



UCLG
Committee

Social Inclusion
Participatory Democracy
and Human Rights

**Inclusive Cities
Observatory**

« WOULD YOU CHANGE?': CONSUMPTION, ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY CONSERVATION AND LIFESTYLE IN CASALECCHIO DI RENO »

Casalecchio di Reno, Italy

Period of implementation: 2006 - 2008 | Study case written in 2010

C*ambieresti?* is an acronym for 'Consumption, Environment, Energy Conservation and Lifestyles'. The project was originally produced in Venice in 2005 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?*



The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** was launched in 2008 by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights with the aim of creating a space for analysis and reflection on local social inclusion policies. The initiative was developed with the scientific support of Professor Yves Cabannes (University College of London) and the Centre for Social Studies (CES) from the University of Coimbra. At present, the Observatory contains more than sixty study cases mostly developed between 2008 and 2010. Even though many of these cases refer to policies that have already come to an end, they still have much to offer: from capitalizing on the learning acquired by other local authorities to discovering suggestive and alternative means to address social inclusion challenges from a local perspective.

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 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.

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.

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?.

Policy development

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

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 goals

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

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

Stakeholders, beneficiaries and participatory methodologies

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.

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.

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 and financing

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 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 etc.

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.

Outcomes and reflections

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 maximum consumption, and to measure their well-being beyond the quantity of goods possessed or consumed.

Replicability

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.

Further information

This case was researched and written by Andrea Mariotto (IUAV, Venice) with the collaboration of Jason Nardi (Social Watch Italy), under the supervision of Dr. Giovanni Allegretti at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal, in 2010.

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