



## Casalecchio di Reno, Italy 'Would you change?': Consumption, Environment, Energy Conservation, and Lifestyle in Casalecchio di Reno<sup>1</sup>

**Name of the policy:** 'Cambieresti': Consumption, Environment, Energy Conservation, and Lifestyles (In Italian: Consumi, Ambiente, Risparmio Energetico e Stili di Vita)

**Start date:** October 2006

**Completion date:** June 2008

### CONTEXT

#### GOVERNMENTAL CONTEXT

##### City context

Casalecchio di Reno is a small town of 35,200 inhabitants located in the province of Bologna, southwest of the provincial and regional capital. It covers 17.37 sq. km. Its territory is partly flat and partly hilly and divided in two by the River Reno. Casalecchio is part of the metropolitan area of Bologna and much of the social, demographic, and economic trends in Casalecchio are due to township's city-region context. In 1994, Casalecchio signed the Aalborg Charter and, in

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<sup>1</sup> The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** is a space for analysis and reflection on local social inclusion policies. It contains over sixty case studies on innovative policies for community development, access to basic services, gender equality, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty, among others. The initiative has been developed with the scientific support of Prof. Yves Cabannes from the University College of London (15 case studies) and a team of researchers from the Centre for Social Studies (CES) at the University of Coimbra, which has worked under the supervision of Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (50 study cases). This Observatory aims to identify and investigate successful experiences that might inspire other cities to design and implement their own social inclusion policies.

The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** has been created by the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the global platform that represents and defends the interests of local governments before the international community and works to give cities more political influence on global governance. The **Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights** aims to contribute to building a common voice for the cities of UCLG in the areas of social inclusion, participatory democracy and human rights. It also aims to guide local governments in designing these policies and to that end, fosters political debates, the exchange of experiences and peer learning among cities around the world.

For more information: [www.uclg.org/cisd/observatory](http://www.uclg.org/cisd/observatory)



2007, joined the Aalborg Commitments as part of the European Sustainable Cities Campaign.

It is an important centre of educational, health, and welfare services (seven social centers that have over 3,000 members, two day care centers, and numerous voluntary associations), and also sport (30 sports clubs involving over 10,000 members, 3 swimming pools, and an arena) and cultural services (theater, youth center, and the House of Knowledge). Casalecchio is the fourth largest industrial area in the province of Bologna and one of the largest trading platforms in the region, with two shopping malls, supermarkets, and a wide array of shops and services downtown and in the suburbs (e.g., gyms, cinemas, Futurshow Station). The business district, which comprises the Zola Predosa area and Sasso Marconi, contains about 5,500 companies – 6.2% of the province – with about 17,000 employees in total. The main economic sectors are wholesale and retail trade (30%), real estate and new technologies (20% each), construction and manufacturing activities (15% and 12% respectively).

The Casalecchio ruling administration consists of a Mayor and 31 Councilors, with an Executive Cabinet of eight appointed politicians. The City Council is responsible for policy deliberation and discussion of matters of local jurisdiction, and is elected for five-year terms. Standing committees of Councilors, internal organs of the municipal council, perform functions of inquiry and consultation, and prepare acts within council jurisdiction. The City of Casalecchio has had a long period of political stability with the center-left coalition governing since the postwar period. The same pattern is found at the provincial and regional levels of government. The current mayor and most of the City Council were re-elected in recent municipal elections.

### **Governmental decentralization context**

Italy is a Parliamentary Republic subdivided into 20 regions, five of which have a special autonomous status that enables them to enact legislation on some of their local matters. Mere administrative districts of the central state during the Kingdom of Italy, regions were granted political autonomy by the 1948 Constitution of the Italian Republic but (except for the five autonomous regions). The implementation of this autonomy, however, only happened in 1970 when the first regional elections took place. Casalecchio belongs to the region Emilia Romagna, traditionally considered part of the 'red belt' of the country, with one of the traditionally more efficient governments which (today) is leading the Conference of Italian Regions. It is worth underlining that Emilia Romagna (its capital is Bologna) traditionally worked a lot on the issues of fair trade and solidarity economy, thanks to its rich fabric of diversified cooperatives and social movements. In this region, a recent law (n. 3/2010) for promoting participation was passed, to emulate the Regional Law n° 69/2007 of Tuscany. The law provides that local authorities, as well as citizen groups, associations, schools, and businesses, are entitled to present participation projects regarding specific matters of public relevance. All projects are subject to evaluation by an administrative body in charge of assessing and authorizing project applications on the basis of a series of conditions and requirements indicated in the law. Once the project is approved, support can be financial, methodological (assistance, consultancy), or logistical (e.g. IT tools) in nature. The administration does not guarantee that the outputs of the consultation will be taken into account, but it is nevertheless committed to give an adequate and publicly accessible explanation of the reasons why the results were not, or only partially, accepted.

In the Italian administrative system, regions are divided into provinces (110), composed of many

municipalities, whose three main functions are: (1) coordinating local planning and zoning; (2) providing local police and fire services; and (3) regulating transportation (car registration, maintenance of local roads, etc.). In each province, there is also a Prefect (*prefetto*), a representative of central government who heads an agency related to public security services and names 'commissioners' who substitute for municipal elected bodies when they decay for any reason. Casalecchio di Reno belongs to Bologna Province.

In Italy, the base administrative division is the municipality, which provides many of the basic civil functions (registry of births and deaths, registry of deeds, social services, primary schools, town planning, contracting for local roads and public works, etc.). Every municipality is headed by a Mayor (*sindaco*) assisted by a legislative body, the *Consiglio Comunale*, and an executive body, the cabinet or *Giunta Comunale*. Since 1993, electoral systems at the local level vary depending on the number of inhabitants. Casalecchio di Reno belongs to the class 'larger than 15,000', so the Mayor and members of the Council are elected together by resident citizens in direct elections, and the coalition of the elected Mayor (who needs an absolute majority in the first or second round of voting) gains three-fifths of the Council's seats. At present there are 8,102 municipalities in Italy, around 90% of which are smaller than 15,000 inhabitants.

**Institutional level of policy development:** Municipal

## **SOCIAL CONTEXT**

In recent years, there has been a slight increase in population and a significant increase of people over 65 years old. In 2007, immigrants represented 7.1% of the total population of Casalecchio and the proportion has been growing rapidly during the last 10 years.

The City's administration has historically supported a vast number of local and diverse associations and continues to do so. At the level of citizen's participation in decision-making processes, the number of initiatives promoted is well above the national average. Consequently, there is a consistency in the relationship established between government and civil society, and a high level of civil engagement. The town's *Social Report 2007* highlights the activity of the House of Solidarity, home to 25 associations. In 2007, 42 events and activities were organized by Peace House (a communal service outsourced to the association Percorsi di Pace); 30 public meetings were organized on the preparation of the local Mobility Plan; there were 10 meetings of the municipal youth council; 6 district assemblies; 6 thematic councils open to public participation; and 125 families involved in the project *Cambieresti?*.

## **COMPREHENSIVE NARRATIVE**

### **Description of the policy**

*Cambieresti?* ('Would you change?') is an acronym for Consumption, Environment, Energy Conservation, and Lifestyles. It aims to introduce the concept of sustainable development into daily practices, consuming models, and lifestyles so that any citizen 'can do something sustainable' and be aware of it.

### **Background / Origins**



The initiative originated in Venice in 2005 in response to a call from the Ministry of the Environment for the implementation of Local Agenda 21, during a particularly fruitful period with regard to participatory processes. The call aimed to extend the canons of Local Agenda 21 and the whole debate on sustainable development in Italy, which was, and still is, largely confined within a circle of stakeholders in a particular context, or within academic and policy advisors to government. The idea was to translate sustainable development into daily practices, consumption patterns, and lifestyles so that any citizen could consciously 'do something sustainable'.

A partnership between the City of Venice (through its Department for Environment) and the Laboratory Ombrello (Umbrella) of the Department of Planning at the IUAV University of Venice, had previously conducted public participation in policies and projects on urban green, energy saving, and on reducing air pollutants. In Venice, the large budget available (approximately € 300,000.00) allowed the initiative to involve 1250 families in a one-year trial during which encounters among neighbours, thematic meetings, workshops, questionnaires, monitoring, parties, and other events would give participants' the possibility to meet, to enhance their skills, to try out new products and new technologies, and to change habits in different areas of their daily life. The original experience was a great success both locally and in terms of awards at national and European levels.

At the end of this experience, a number of the authors and promoters of the project created the non-profit organization *Cambieresti* to export the project to other contexts and to help other organizations and institutions replicate a similar process. Among the most successful experiences after the Venetian one, is the one of Casalecchio, where a smaller version of *Cambieresti?* has been embraced by a large group of households and has inspired public policies promoted by the local administration.

### **Policy objectives**

The objective of the policy is to translate sustainable development into daily practices, consumption patterns, and lifestyles so that any citizen can consciously 'do something sustainable'.

### **Chronological development and implementation of the practice**

*Cambieresti?* in Casalecchio initially involved 125 families, but after the first edition organized by the association *Cambieresti*, it was reproduced by the participants themselves and is now in its third edition. The municipality has progressively taken a number of changes in terms of reducing consumption within its structure (e.g., of energy, paper, food, transportation, etc.) and has conducted interesting experiments under the *Cambieresti?* umbrella, for example, in the fields of micro-power generation and bio-dynamic farming.

*Cambieresti?*, in practice, can be divided into three interconnected stages: networking, communication, and experimentation:

Phase 1 consists of investigating potential carriers of local resources (e.g., knowledge, participatory, economic, etc.) relevant to the issues to be addressed. At this stage there are usually two groups identified: (a) those who can directly fund the experimentation and that may find a direct economic advantage in participating and (b) those who are content bearers.

Although there are often intersections between the two groups, the first is primarily involved in planning the project's technical methods of production (e.g., marketing communication, scheduling, incentives for participation, monitoring mode, etc.), with the latter involved in defining and supplying elements such as themes, workshops, meetings, etc. *Cambieresti?* is then contextualized in different territories and becomes a participatory project, developing a close relationship with the institutions, enterprises, and associations that operate locally. Depending on the composition of the partnership, the overall scope of the project, the budget, the range of covered topics, etc. varies by territory.

Phase 2, the communication campaign, is the heart of the entire process. In Venice, 11 topics were proposed for participants, while the Casalecchio initiative selected 6 topics. Before beginning experiments with the households, an extensive program of workshops was designed with the partners (see Figure 1).

### Figure 1. Casalecchio workshop topics

#### *Waste*

Home composting: From the balcony to the garden  
How to self-produce soaps and detergents  
Reducing packaging  
Trash-ware: Buy-manage-restore-recycle a PC  
Waste melody – musical instruments from waste  
Diapers and moon cup

#### *Water*

Public water  
Water comparison (from chemical and physical parameters to taste)

#### *Power / Bio*

Do it yourself is better: Jams, bread, beer, ...  
Seeds and traditional varieties: The rediscovery of lost tastes (tasting)  
Organic fermentation: Self-made yogurt and kefir and their possible uses in the kitchen  
Preservative revolution: How to maintain fruit and vegetables year-round  
GMOs: How to know them and how to avoid them

#### *Critical Consumption*

Solidarity Buying Groups (GAS)  
Educating the consumer to read labels and brands  
Projects, activities and tastings of fair trade products  
Certified wood  
Ethical finance

#### *Energy*

How to build a solar panel yourself  
Green building: Visits to existing examples in Casalecchio and vicinity  
Saving energy in the kitchen and reducing domestic consumption

### *Mobility*

#### Sustainable mobility

Car sharing and car pooling: How it works and opportunities

The Pedibus – What it is and how to organize it

In addition to the workshops, held for the most part by the partners themselves, *Cambieresti?* foresees the organization of a series of neighbourhood meetings in which family representatives get to know each other, exchange information, discuss practices that provide the greatest saving of resources, organize in-depth meetings or visits to sites and activities of particular interest, etc. There is considerable freedom to modify the original program according to interests and opportunities that arise. A part of the budget is made available for these activities.

Another communication activity is the preparation of a 'Guide to change' in which all participating organizations contribute by providing relevant information on the topics of the project. The association *Cambieresti?* receives all the contributions, and illustrates and translates them into non-technical language so as to enhance the appeal for people with little experience. The guide is then distributed to neighbourhood meetings and is often the triggering element of discussion.

### **Agents involved**

The project was sponsored by the Environment Department of the City of Casalecchio, with the support of the non-profit association *Cambieresti?*. As with the Venice experience, two steering committees were set up: one with the funding partners, the other with local organizations. The funding partners in Casalecchio were:

- Supermarkets and large retail: Coop Adriatica, NaturaSì, IKEA
- Associations: Association Pro.B.E.R., organic and biodynamic producers in Emilia Romagna
- Publicly owned/participated companies: Hera (waste, water, gas), Atc (Transport)
- Banks: Aemilbanca, Credibo – cooperative bank of Bologna

It should be stressed that these partners were selected and involved not so much for their ability to finance, but for the commitments that they could make bringing their knowledge on specific issues and undertake actions guided by saving non-renewable resources. For example, Ikea contributed its expertise on wood certification and energy saving in the kitchen, and implementing a shuttle bus to transport employees and customers from Bologna to Casalecchio. The banks were selected because they had soft loans for housing interventions related to reducing energy consumption. Coop Adriatica and NaturaSì promoted packaging reduction initiatives, selling products on tap and local 'zero km' products. Atc developed a car-sharing service and Hera started collecting waste door to door.

Associative (including local community) partners were: Amici dei Mici, Amici del Pra 'Znein, Amici del Reno, Amici di Primo Levi – Reno Valley, [Youth Center](#), [Legambiente](#), [Socio-cultural circle MCL 'G. Lercaro'](#), [GEV](#), volunteer eco guards, [Lungo Reno Tripoli](#), [MOICA](#) (the Italian movement of housewives), [Percorsi di Peace](#), and [WWF Italy](#).

The multifaceted partnership formed for the project allowed the organizers to define the scope of the project itself, to do most of the laboratories, and to reach the target of 125 households defined when designing the project, since each of them has supported the dissemination of the communication campaign in the area. Many of the associations in the project have found a way to become known, come into contact with each other, and start new projects together.

### **Beneficiaries**

The project directly benefits the citizens who participate in it, but also tends to show through its participants that a change in the direction of more sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles can be put in practice by anyone, benefitting society more generally. Both in the Venetian experience and in the ones reproduced in other contexts, there has always been the ability for participants to continue the experience independently, through buying groups and other organizational forms more or less formalized and to be able to expand, considerably, with the involvement of new players who had not previously participated in the project. In the case of Casalecchio, this enlargement is clearly visible, as the participants have promoted a new edition of *Cambieresti?*, completely self-organised.

### **Participation processes implemented**

The first level of participation is that of fitting the project into its context: an accurate outreach tends to select individuals who in various ways can bring resources to the project. With them, implementation and monitoring activities are decided. Many of them share a concern for a lasting exchange with a sample of citizens, which allows them to understand the prevailing systems of preferences, such as how the needs of a citizen, who progressively refines his/her awareness of the products that best satisfy him/her, change.

The second level of participation is that of the experimentation itself: the households who take part to the initiative also participate by discussing, but especially by doing: testing, manipulating, tasting, building, etc. This experiential aspect seems crucial to the success of a project so extended over time: no citizen would be willing to participate in meetings for several months where you only talk. Everyone feels the need to acquire knowledge that can be spent at home, at work, with friends, etc.

In these experiences, the public/local authority is an actor among others. Its functions of promotion and coordination are recognized, but it is not the 'expert' entity to whom the citizens refer to become more aware and more sensitive about environmental issues. Its legitimacy in the eyes of the participants increases through its actions, as it demonstrates being able to actually enact sustainable changes in its procedures and modify its 'bad habits', which are often much stronger than those of an ordinary citizen or non-governmental organization. The extended partnership allows the local authority to express the explicit change requests of the project in collective terms: no Italian public administration could, by itself, ask citizens to make sustainable change in their lifestyle without falling immediately into a large series of contradictions.

### **Institutionalization processes**

In Casalecchio, the organized phase of the project lasted for eight months. Then, there was a

phase to accompany the actions that the participants had committed themselves to develop. This second phase lasted about five months, with less frequent meetings but striking results in terms of the ability of the groups that were formed to create and promote new experiments, especially in the areas of critical consumption, mobility, and energy. Examples in this respect are: the design of an informative box which shows all the labels that should be attached but are often missing in the packaging of the food they consume; a project of an energy self-sufficient school to be carried out with a broad shareholder base among parents of pupils; a joint project to promote the use of a local railway line; and two joint purchasing groups that have progressively broadened the base of subscribers and the network of producers they deal with.

The involvement of local governments in various sectors has also made it possible to advance other projects, such as: the 'door to door' collection of waste; green procurement for all consumers in the municipal offices; the project 'fruit snacks', which allows employees to eat seasonal fruit and local produce instead of snacks distributed by industrial machines in the various locations; the proposed bio-dynamic farm management of a large city park; and an ongoing project of environmental education involving local schools and the Youth City Council aimed at a general reflection on consumption, waste, mobility (i.e., the way to move from home to school), etc.

### Financing

On the financing part, it is important to note that the partnership built around *Cambieresti?* leads to a breakdown of costs which is particularly advantageous for the promoting local administration government. Half of the budget for the Venetian experience was provided by ministerial resources, and the other half by all the partners with funding in cash and incentives for participants, such as car sharing and bus passes, energy audits in housing buildings, energy-saving light bulbs, trolleys and shopping bags, flow-reducers for taps, etc. The Venice City Council acted with a level of funding equal to only 10% of the total budget.

For Casalecchio, where the total budget amounted to € 28,000, the City funded approximately half of the project, claiming the costs of technical support from the Association *Cambieresti?*, while other partners have been ordered to bear the costs of the communication campaign, incentives, and the establishment of laboratories.

### Key results and achievements

The most striking results are the relationships created and the self-organized continuity of the experience: after the experience of *Cambieresti?*, autonomous groups were constituted as subjects of reference for other people and for defining an institutional framework of policies. As well, there was an increase in participants' sensitivity to and awareness of the proposed themes, and changes achieved by participants on savings of renewable resources. Overall, the success of the *Cambieresti?* challenge was to equip citizens with a toolbox that allows them to find their way across a marketplace which is increasingly marked by the single law of maximum consumption, and to measure their well-being beyond the quantity of goods possessed or consumed.

### Replicability or adaptation of policy elsewhere

*Cambieresti?* was replicated, after the Venetian edition, in at least a dozen different cities, and



has thus become a real model, thanks to its open source nature and its simplicity of implementation, which can be summarized in the keywords *networking*, *communication*, and *experimentation*. The experience gained in recent years has shown: (a) the feasibility of *Cambieresti?* even with a very limited budget and only a few partners, a few themes, and a few families involved; (b) the possibility of bottom-up promotion, even if public support ensures visibility and scope; and (c) its function as a glue between subjects that are often operating in areas which are contiguous but separated by different cultural backgrounds, approaches, ways of action, target audiences, etc. Finally, in terms of participation, *Cambieresti?* confirmed the validity of an experiential training approach, an exchange that is not limited to a dialogue among participants but, rather, is focused on direct evidence, self-production, and self-monitoring of the changes achieved.

## SUMMARY

*Cambieresti?* is an acronym for 'Consumption, Environment, Energy Conservation and Lifestyles'. The project was originally produced in Venice in 2005 in response to a ministerial call for the implementation of Agenda 21 with the goal of practicing sustainable development in daily practices, consumption patterns, and lifestyles. In Venice, 1250 households were involved in a one-year trial. Other subsequent experiments were carried out with the support of the Association *Cambieresti?*, which was formed by representatives of the promoters of the original project. The Casalecchio di Reno experience (2007) is the most successful, thanks to highly developed social capital and a local public administration willing to change its decision-making procedures and its ways of working. In Casalecchio, 125 families participated: for eight months they were involved in neighbourhood meetings, thematic meetings, workshops, festivals, and events. They then established buying and project-oriented groups that still continue, in an autonomous form, the experience initiated with *Cambieresti?*.

From an organizational point of view, *Cambieresti?* can be summarized in three successive stages: networking, communication, and experimentation. It starts with a reconnaissance of potential carriers of local resources (knowledge, participatory, economic, etc.) that are relevant to the issues to be developed. Together with them, the thematic contents to be covered in that context and the operational modalities of the project (e.g., marketing communication, scheduling, incentives for participation, methods of monitoring) are defined. This is genuine participatory planning which sets out the contours of the entire operation (actors, duration, agenda of meetings and workshops, incentives to participate, etc.); the roles of institutional, economic, and voluntary bodies; the number of participants that will be involved, and so forth.

The communication phase is divided between an advertising campaign, aimed at informing the public about the process that has started, and co-editing a guide to change, with contributions from all partners, standardized in a common language on issues to be discussed.

The testing phase consists of workshops, held mostly by the project partners, and neighbourhood meetings. In this phase, the households who take part in the initiative discuss and debate, but also do practical things: testing, manipulating, tasting, building, etc. This experiential aspect seems crucial to the success of a project where a long-term participation is required.

The organizational phase of the project, in the case of Casalecchio, was eight months and was extended to a period of accompanying measures that the participants had committed themselves to develop. This second phase lasted about five months, with less frequent meetings, but with striking results in terms of the groups' ability to create and promote new experiments, especially in the areas of critical consumption, mobility, and energy.

The involvement of different administrative sectors of the local authority has led to the advancement of projects related to *Cambieresti?* and its related savings goals. With an investment of about € 15,000 (half the project budget), the City of Casalecchio managed to develop a set of policies aimed at environmental savings and sustainable organizational performance.

The results are valuable in terms of collectively achieved savings, and especially in terms of the relationships established between partners and between the participants, which determine the continuity of the process in self-organized awareness proposals and in projects promoted with a bottom-up approach, characterized by creativity and social innovation.

**For further information:**

Beatrice Grasselli, Councillor for the Environment  
Casalecchio di Reno  
Via Guido Rossa, 1/3  
Fax: 051/598393  
Email: [ambiente@comune.casalecchio.bo.it](mailto:ambiente@comune.casalecchio.bo.it)

Maria Savini, Project coordinator – [MSavini@comune.casalecchio.bo.it](mailto:MSavini@comune.casalecchio.bo.it)  
Association Cambieresti? – [associazione@cambieresti.it](mailto:associazione@cambieresti.it)

*Cambieresti?* website (maintained by the participants): [www.cambieresti.org](http://www.cambieresti.org)

**Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG):**

Tlf: + 34 93 342 87 70 <http://www.uclg.org/cisdg/>

**Acknowledgements / Credits**

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