—a technical and financial instrument developed by the Municipality of Fontecchio with the support of the Department of Architectural Design at the Politecnico di Milano<sup>19</sup>.

This focus on participatory cultural governance is reinforced by Fontecchio's early endorsement of the Faro Convention<sup>20</sup>, long before its official ratification by the Italian state in 2020. In 2013, Fontecchio became the first Italian municipality to explicitly adopt the principles enshrined in the Convention, marking a pioneering commitment to an inclusive and democratic understanding of cultural heritage. The Convention, promoted by the Council of Europe, redefines heritage not just as a set of monumental or institutional assets, but as a living and evolving set of resources - material and immaterial - through which communities recognise and express their values, traditions and identities.

In October (9-12) 2017, Fontecchio hosted the Council of Europe's first *The Faro Convention In Research-Action Workshop. Community involvement in a post-disaster heritage revitalization*<sup>21</sup>. In doing so, Fontecchio confirmed its role as a research laboratory for innovative heritage practices. The Faro approach promotes shared responsibility between citizens, institutions and private actors, in line with a vision of cultural policies as co-produced and continuously negotiated. This perspective resonates with Article 9 of the Italian Constitution, which emphasises the protection and promotion of culture as a fundamental commitment of the Republic.

The meeting provided an opportunity for knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices developed in the home countries of the speakers invited by the Council of Europe, who came from universities and research institutes in France, Greece, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Portugal.

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<sup>18</sup> Compared to social housing experiences in major urban centers, this project stands out for the high architectural quality of the buildings involved, their excellent energy efficiency and seismic safety standards, and the exceptional landscape value of the surrounding environment. It promotes the reuse of historic centers for residential and artisanal purposes; fosters the development of new forms of local economy (such as agriculture, small-scale craftsmanship, and tourism); and supports the adoption of innovative models of environmental, energy, and economic sustainability.

<sup>19</sup> <https://comune.fontecchio.aq.it/piano-di-ricostruzione/>; <http://www.comune.fontecchio.aq.it/ricostruzionepost-sisma/piano-di-ricostruzione>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.coe.int/it/web/venice/faro-convention>

<sup>21</sup> <https://comune.fontecchio.aq.it/convenzione-di-faro-fontecchio-9-12-ottobre-2017/>

Three main themes were addressed in the working groups:

- *Heritage in a changing society;*
- *Heritage as an ecosystem for development;*
- *Accessibility to cultural heritage.*

Based on what has been outlined so far, the village of Fontecchio is an ideal location for research and action. The academic contributions were organised into plenary and parallel sessions, focusing on the revitalisation of heritage following disasters caused by multifactorial crises — economic, social, environmental and political — and on how the local community can play a central role in this process.

Guided by the principles of the Convention, the workshop sought to establish partnerships with universities, civil society, and research centers to conduct studies on rural and urban territories, on “heritage communities” (including local stakeholders, museums, non-governmental organizations, associations, etc.), and on European heritage. Delegates from the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Culture, universities, local authorities, and local associations, along with representatives of civil society, took part in three working groups focused on: enhancing environmental resources, developing social networks, and raising awareness around the recognition of cultural heritage<sup>22</sup>.

On the final day, a public conference was held during which the study results were shared with national and local authorities, and the final document was presented. In this document, the working group:

- produced a draft charter outlining the methodology to be adopted in heritage-led post-disaster recovery efforts to enhance democratic citizenship and participation;
- produced a draft charter on the application of the Faro Convention approach in post-disaster recovery, with specific observations relating to Fontecchio;
- identified key topics to be prioritized for the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage.

In this light, Fontecchio's experience can be read as an emblematic case of how peripheral and rural areas can reposition themselves at the centre of contemporary debates on heritage, democracy and sustainable territorial development.

The event 'Stories, Places, People' took place approximately one year after the Workshop, on 19 October 2018. The G. Titta Rosa Primary School in Fontecchio played host to the Faro Convention for Community Reconstruction. This day of in-depth discussion focused on themes of social reconstruction and the revitalisation of heritage communities, based on the principles of the Convention<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Spadolini, F. (2019). *The Faro Convention in Research-Action. Community involvement in a post-disaster heritage revitalization*, in *Città Come Cultura. Processi di Sviluppo*, (a cura di E. Pelosi). Fondazione MAXXI editore, 248-253.

<sup>23</sup> The workshop was included among the activities officially recognized as of interest by the then Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities for 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage. <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/it/cultural-heritage/eu-policy-for-cultural-heritage/european-year-of-cultural-heritage-2018>



The town of Fontecchio is currently facing significant challenges related to repopulation and the revitalization of community life, both socially and economically. Historically affected by emigration and recurring earthquakes—most notably the 2009 disaster—the town is still undergoing reconstruction, which is expected to be completed by 2025. However, the number of residents remains low compared to the housing stock, raising concerns about the long-term maintenance of unused buildings.

Reconstruction is coordinated by the Special Office for the Crater Municipalities, based in Fossa, which oversees 56 towns and has been implementing a governance model across eight regions since 2013. Despite the availability of three billion euros for reconstruction, only 4% of this budget is allocated to social and economic development. This limited focus has made community revitalization more difficult and has left many of the town's deeper needs unaddressed.

Fontecchio and the surrounding Aterno Valley are home to promising and innovative grassroots initiatives. Yet, a lack of an integrated, regional strategy prevents these efforts from gaining broader impact. Still, community engagement remains strong: residents actively participate in local events and show a genuine commitment to improving their town. Some individuals have recently moved to Fontecchio, purchasing homes and starting small businesses. However, these efforts tend to be based on personal networks rather than on a structured business environment.

In this context, initiatives like the traditional *casa & bottega* model (combining home and workplace) appear particularly suitable, but they need to be part of a broader, sustainable development plan to be truly effective.

Although Fontecchio offers a rich cultural and historical heritage—from its architecture to the surrounding landscape—the town's identity remains overshadowed by the memory of the earthquake. Nonetheless, a longer stay reveals multiple layers of heritage and community life. Institutions like the local elderly care center, which serves 140 residents, and the *spazio della memoria* (memory space) offer opportunities for inclusive development.

### **Living religious heritage sites, traditions and cultural identity**

The Perdonanza Celestiniana in Fontecchio provides a compelling example of how intangible cultural heritage can reinforce community identity and contribute to heritage-led regeneration. This study examines the festival not only as a religious and historical tradition but also as a site for participatory practices, collective memory, and cultural resilience.

#### ***Historical and Cultural Context***

The Celestinian Pardon dates back to July 27, 1294, when Pietro del Morrone—later Pope Celestine V—traveled from the hermitage of Sant'Onofrio al Morrone to L'Aquila. This journey established a civic and religious ritual that remains central to the identity of Fontecchio and surrounding towns. The torchlight procession, the Fuoco del Morrone, and the associated rituals, such as passage through the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio, exemplify the interweaving of sacred practice with local collective memory.

### ***Community Participation and Heritage Practices***

Data collected through participant observation and interviews highlight that local residents are actively engaged in organizing, maintaining, and interpreting the festival. This engagement extends beyond ceremonial participation to collaborative decision-making about festival programming, integration of contemporary cultural activities, and the management of heritage sites affected by the 2009 earthquake. The restoration of the Basilica following earthquake damage—coordinated by technical experts, universities, and community stakeholders—demonstrates the intersection of material conservation and community-driven heritage management. Innovative and traditional materials were combined to ensure structural integrity while respecting historical authenticity, reflecting a hybrid approach that aligns with Faro Convention principles.

### ***Link to Research Objectives***

The analysis demonstrates that the Perdonanza Celestiniana functions as more than a religious celebration. It serves as a platform for:

1. *Cultural regeneration*: Reinforcing social cohesion through shared practices and historical memory.
2. *Participatory governance*: Involving the community in decision-making processes about heritage preservation and festival organization.
3. *Sustainable development*: Stimulating local tourism, social engagement, and identity-based regeneration in a post-disaster context.

### ***Analytical Insights***

The study identifies a clear relationship between heritage, identity, and civic participation. Rituals like the Perdonanza act as mechanisms for transmitting historical knowledge, promoting inclusivity, and strengthening collective identity, demonstrating the practical application of the Faro Convention in small, rural communities. Moreover, the combination of tangible restoration and intangible heritage preservation illustrates how multi-dimensional heritage practices contribute to resilience and sustainable development.

## **Conclusion**

The case of Fontecchio illustrates how community-led approaches to heritage conservation can simultaneously foster cultural identity, social cohesion, and sustainable local development, particularly in post-disaster contexts. Through initiatives such as Borghi Attivi and the adoption of the Faro Convention principles, the village demonstrates that reconstruction extends beyond the physical repair of buildings to include the revitalization of collective memory, participatory governance, and intangible cultural practices.

Fontecchio's experience shows that engaging residents in co-designing development strategies strengthens both social and cultural resilience. The Perdonanza Celestiniana exemplifies the potential of living heritage to act as a catalyst for civic participation, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and local identity reinforcement. The festival highlights how intangible traditions, when combined with careful material conservation, can contribute to sustainable territorial regeneration.

This study underscores the value of integrating participatory methods, local knowledge, and professional expertise in heritage-led recovery. The Fontecchio case provides empirical evidence that small rural communities can play a leading role in redefining relationships with cultural heritage, promoting inclusive governance, and developing innovative approaches to post-disaster reconstruction.

By situating heritage practices within broader social, economic, and environmental frameworks, Fontecchio demonstrates a replicable model for other regions seeking to leverage cultural heritage as a tool for regeneration. Ultimately, this case affirms that heritage is not a static resource but a living, evolving medium through which communities can reaffirm identity, exercise democratic participation, and envision sustainable futures.

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