

NEW PERSPECTIVES OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN URBAN POLICY

COMUNE DI CENTO



COMUNE DI CENTO / INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN



SUMMARY

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AN OVERVIEW OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN, NATIONAL AND EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION GOVERNANCE

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The processes of citizen involvement in public affairs have been experiencing a growing diffusion in many democratic countries for several decades now. The emergence of the participation topic is likely to be traced back to the social movements of the 60s and 70s that put forward a political demand for citizens' involvement in public choices. These movements denounce the 'betrayal' by representative democracy - accused of having fallen hostage to elites, oligarchies and interest groups - of its fundamental premises: the sovereignty of the people and the political equality of citizens.

For several years the **European Union** has started a deep reflection on the issue of the democratic legitimization of its powers, which over time has led it to open channels for dialogue with civil society through specific participatory tools, with the aim of making up for the sense of distance and extraneousness perceived by European citizens towards a system whose functioning appears excessively complex.

The need to promote a social dialogue that would over-

come this weakness at first found expression in the **Social Protocol attached to Maastricht Treaty of 1992**, which gave the Commission the task of promoting consultation of the social partners at Community level" and of taking every useful measure to facilitate dialogue", asking them at the same time to "consult the parties before submitting proposals in the field of social policy ". The provisions were then incorporated into the legal system by the **Treaty of Amsterdam**, providing for three participatory tools: consultation, free and restricted agreements.

In 2001, participation became the subject of a specific political action with the **White Paper on European governance**, covering the whole system of rules, procedures and practices relating to the exercise of power within the EU.

In the White Paper the theme of participation is intertwined with other important topics of discussion such as transparency, access to documents, procedural participation and institutional communication.

In 2009 the **Lisbon Treaty** came into force, which, recognizing the profound distance between European in-



stitutions and citizens and affirming the importance of establishing a lively and direct dialogue, has sanctioned participation as a real constitutional principle.

Citizen participation within the EU system was also promoted through individual regulatory acts, Directives, which, making the preparation of participatory instruments binding in the development of some policies, especially in environmental issues, certainly pushed the Member States to create opportunities for discussion with citizens.

“Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen”

art. 10 Treaty of Lisbon

Today references to participatory democracy can also be found on a larger scale in international documents such as the **United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000** or the **Brisbane Declaration of 2005**.

Also in **Italy**, starting from the 90s, a period of reforms began aiming at affirming more or less explicitly new fundamental principles such as: transparency, quality, efficiency, participation, principles that have helped to deeply change the vision of the relationships between institutions and citizens and to affirm the centrality of the latter. The **Bassanini law no. 59/1997** contributed to promote a new perspective according to which citizens, individuals or associates, become allies and partners with whom to work on the co-planning and co-production of policies.

In particular with the “**principio di sussidiarietà orizzontale**” (principle of horizontal subsidiarity), stated in art. 4 of law 7, in art. 3 of the T.U. of 2000, and then reaffirmed in the Constitution after the reform of Title V of 2001, in art. 118, it is proposed to reverse the traditional flow of power, which should no longer proceed top down, but on the contrary bottom up, i.e. it should start from the citizens, for whom a power of initiative and a new centrality is constitutionally affirmed. Starting from the reform and modernization process of

the Italian Public Administration in 90s, the issue of the citizens' involvement and participation in public policies is increasingly linked to the strategic development of ICT and digitization. In 2005 the **CAD (Administration Digital Code)** was approved (then amended in 2010) which, in addition to establishing the right to use technologies in communications with administrations and the right to take part into the administrative procedure, actually recognizes the importance of involving citizens in political and administrative life.

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The Legislative Decree n. 150/2009, in particular, included transparency (understood not more just as a control tool, but rather as an actual result of the administrative action) between civil and social rights which must be insured to citizens throughout the national territory. To promote transparency it has also been established an **independent Commission (ANAC Anti-corruption National Authority)** for the evaluation of public administrations.

In 2011, the **national open data portal www.dati.gov** was launched, which has recorded since then an ex-

“Stato, Regioni, Città metropolitane, Province e Comuni favoriscono l'autonoma iniziativa dei cittadini, singoli e associati, per lo svolgimento di attività di interesse generale, sulla base del principio di sussidiarietà”

Constitution art. 18

ponential growth in open data; in the same year, Italy joined the Open Government Partnership, with the aim of promoting innovative political initiatives along the three main axes of open government, namely the transparency of the Public Administration, the fight against corruption, and participatory democracy.

Central step of this path is **ParteciPA**, the Italian government platform based on Decidim, a free software,

“State, Regions, metropolitan Cities, Provinces and Municipalities shall favour the autonomous initiative of individual and associated citizens to carry out activities of general interest, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity”

Constitution art. 18



developed entirely in a participatory manner, which has been adopted by the city of Barcelona and within a few years by many other cities in Europe and around the world. The current platform has been online since 2019 and it is dedicated to the consultation and public participation processes promoted by central administrations, agencies and departments of the Presidency.

The **Emilia Romagna Region** is one of the Italian regions, together with Tuscany, Lazio and Puglia, which has mostly transposed the national directives in terms of participation. In 2018 it issued the **Regional Law on Participation No. 15** which aims at encouraging citizen participation in the development of public policies and to strengthen the sense of active citizenship, in particular on the occasion of important and strategic choices for the territory.

A great deal of work has been carried out in the field of communication between administrators and citizens, thanks to the knowledge that the first condition for stimulating participation is the awareness of the programs

and interventions that the Administration intends to implement.

Emilia-Romagna is the first Italian Region to create a participation experience through the **e-democracy platform “PartecipAzioni”**, dedicated to the processes of consultation and public participation, launched in February 2022. The goal is to promote an Open Government policy, supporting the culture of open administration and facilitating citizen participation not only in decision-making moments but also in the development phase of the Region’s public policies.

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“Il processo partecipativo è un percorso strutturato di dialogo e confronto (...) al fine di ottenere la completa rappresentazione delle posizioni, degli interessi o dei bisogni sulla questione, nonché di giungere ad una proposta ed alla sua eventuale mediazione o negoziazione in funzione di una co-decisione, ricercando un accordo delle parti coinvolte sulla questione oggetto degli atti in discussione”

art. 3 L.R. 15/2018

Despite all these measures taken to guarantee the citizens' involvement, in order to understand the citizens' relation to democracy and governance in Cento, and by extension, to Italy, it is important to have a close look at the political history of the country. Italian politics is quite known for being tumultuous. In the 1990s political scandals, extensive corruption and organized crime's considerable influence have for many years led to the growing disenchantment of citizens regarding political matters. Political turmoil has led to a general form of suspicion regarding politics, however, it appears that the situation has improved in the last decade also because of the continuous fight against corruption (even though Italy still scores quite badly in Europe in terms of corruption index) and the increase of transparency measures. In the recent years, however, parties and movements which lay their foundations on direct participation and involvement of citizens (...) have risen to be part of the Italian government. Italy has a very low level of trust in their national government (one of the lowest in Europe together with France, Greece, Spain

and in municipal authorities as well (even though higher at local level than national level). It is also important to mention that the Italian administration is perceived quite negatively by citizens especially for its high level of bureaucracy. And this appears to be not only a perception but a measurable fact since European place Italy as the 21st country in Europe for public administration performance (therefore appearing as a country with the highest need for administrative capacity improvement).

“The participatory process is a structured process of dialogue and discussion (...) in order to obtain a complete representation of the positions, interests or needs on the issue, as well as to reach a proposal and its possible mediation or negotiation as a function of co-decision, seeking an agreement of the parties involved on the issue subject of the acts under discussion.”

art. 3 L.R. 15/2018

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THE CITY CONTEXT CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

And how is the situation in Cento in
terms of participatory democracy?

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SOME DATA ABOUT CENTO update 31/12/2021

Country: **Italy** Region: **Emilia Romagna**

Province: **Ferrara** Area: **64,74 km²**

Population: **35.279 inhabitants**

Population density: **544,4 inhabitants/sqkm**

Demographic profile: **17.339 males - 17.940 females**

Average age: **45.62 years old**

(0-14, 13.76% / 15-64, 63.35% / 65+, 22.88%)

Families: **15.009** (average components: **2,4**)

Foreign people: **3.925 (11%)** Largest foreign communities are from:

Morocco (24,9%), Pakistan (16,2%), Romania (14,2%),

Albania (8,4%) and China (7,0%)

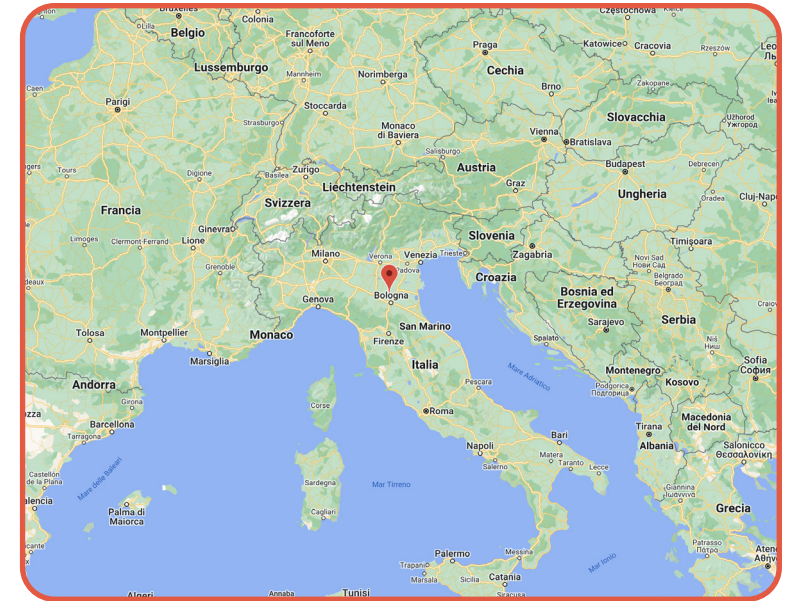
Economy profile (employment sectors): **engines and mechanics**

manufacturing, agriculture, food industry

Functional Urban Area: **small urban area** / 1 main town (Cento) and 9 municipal fractions (Renazzo, Corporeno, Dodici Morelli, Buonacompra, Casumaro, Molino Albergati, Alberone, Reno Centese, Bevilacqua)

Political situation: **Mayor: Edoardo Accorsi, since 2021 (first mandate)**

- Lista Civica “Attiva” (local civic list), supported by another civic list (Cento Sicura) and 1 political party (PD).





SOME EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATION IN CENTO

In Cento the situation is quite interesting as the municipal team, which got elected in 2021, is new, young and germinated from the civic list “Attiva”. Cento has a long history of Mayors elected through civic lists instead of big national parties which appear to be a way of putting some distance with the national parties’ turmoil.

Finally, we can add that even though political participation of citizens is not that huge locally (...), citizens’ volunteering is very high especially through active local association and Consulte civiche (neighborhood councils) gathering a rich and diverse set of active citizens.

“L’Amministrazione Comunale, con l’istituzione delle Consulte Civiche, riafferma il significato ed il valore della partecipazione dei cittadini alla vita politica, sociale e amministrativa della comunità.”

art. 1 Regolamento Consulte Civiche Comune di Cento

An enlightening and comprehensive summary of the situation in Cento in terms of citizens participation is provided by Christophe Gouache, lead expert of the Active Citizens network, who in his Baseline study (2000), describes it as follows

The rich diversity of active citizens in the Neighborhood Councils (Consulte Civiche)

The Consulte Civiche (neighborhood councils) are bodies of citizens who play a consultative role in the administrative management of the local community (esp. urbanism, public services, etc.). Historically, in Italy, the city of Bologna (in the 1960s) was the first one to create Neighborhood Councils. Even though, nowadays, many more cities have them, the city of Cento (same region as Bologna) introduced them 20 years ago already.

In Cento, the territory has been divided into 9 integrated areas, in each of which a Neighborhood Council has been constituted. The number of members of the individual Civic Councils is established taking into account



the population living in the various integrated areas and ranges between 7 to 11 citizens.

Each council is composed of a president (elected by members) and its members (consultori). The members are elected by the residents of each neighbourhood and

apply as candidates on a voluntary basis. In order to be eligible, candidates have to either live or work in the neighborhood. (...)

Each council is given a place to meet by the city administration. Meetings can either be decided to take place based on the president's call, or by one of its members. To happen, at least one third of the members of the council shall be present or 30 citizens from the neighborhood.

(...) The municipal budget, the multi-annual plan of interventions, the urban planning projects as well as

public works projects exceeding 150 000€ shall be approved by the city only after it went through a consultation process with the concerned Neighborhood Council (the one impacted by the planned project).

For some public matters, the consultation process is



therefore compulsory but obviously, the city does not have to take into account what comes out of the Neighborhood Council since it is a non-binding position anyway - which is why it is called a consultation body.

Certainly one of the strengths of these organizations is the richest diversity of active citizens in terms of demographics. Concretely this means that the members cover a wide range of the population in terms of age (young people, families, mid-age active citizens, senior ones) and a good gender balance. **The Consulte Civiche of Cento are an incredible source of voluntary and diverse active citizens which is not ‘exploited’ (positively) enough by the city. One of the risks of not improving the communication/collaboration between the councils and the city is, of course, the progressive resignation of these active citizens and the growing conviction that local governments (and not only national ones) pretend to care about citizens’ opinions but, in the end, don’t really. If participation is considered as a facade by citizens, then it would be a great loss for the city administration.**

“With the establishment of the Neighborhood Councils, the Municipal Administration reaffirms the significance and value of citizens’ participation in the political, social and administrative life of the community.”

art. 1 Regulation of the Consulte Civiche of Cento

Local associations: a fertile soil for participation and collaboration

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The city of Cento hosts around 200 associations which, for a city of that size demonstrate a good citizen engagement in the social, cultural, political life of the city. These associations are very diverse and act at different levels on many subjects (social inclusion, cultural activities, library, cinema, organic food purchasing groups, events, fairs, shows, intercultural exchanges, sports, etc.).

Most associations confirm that involving citizens in the long run and/or in management roles is not so easy. In-



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deed, for management roles, active citizens are often a reduced number ranging from 5 to 20 people. On the other hand, involving citizens in ‘fun’ activities, very hands-on work and punctual support/help is quite easy and efficient. Without much surprise, more demanding activities require time, energy and effort) that many citizens don’t necessarily have or can not give. In terms of citizen participation this means that we shall also consider different possibilities of engagement



in participatory processes. From demanding and long run ones to light, fun and quicker ones. As an example of this approach, the Carnival di Cento Association is a good case. Five associations dedicate a huge amount of time and energy creating the carnival’s floats all year around with a small number of active volunteers but when it comes to the actual setting up and running of the carnival event, then 1000 volunteer citizens help. Associations in general acknowledge that, for them also,



it is difficult to mobilize citizens. It often requires a lot of effort to communicate (putting flyers one by one in people's mailbox or even directly knocking at people's doors). This difficulty faced by citizen-based associations confirms the even greater difficulty that city administration may encounter when they wish to carry on participatory processes (even though they have more powerful communication, resources).

(...) Citizens also often experience the difficulty of dealing with the two parts of what makes a city's authority, the politics on one side and the administration (civil servants) on the other side. For them, *'it's easier to talk with the politics rather than the civil servants because with the city departments/services we always end up having bureaucratic problems' (having to provide an absurd amount of administrative papers, forms, authorization, proofs of all kind, etc.)*. There is a gap between the politicians and the civil servants: *'politics make us some promises then the technical services tell us 'no, it's not feasible'*. *'We often have the impression that the technical services are hiding behind regulations and*



rules but don't help much in finding solutions'. Finally and on top of that, citizens and administrations don't have the same relation to time. *'We, associations are moving faster than the bureaucratic rhythm of the city administration'*.

If you had a magic stick to improve the collaboration with the city administration: *'I would ensure that the city exploits better the potentiality and expertise of the engaged, active citizens (associations)'*. *'We would take*

away the barriers that block us from doing more'. 'We would like the city to recognize the importance of the [social] role we play and be supportive of our projects'. 'To collaborate closer with the city requires a personal change of mind... both in the head of the active citizens, civil servants and politicians...' concludes an active member of an association.

The number of associations in Cento demonstrate that citizens are locally socially, culturally and politically active and this means that there is a fertile soil to plant the seeds for greater and closer participation and collaboration between citizens and city governance.

(Christophe Gouache, *Baseline study*, 2000)

The Collaboration Agreements (Patti di collaborazione)

Cento has moreover developed a new form of participation taking inspiration from the model implemented by the Mu-



nicipality of Bologna, the capital city of the Region Emilia Romagna.

Through a participatory process of co-planning, called **Cento Beni Comuni**, the municipal administration of Cento came to the definition of a Regulation on collaboration between citizens and the administration for the shared care and management of urban common goods, officially approved in 2020. The regulation intends to leverage the concept of co-responsibility and provides for the possibility of establishing **collaboration agreements** between citizens and the city to implement initiatives and interventions for the shared care and management of material assets of the city (green areas, historical heritage, public spaces, etc.) as well as immaterial goods (artistic heritage, cultural and social projects, etc.).

Any citizen or group of citizens can therefore voluntarily propose a care project to the administration. Each time citizens and administration decide together how they can manage and divide up the actions of



ration agreements have been signed for the flooring of a playground, for the restoration of a small votive monument, for the cleaning of Cento's river bank and for the planting of trees.

The Youth Table (Il Tavolo dei Giovani)

The Youth Table of the Municipality of Cento (Tavolo dei Giovani) was born in 2014 thanks to the project “Spazio Giovani” (space for young people) , financed by the Emilia Romagna Region with the Law on Participatory Policies.

the project among the involved actors. As long as the project is ongoing any other citizen is free to join and to bring his/her contribution to the successful achievement of the action.

As an example, since the regulation's approval, collabo-

The project saw the establishment of a Municipal Council for Girls and Boys (C.C.R.R.) and a Permanent Youth Table, as “recognized youth containers” for planning policies for the younger generations in the area.

The two bodies were officially recognized by the City

Council of Cento on 09/30/2014 with the approval of the Participatory Proposal Document created by the young people themselves.

Over the years, the Youth Table has been represented



by young people attending high schools in the area and has been involved in the organization of events and initiatives for young people, with the coordination of the municipal Youth Information Center, from a peer to peer perspective.

The young citizens who participated in the birth and development of the Table, now almost adults, over the years have been then engaged in other projects either as facilitators or as educators themselves, confirming the formative validity of the path followed. One young person in particular, referent of the first Youth Table in 2014-16, is today the Mayor of the Municipality of Cento.

In 2022 the Youth Table was also extended to young university students, thus covering a range from 15 to 25 years, albeit organized into two groups (15-18 and 19-25 years) who meet regularly twice a month to discuss , plan and organize initiatives in the area.

The areas of intervention are those closest to the youth segment: music, sport, culture, volunteering, school; on these issues, the children draw up proposals that are



shared with the City Councilor with responsibility for Youth Policies who acts as a spokesperson with the Administration on whether or not to implement the proposals.

Also from 2022 the Youth Table has a new meeting

place, no longer provisional as in the past (municipal rooms made available but shared) but reserved only for the working group.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Although “Active Citizens” started in 2019 with the previous administration, the new Mayor, elected in October 2021, from the start expressed full support for the project, entirely sharing its objectives and aims.

Edoardo Accorsi, 27 years old, is at his first experience as a civic

administrator. Due to his educational background in social sciences and education but also in politics and public administration he has chosen to be in charge of the social and educational services.

Thanks to the influence of his studies, his government is

strongly devoted to creating bonds between public administration, civil society, associations, and more generally with all the actors involved in the cooperation and project's co-designing.

This approach was implemented as early as the electoral campaign period. Together with the political party and the civic movements that supported his candidacy, he had built a shared and co-designed electoral program. They run three open meetings where citizens actively participated in drafting the proposals and concrete actions for the future city's government. The challenge was to co-create new visions for the future of Cento, summarized with three adjectives: happy, daring, and pluralistic.

Working in small groups, people had the possibility to bring their opinions to the table, share their expectations and their issues regarding the city, its administration, and its public assets but also to bring different and

innovative points of view regarding the development and the growth of the city. All the ideas, suggestions, and inputs were then summarized and they ended up in the final electoral program.

Since the election, the Mayor and all the other councilors have been working to carry on this method involving not only all the council members but also the civil society, voluntary associations, and enterprises.

As a will of transparency, the Administration presented in preview the forecast budget with the trade unions and trade and industrial associations in order to share the preliminary work and obtain important feedback.

The goal for the future is to increase the moment of public participation and policy co-designing, making people better understand the inner causes and mechanisms of the Administration, and how it concretely operates and makes “the machine” run.

In addition to this, it is important to highlight that the



current administration, to a greater extent than previous ones, is building very close and fruitful relations with the Municipality of Bologna. Edoardo Accorsi actively supported the campaign of the current Mayor of Bologna, still continuing to have a relationship of dialogue and exchange even after his election as Mayor of Cento. This allows the city of Cento to enter a wider network of cooperation with the city of Bologna and consequently with the Emilia Romagna Region, of which Bologna is the capital.

WHY TAKING PART INTO A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY PROJECT?

The premises so far described have encouraged decision makers to support the Active Citizens project, in the belief that the resources and potential already existing in the area can be channeled in the direction of a more widespread and impactful citizen participation.

Joining this project means specifically:

- **enhancing the role of neighborhood councils by en-**

suring them a more incisive decision-making power and a concrete spending capacity

- **improving relations with citizens** through a more efficient flow of information
- **activating processes of active citizenship and co-planning** through alternative channels, capable of strengthening social cohesion and the sense of belonging to the community
- **raising awareness** and involving new and wider city catchment areas in participatory processes
- activating a **widespread training program** to raise awareness on the functioning of the municipal machinery and on the issue of citizen participation
- **managing and reducing conflicts**, strengthening trust in institutions and tackling the consensus deficit

To sum it all up in one concept, the final goal is to take further decisive steps in climbing the **ladder of citizen participation**.



CITIZEN CONTROL

Citizens are in full control of power and decision. They are responsible and organized to manage that power



DELEGATED POWER

Public authorities delegate to citizens the power of creation and/or decision. Citizens are granted authority



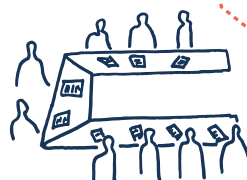
CO-DECISION

Making choices and taking 'final' decisions, is done by public authorities and citizens together, in partnership mode



CO-CREATION

Co-creating policies/ plans together with citizens at the initial phase of design. Solutions are co-elaborated from the beginning



CONCERTATION

Inviting representatives of citizens' interests or citizens to collect their views, negotiate and potentially adapt the original plans



CONSULTATION

Presenting ideas or plans to citizens to collect their opinions, reactions, concerns



INFORMATION

Being informed, knowing what is going on, decisions that are made, discussed or planned to be made

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

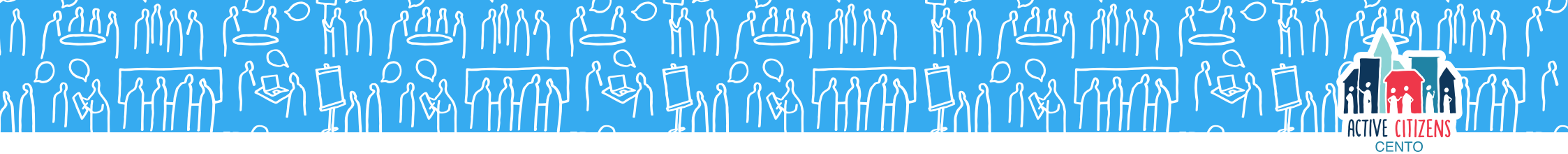
Poster by Christophe Gouache - Strategic Design Scenarios
Adapted version from Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969)



3

SETTING UP THE URBACT LOCAL GROUP (ULG)

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The integrated approach to sustainable urban development promoted by URBACT builds on the participation of key local stakeholders in policy-making and delivery. Developing partnerships involving local authorities (including different departments within the local administration), beneficiaries/ users, NGOs, public agencies, the private sector and the civil society (citizens and inhabitants) has proven to be a key component in the design and implementation of efficient urban policies.

Every city partner in an URBACT network is required to set up an URBACT Local Group (ULG) that brings together all relevant stakeholders having a stake in the policy challenge addressed by the city.

The main objective of the ULG is to bring around the table the different interests at stake and different perspectives to frame problems and agree policy priorities, and design concrete solutions so as to address these problems in the most efficient way.

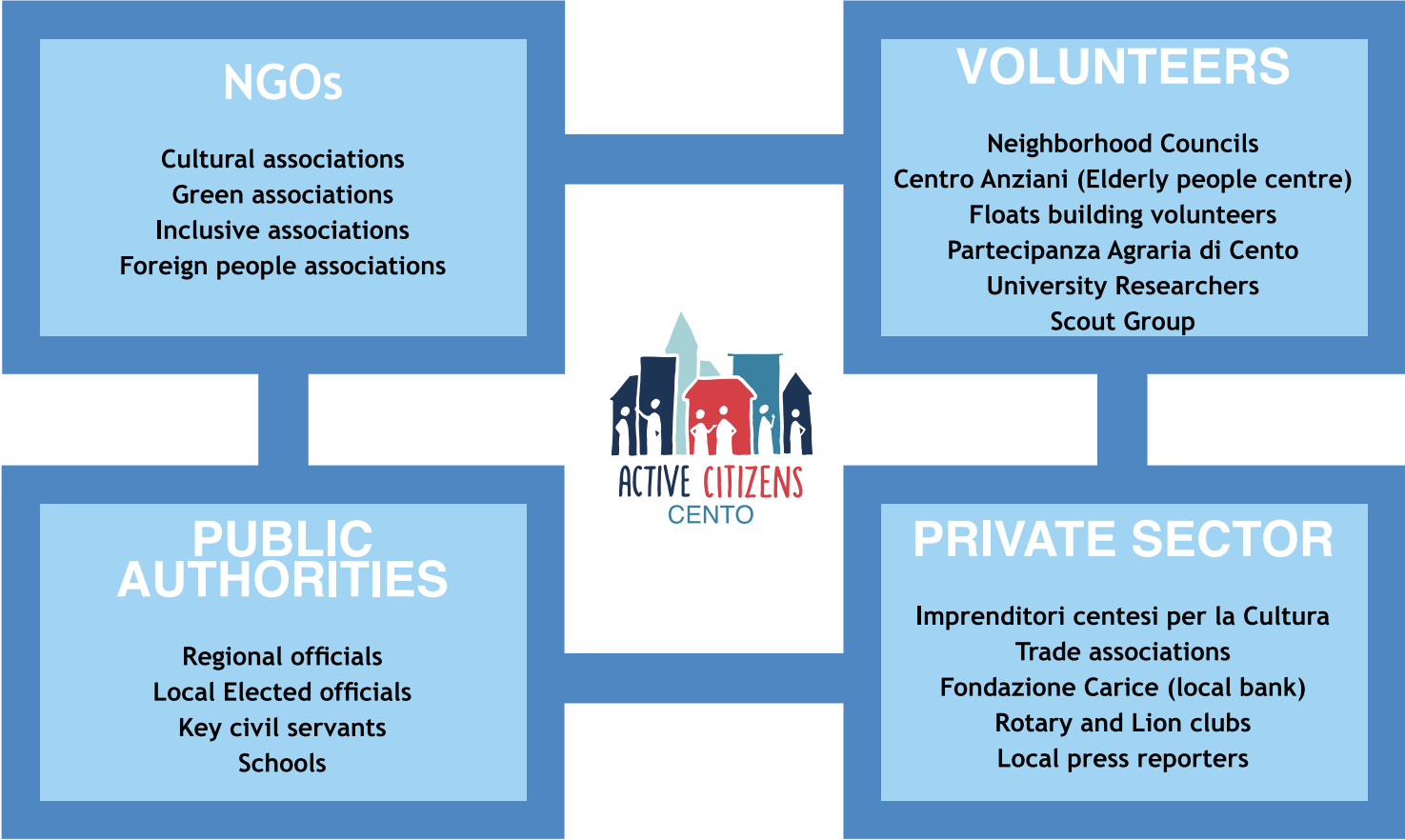
Each partner city involved in an URBACT network needs to set up what is called an URBACT Local Group (ULG).





Its composition is heterogeneous and include, usually: civil servants, elected officials, NGOs & associations, private sector (entrepreneurs, shop owners, etc.), academia (researchers, professors, etc.) and of course, citizens. Each ULG

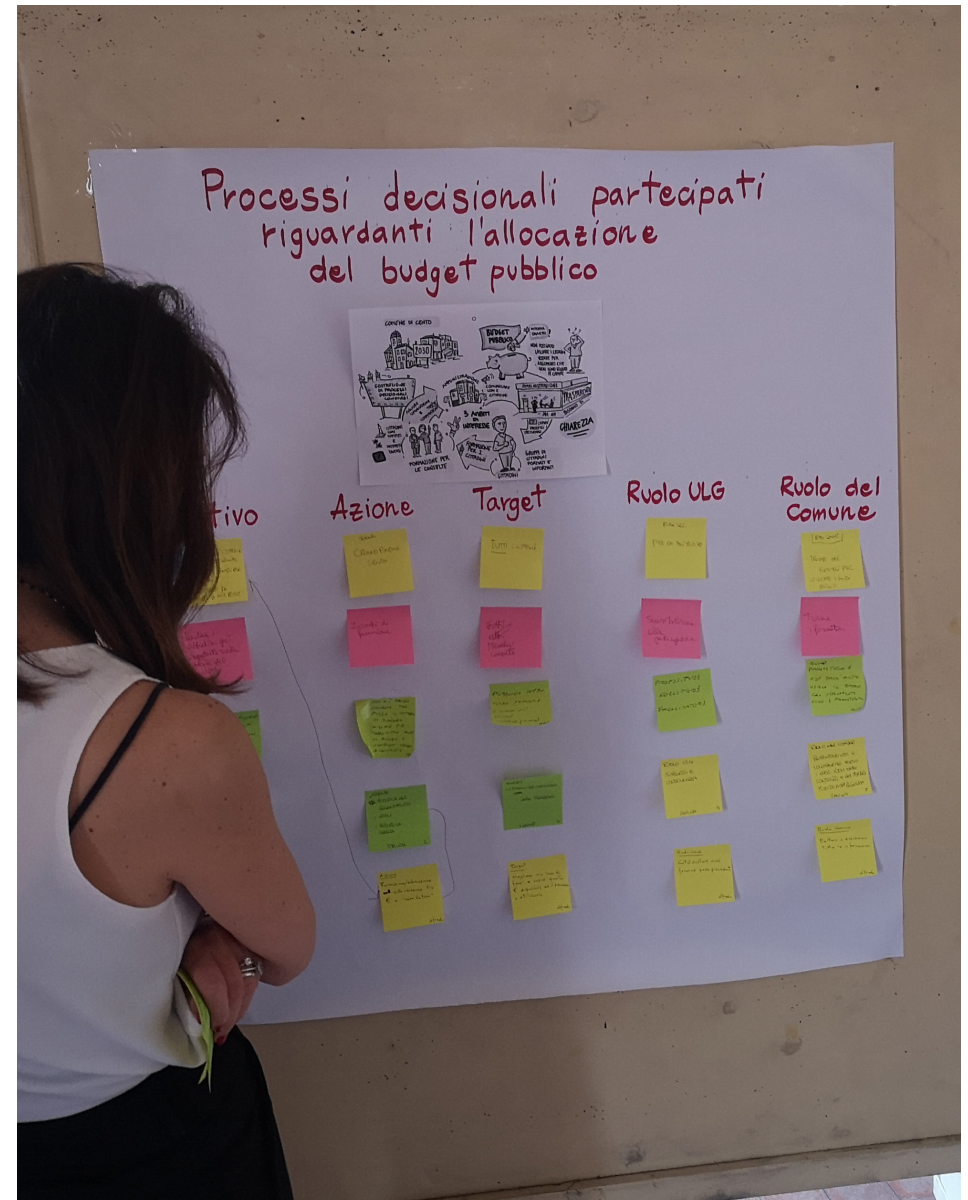
is composed in a unique way. It's up to each city to define who should be part of it based on the challenge they're trying to tackle. At the beginning some stakeholders were identified as possible partners in the project.



CENTO'S ULG

Not all the partnerships envisaged were activated and finally the city of Cento's ULG structured it self with the following people:

- **Vanina PICARIELLO**, at first member of neighborhood Council Cento-Penzale, then elected (Vice Mayor)
- **Silvia BIDOLI**, at first member of Don Zucchini association, then elected (Counselor in charge of Culture)
- **Matteo FORTINI**, member of the City Council in charge of digital innovation
- **Giacomo BALBONI**, **Federica SALVI** members of neighborhood Council Cento-Penzale
- **Flavio CORTESI**, **Federico GALLERANI**, members of Neighborhood Council Renazzo
- **Paola MOLINARI**, member of neighborhood Council Casumaro
- **Elisa FORTINI**, **Erik FORTINI** members of neighborhood Council Corporeno
- **Umberto AMOROSO**, European Project Service Municipality of Cento





- **Ingrid TUGNOLI**, Communication Office Municipality of Cento
- **Anelita TASSINARI**, Urbact Project Coordinator (Municipality of Cento)
- **Valentina REBECCHI**, Culture Department Municipality of Cento
- **Erika BERGAMINI**, Youth Service Municipality of Cento
- **Michele NOVI**, L'Alveare che dice sì (entrepreneur)
- **Francesco BALLATI**, Resistenza Terra (Green Association)



- **Alessandro MAZZINI**, NGO Strade (social inclusive association)
- **Tahir MAHMOOD**, Association of Pakistan Community
- **Alfredo TASSINARI**, active citizen
- **Antonio RONCAGLIA**, Cento Scouts Club
- **Luca DAL POZZO**, Raku (cultural association)
- **Mascia LENZI**, Open Group (Inclusive Association)
- **Giuseppe BARONI**, Libera (association in defense of legality)
- **Valeria TASSINARI**, teacher and president of "Amici

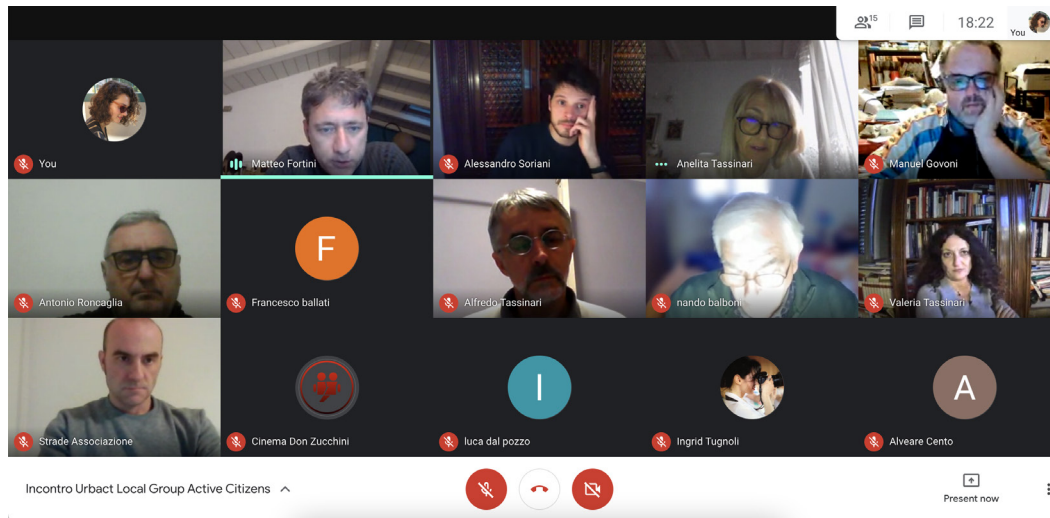
Giardino del Gigante” (cultural association)

- **Enrico TADDIA**, Don Giovanni Zanandrea Foundation
- **Oliviano TASSINARI**, Partecipanza Agraria di Cento (historical institution of collective lands)
- **Alessandro SORIANI**, university researcher - facilitator
- **Irena KRSTEVA**, **Cecilia PRESTI**, **Sofia GALLI**, Bangherang association - facilitators

During the building phase of the local group in Cento, we tried to reproduce an extensive citizen representation with a good balance of presences among associations (focused on culture, green, trade, social inclusiveness topics), schools, entrepreneurial world, ethnic minorities, elected officials and

civil servants. The first meeting was held with wide participation and lively expectations, then subsequently the group thinned out on the basis of a sort of natural selection: the conflicting points of view with the municipal administration then in charge and the not purely operational and concrete nature of the project prevailed in some participants who no longer showed up at the meetings.

Given the difficulties initially encountered in managing the most controversial positions of some people, we decided to identify some facilitators in order to guarantee a *super partes* group management. Subsequently, the most motivated people remained and the group's

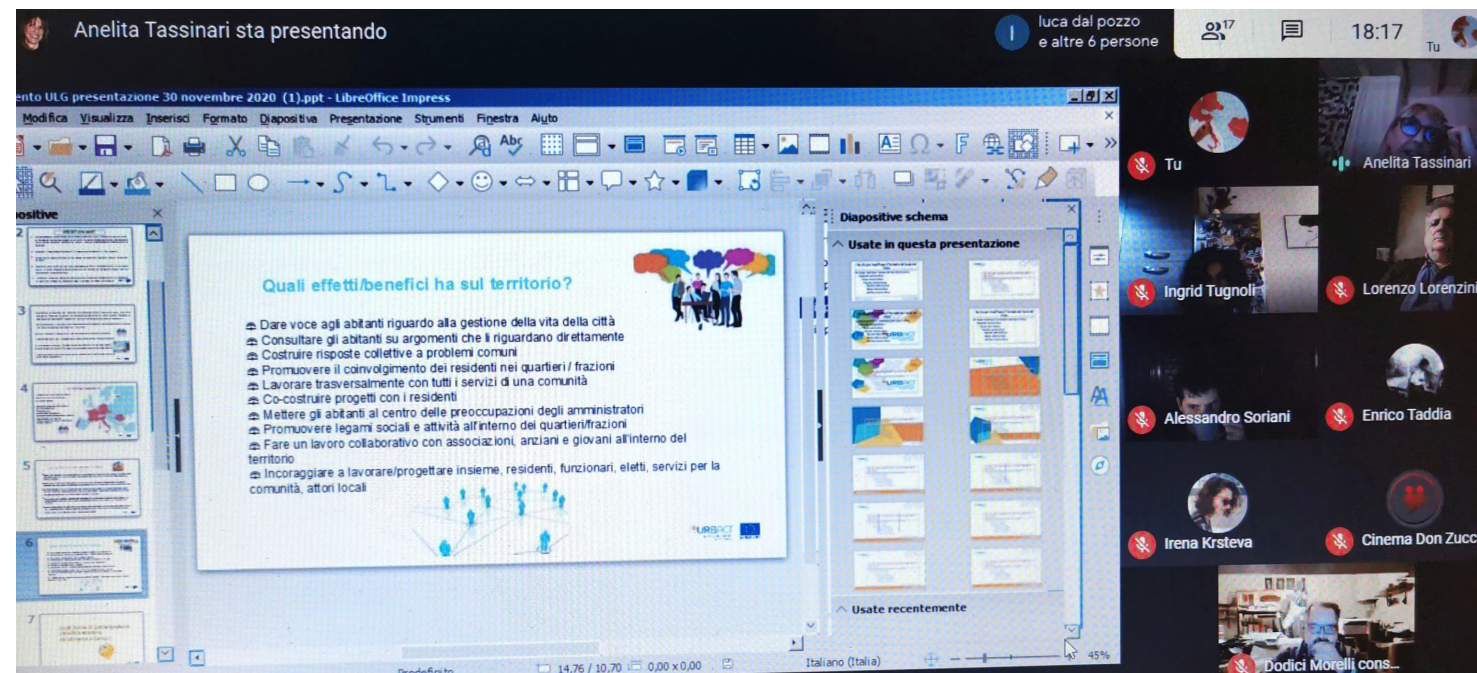




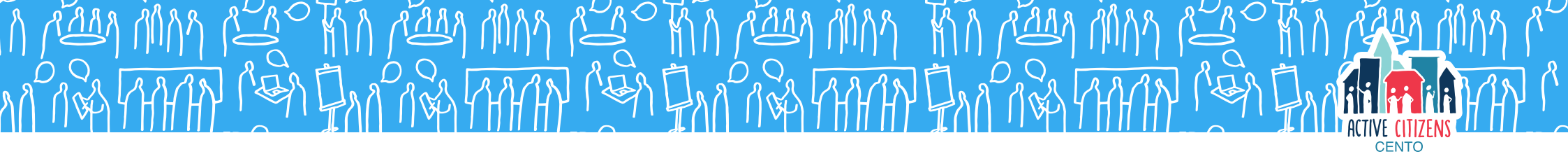
composition stabilized until the end of the project.

In particular, the presence was guaranteed by members of associations and NGOs and Neighborhood Councils, thus reflecting the social components that are most active in the municipal area.

Despite the fluid and dynamic nature of the group, there have been no defections of people or new entrants since then. Two members of the group who joined as representatives of Neighborhood councils and associations have been an exception because at the elections of 2021 they successfully candidate themselves. They were elected and one of them became Vice Mayor and the other one



Councillor in charge of Culture. Their presence, even if it was necessarily less frequent due to their many political commitments, was nevertheless of great help because they ensured a connection between the ULG and the new Administration, providing also with a valid support in the implementation of the Small Scale Actions, which were carried out with great participation of the ULG members as well.



Due to the pandemic situation the group has inevitably met with much less frequency for a long time. The Zoom meetings were not motivating enough and in this phase many decisions were taken without a real consultation of the ULG members, who anyway have always been informed about what was going on within the project.

Despite these moments of difficulty and slowdown, it is possible to affirm that the ULG members contributed with a constructive and collaborative spirit to the overall success of the project, enriching it with their human and professional background.

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4

THE ACTIVE CITIZENS' CHALLENGES

33

During the first six months of the network, the lead expert of the project went on field visits in all partner cities in order to build a state of the art as well as draw each city profile. The results were put together in a document called the Baseline study.

In Active Citizens, the baseline study identified 9 sub-challenges regarding participatory democracy:

1. Developing a culture of participation
2. Enlarging and diversifying active citizens
3. Co-creating solutions city & citizens together
4. Building trust
5. Developing participatory urban planning

6. Bridging the gap between elected representatives and citizens

7. Listening to citizens and asking their opinions

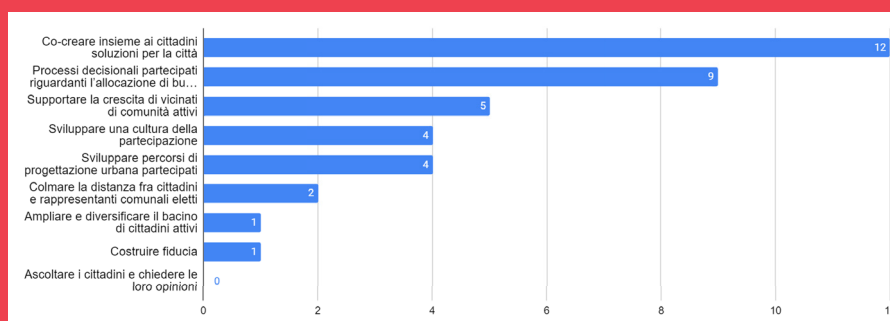
8. Supporting lively neighborhood

9. Co-deciding upon public budget allocation

The ULG was asked to identify and isolate, by means of a special online questionnaire, the challenges of greatest interest specific to the Cento area. The aim is precisely to reflect and work on these issues and develop working methodologies in the coming years responding to the needs and wishes of citizens in relation to the objectives identified by each city.

SURVEY RESULTS ON CHALLENGES IN CENTO

17 risposte





THE SURVEY AMONG THE GROUP'S MEMBERS BROUGHT
TO THE FORE THREE MAIN ISSUES CONCERNING OUR TERRITORY:

- 1 Co-creating solutions city
& citizens together**
 - *Lack of community involvement and public consultation*
 - *Need to find a contact office as a point of reference for the citizens participation*
 - *Need to simplify bureaucracy*

- 2 Supporting lively neighborhood**
 - *Low collaborative spirit and fragmented social groups*
 - *Need of more social cohesion*

- 3 Co-deciding upon public
budget allocation**
 - *Criticism and lack of transparency about the use of public money*
 - *Need to balance the employment of resources among the different neighborhoods*

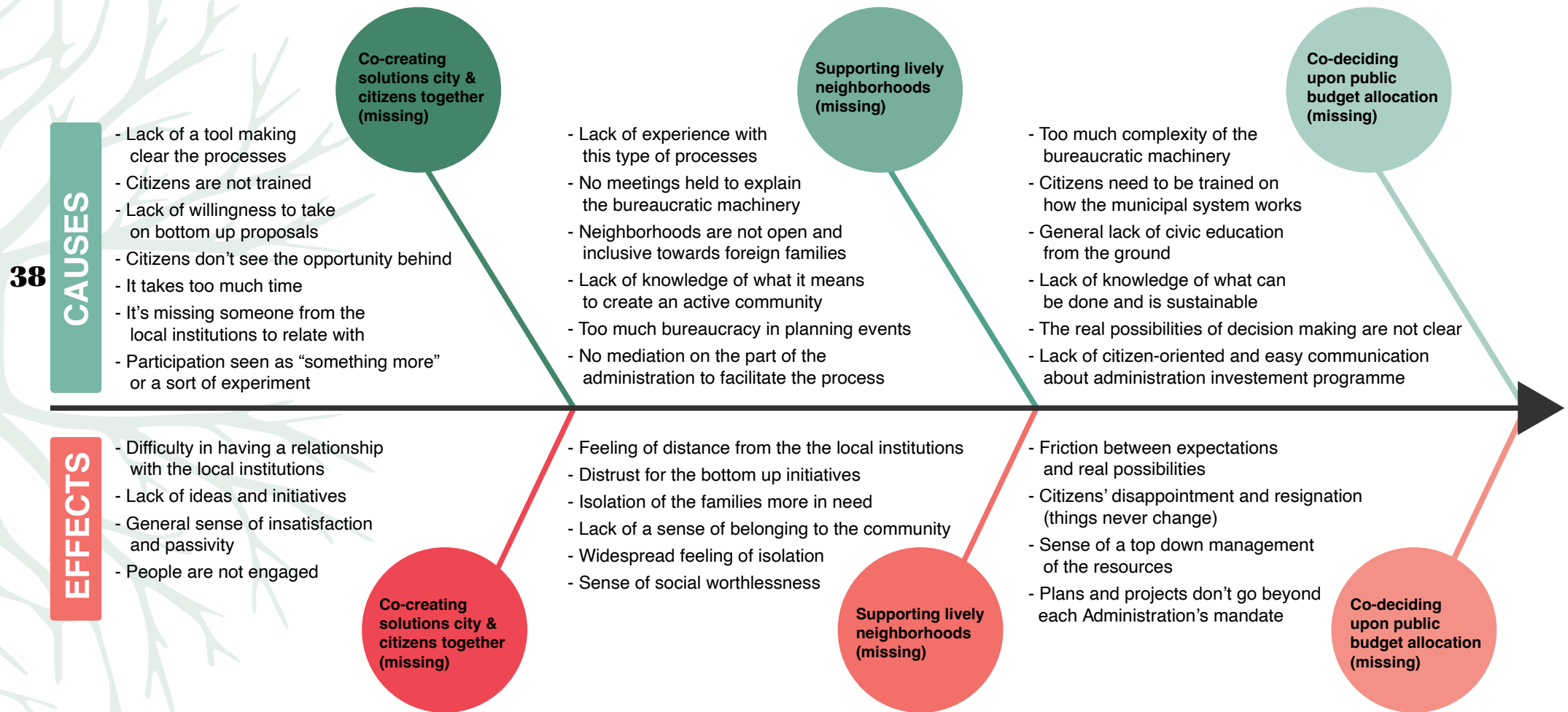
5

ANALYZING THE PROBLEMS

The Problem Tree

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After defining the challenges, the ULG then focused on the causes and effects, i.e. the social repercussions of a failure to achieve the three objectives, highlighting the existing criticalities in the area. The fruit of these reflections was then graphically represented through the “problem tree”.



6

VISIONING THE FUTURE

From Vision to Actions

39



challenges

problem trees

visions

final visuals

small scale actions

ACTIONS

A vision: a way to substantiate our goals

Most of life is filled with uncertainty. This is especially true of the future. But if you can hold onto a vision of what's yet to come, you can boost your chances at achieving your dreams and being successful. What is vision exactly? How does it help, and what does it mean to have a vision?

When you apply vision to the future, you can create a mental picture that can be used to direct your actions. Vision serves as a guide and can be used to provide a sense of purpose.

Challenges are inevitable. Vision provides you with something to look forward to and always work towards. **Having a vision places a purpose upon your goal-set-**

ting activities. Without an end goal or destination in mind, then you won't have a clear or defined path. Vision provides this.

(drawn from <https://www.uopeople.edu>)

Visioning the future

The analysis of the critical points in the area and the cause and effect relationships provided for an objective starting point from which to draw up a programme of change in the city-policy.

Before moving on to actual action, however, it was necessary to understand more precisely towards which objectives actions should be directed and what should be re-thought and re-developed.

It was therefore necessary to reflect and focus on how we wanted to improve Cento and delineate the ideal sit-



uation we would have liked to achieve.

The ULG met again to define the so-called “vision” of each challenge. Divided into subgroups, in virtual rooms, the group members were invited to reflect together on how they imagine Cento in ten years’ time in relation to each of the three identified themes. They were then asked to define the ideal vision of our city in 2030 and to discuss the problems to be solved and the paths to be taken to achieve this ambitious but not impossible goal.

The exchange within the subgroups was very constructive and full of suggestions to build together an increasingly participatory city, and the following is a summary of what emerged from the discussion:

Group 1: Co-creating solutions for the city

- The group reflects on two different aspects of the same challenge. On the one hand, the numerous bureaucratic steps that the public administration has to take in order to implement projects and initiatives, and

on the other, the citizens, who are not always inclined to take the initiative in proposing ideas and getting involved in planning.

- In order to bring these two subjects (administration and citizenship) together synergistically, the group developed the idea of a municipal administration specially structured with staff and offices dedicated to listening people. This place also becomes a point of dialogue and encounter among associations and subjects operating in various capacities in the area. Procedures are thus created able to survive the political shift and, despite the “heavy elephant”, they can proceed with broader projects.

- This structure must also encourage intersectoral work within the administration to respond in a choral and efficient manner to the needs and ideas of the citizen.

- The group also envisages a strong involvement of young citizens and a training work within schools to restore young people’s trust in institutions: young people thus find their role in participatory management and are aware of how to interact with the administration.



Group 2: Participatory decision-making processes concerning the allocation of public budgets

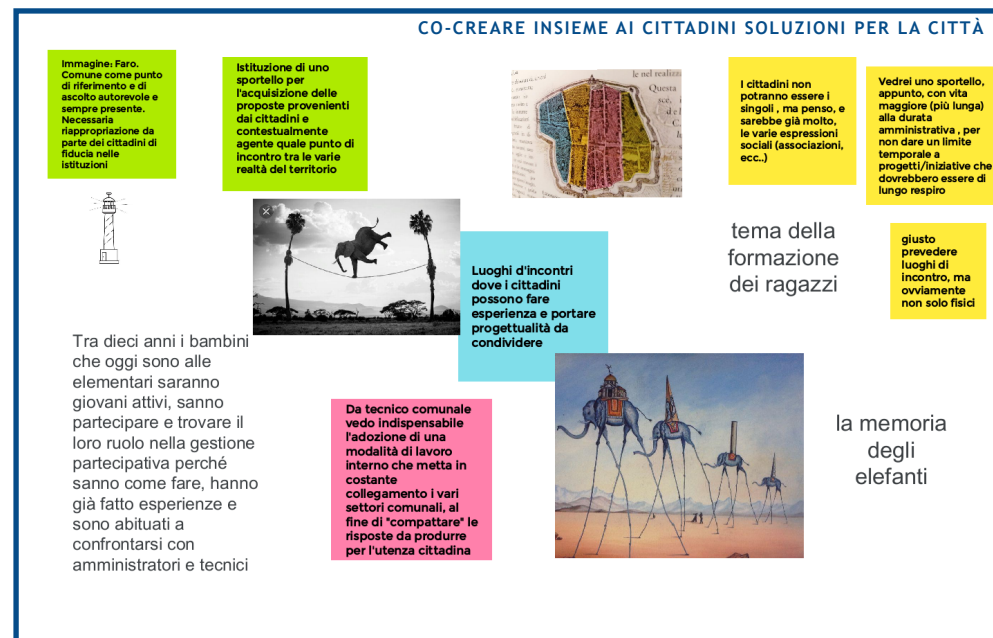
- The group elaborates the **idea of a triangle with information and training at its centre**. Training becomes the main means of communication between the public administration, individual citizens and councils regarding the budget. A specific training activity allows all those who benefit from it to get to know and delve with awareness into the complex structure of the public budget.
- The **neighborhood councils become a fundamental connection tool and a valuable vehicle for correct information**.
- The possibility of **creating subgroups of trained and specialized citizens**, each with their own specific interests, is also envisaged

Group 3: Supporting the growth of active community neighborhoods

- The **symbolic image** from which the group's work starts is a **mailbox**. An active neighborhood is a place where everyone feels part of a group and is free to express their ideas and needs.
- Through meetings at fixed intervals, the **neighborhood meets and chooses its representatives**, with referents also identified on the basis of age groups, who will mediate between the neighborhood and the administration.
- Through **targeted training courses**, the citizens of a neighborhood can become aware of their social role and their representatives can learn how to relate to the Public Administration.
- On its side, the administration will identify a **contact person or office responsible for communication with neighborhood groups**, so that the sharing of ideas and needs will be increasingly fluid and simplified.



BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY FOR THE VISIONING WITH ULG MEMBERS



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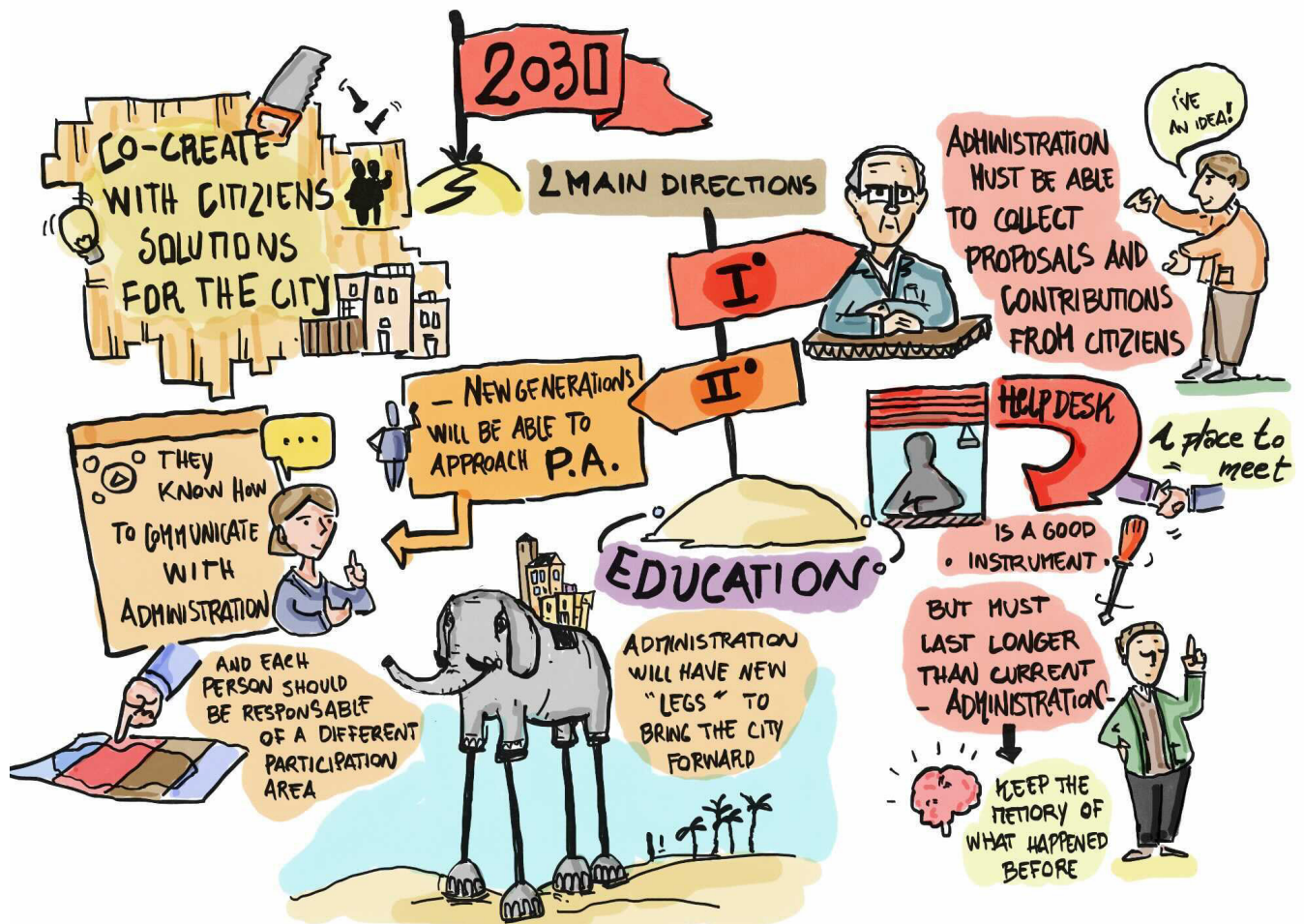
Our Visions: CENTO IN 2030

Based on these ideas, the Municipality of Cento has developed visions, whose key concepts have been illustrated in drawing boards.

Co-creating solutions city & citizens

In 2030, the Municipality of Cento has prepared and structured a Help Desk open to citizens that facilitates the creation of participatory paths and their development, allowing constant monitoring of the various operational phases outside and inside the municipal offices. The Help Desk is also a point of reference for citizens, an important place in which the citizens can compare ideas and create new projects. The desk has a

wider scope than the city's political elections, in order to guarantee a lasting and consolidated work tool that allows the involvement of citizens at all times without any sudden interruption. It is also important to remem-





ber the steps taken, keeping track of the projects carried out, thus allowing us not to start over each time but to guarantee a progressive and increasingly conscious development.

The municipal administration has become better trained and prepared to welcome and manage participatory courses, it has achieved a deeper awareness of the procedures and implementation phases and it has set up internal working procedures placing the different administrative services in a fluid and constant dialogue in order to facilitate the success of the proposed initiatives. The citizens of Cento, especially boys and girls, have a greater awareness of the role and work carried out by the municipal administration: this aspect allows them to interact constructively with the municipality to propose useful solutions to all citizens, to respond to the most urgent needs and offer new opportunities for action. An important role is therefore given to citizenship education, also involving the school in an active way to guarantee a training path that starts from

the first years of school.

Each citizen of Cento has the opportunity to take part in specifically structured working tables, each of them dedicated to a topic /theme, to which he/she can devote part of his free time to try to promote and defend what concerns him. This is the vision of an attentive and reactive City, ready to propose ideas and solutions concerning different areas and capable of modifying its way of acting by evolving over time according to the most urgent and heartfelt issues.

Co-deciding upon public budget

In 2030, decision-making processes regarding public budget allocation will be fully participatory. A free vote on the budget without any kind of support from the Public Administration is dangerous and potentially unsuccessful: for this reason, in 2030 there are trained groups of citizens who contribute to the budget decision through dialogue with the neighborhood Councils.



Public administration, neighborhood councils and citizens are involved in a close link that sees them engaged in training and self-training:

Training for members of the neighborhood councils to

also more clearness and legibility.

Supporting lively neighborhoods

In 2030, neighborhood members are able to easily com-



municate with each other and with the administration. Also thanks to the mediation of the local administration, the city has been structured in active neighborhoods in which everyone feels to be part of a group and is free to express his ideas and needs.

The image that ideally symbolizes this interaction is a postbox located in each neighborhood to gather the requests and the proposals which every citizen would like to share with all the other neighborhood's members.

By means of technology, together with tools accessible even to those who do not have access to technological instruments, citizens are in constant dialogue. Through meetings set with fixed deadlines, the neighborhood meets and chooses its representatives, discuss-



es the needs and formulates proposals based on what has emerged through the means of communication identified.



The neighborhood representatives take care of mediating the confrontation within their own group and the relationship between their neighborhood and the administration. Through training, representatives know how to relate to the PA: who to refer to, what are the internal processes of the administration based on the topic, etc. On its side, the institution has identified a contact person and an office in charge of communicat-

ing with neighborhood groups, so that the sharing of ideas and needs is fluid and simple and the requests / proposals never go unanswered.

In order to promote and facilitate the comprehension and the public knowledge of the visions, some ULG members recorded videos in which they explained in words the concepts conveyed by the illustrations produced.

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7

A LEARNING JOURNEY

About Action
Planning Networks

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URBACT supports European cities to develop sustainable integrated responses to the pressing challenges they face today. It offers them a unique opportunity to learn from other peers in Europe in order to improve the way cities are managed.

URBACT networks foster the exchange of experience and good practice across cities, building urban stakeholders' capacity to develop efficient solutions. One could say that URBACT is a European incubator for sustainable integrated urban development enabling cities to benefit from the tried and tested URBACT Method.

The main objective of Action Planning Networks is to bring together between 7 and 10 cities across Europe to exchange their experience in a particular thematic urban development challenge (in our case Participatory democracy) and to share their ideas about possible solutions, during a period of over 2 years.

The Phase 1 (from late June 2019 to February 2020) focused on the development of baseline studies, city pro-

files and the production of the Application Form for Phase 2.

Once approved for Phase 2, the network then focuses on achieving 2 key results, co-creating their Integrated Action Plan together with their Urbact local group (ULG) at the same time as experimenting Small Scale Actions (SSA).

The whole Action Planning Network journey was therefore both an occasion for transnational exchange and learning in between different European cities at the same time as an occasion to explore, experiment and co-create an adhoc city strategy together with local stakeholders and citizens.

During that long and adventurous journey, Active Citizens' partner cities, despite the pandemic situation, traveled around Europe several times, hosted the other cities in their own, experimented new ways of engaging citizens (Small Scale Actions) and built, locally, desir-



able visions of the future as well as co-created a concrete, ambitious, yet credible, action plan to implement greater participatory democracy locally.

The Active Citizens' network:

AGEN (France) - Lead partner

SAINT QUENTIN (France)

CENTO (Italy)

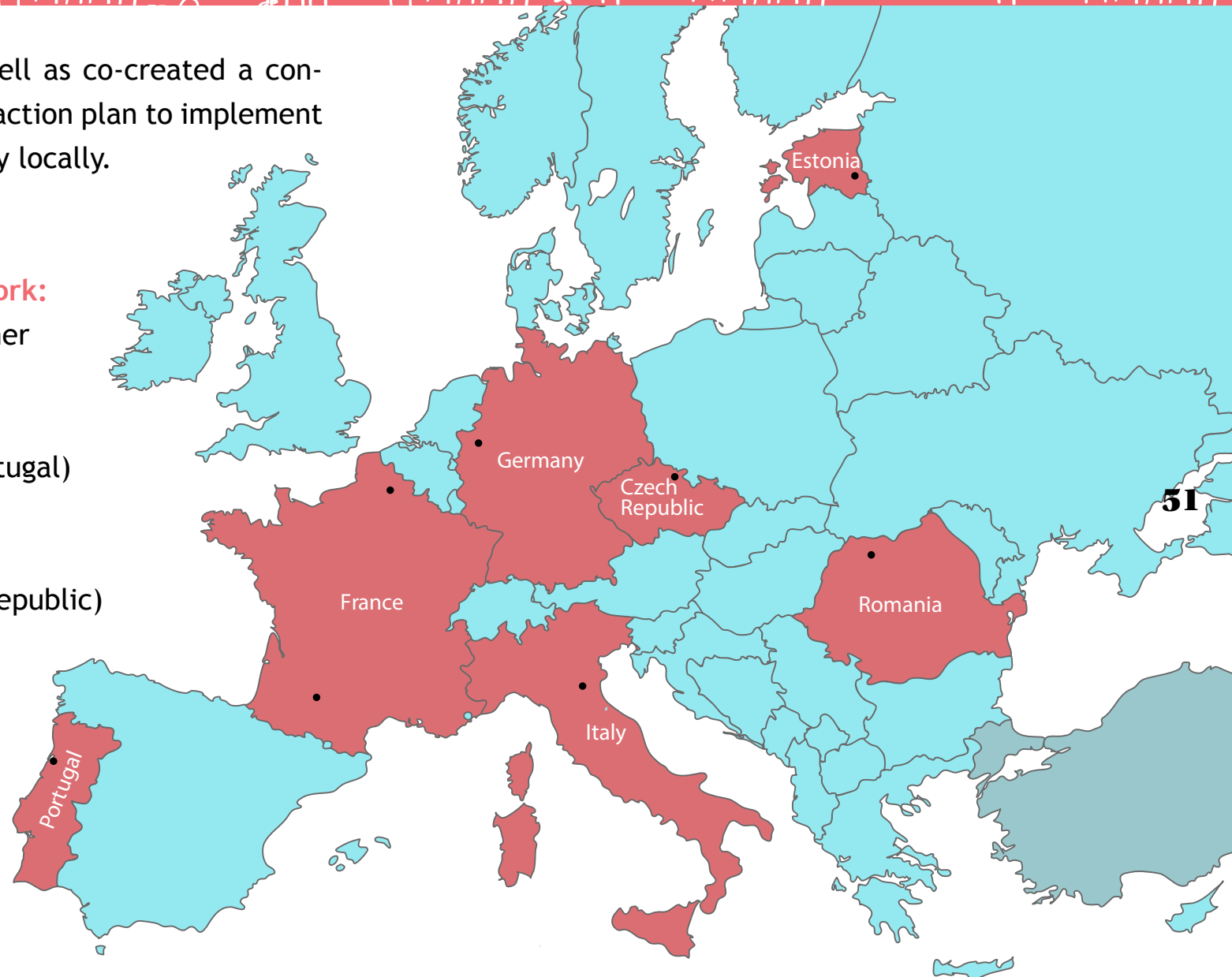
SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA (Portugal)

DINSLAKEN (Germany)

TARTU VALD (Estonia)

HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ (Czech Republic)

BISTRITA (Romania)





Remembering the TNM in Cento / 5-6 February 2020



8

THE ROAD MAP

Describing the process towards
the elaboration of the
IAP - Integrated Action Plan

53

What is the IAP Roadmap?

The first milestone for the Action Planning Networks is the production of an IAP Roadmap by each network partner. This is essentially a **WORK PLAN** mapping out how each partner will arrive at the end goal of having an Integrated Action Plan which is ready to be implemented. The Roadmap should show a step by step process, linking the transnational exchange and learning with the work of

the URBACT Local Group (ULG) to show how the city will arrive at the finish line.

The IAP Roadmap is a **PLANNING TOOL** which should be reviewed and updated according to an agreed schedule (this can be after each transnational meeting or ULG). It should include individual city milestones so that the network partners can monitor and report progress.

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INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN ROADMAP CENTO



CHALLENGES (PROBLEM ANALYSIS)

WHAT? The ULG of Cento selected the following challenges:

- Co-creating solutions city & citizens together
- Supporting lively neighbourhood
- Co-deciding upon public budget allocation

WHEN? November-December 2020

HOW? Context & problem analysis (problem tree) + stakeholder mapping

WHY? Making sure there is a collective understanding of the challenges and that those challenges are real (crucial/relevant) at city level.

Cross analysis between cities

IAP ROADMAP

WHAT? Co-draft your IAP roadmap with your ULG. "Do we agree that this will be the path we will follow in order to co-create our IAP?"

WHEN? December 2020

HOW? IAP roadmap template + comparison with other cities

WHY? Making sure the path (roadmap) to follow in order to create the final IAP is clear for everyone.

Comparison of IAP roadmap with the other cities

EXPERIMENTING (TRY OUT) / SSA

WHAT? Could we experiment the most promising ideas in order to check whether they are relevant, feasible, worth developing? Can they really help solve our problems?

WHEN? April-September 2021

HOW? Small Scale Actions (on the ground experimentations)

WHY? Trying out ideas to check whether they are Proof of Concepts or not, evaluating their effects on our problems.

Peer to peer learning from other cities' SSAs

GENERATING IDEAS

WHAT? What could we do to achieve our objectives, to make our vision a reality? What can we learn from our peers? What inspiring practices could we transfer to our local context? What could we invent?

WHEN? March-April 2021

HOW? Idea generation and SSA reflections.

WHY? Developing as many ideas as possible in order to respond to the objectives.

What are the ideas in the other cities?

VISIONNING & OBJECTIVES

WHAT? What do you wish to achieve? What would the future situation look like once the challenges are solved? What are our objectives?

WHEN? January-February 2021

HOW? Vision building + objectives' description

WHY? Making sure we have a clear idea of what we would like to achieve, in the end, through our IAP + defining clear and tangible objectives.



MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS October 2021

REFINE/ADJUST/FINETUNE

WHAT? What do we need to adjust, refine, finetune? What should we correct to increase efficiency, impact, quality? What should we improve or re-develop, re-think?

WHEN? December 2021 – April 2022

HOW? Small Scale Actions (on the ground experimentations)

WHY? Trying out ideas to check whether they are Proof of Concepts or not, evaluating their effects on our problems.

What are the learnings and adjustments in the other cities?

DRAFTING IAP

WHAT? Let's draft our Integrated Action Plan. What should we include into it? How does it integrate in the city policies (and beyond)? Is it realistic yet ambitious enough?

WHEN? December 2021-February 2022

HOW? IAP drafting

WHY? From all the things we've learn, what is feasible, reachable, meaningful in order to respond efficiently to our initial challenges. What are the actions we will need to put in place?

Reviewing and comparing with the other partner cities

FINALIZING IAP

WHAT? Is our IAP robust? Is our strategy bold yet implementable? Is it well integrated within the local politics and policies + regional and/or national ones?

WHEN? February-April 2022

HOW? Comparing local IAP with other cities' IAP, sharing the IAP locally for collective approval & support, securing political support

WHY? Are we sure our IAP is fine? Do we believe in it? Do we think it's both promising in terms of impact as well as reachable/feasible?



INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN (IAP)

SPREAD/COMMUNICATE

WHAT? Let's inform the world about our IAP. Publicise, spread, share your IAP.

WHEN? June-July 2022

HOW? Local/regional/national press + social networks, locals news, etc.

WHY? Make sure, that at city level, people know about your IAP, about your wish to officially develop and implement participatory democracy.



9

THE SMALL SCALE ACTIONS

The on the ground experimentations

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WHAT IS A SMALL SCALE ACTION?

A Small Scale Action is an experimentation. It is an idea or a concept, perhaps already tried in another city, which can be tested to check the relevance, feasibility and added value of its implementation in different local contexts.

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The Small Scale Actions are limited in time, scale and space and by their nature have the right to fail. Cities will be able to learn from these tests, measure the results and either adapt, upscale or reject actions to be included in the Integrated Action Plan based on this experience.

A Small Scale Action is an experiment aiming at being a Proof of Concept. A **Proof of Concept** is an evidence, typically deriving from an experiment which demonstrates that an idea/concept is relevant, feasible and meaningful.

The principle is to ‘try out’ an idea in order to see if ‘it makes sense and eventually works’. In Active Citizens, the Small Scale Actions allowed us to try out some concepts in order to see the effects they produced but also potentially pre-identify potential future actions to be integrated in the IAP.

Cento developed 5 Small Scale Actions based on the following experiential situations (interwoven along the different actions):

- Living a co-planning experience leading to a concrete and measurable result
- Actively involving decision-makers in the implementation of the SSAs
- Experimenting with the training issue
- Involving young people to raise their awareness of participation
- Creating contexts of dialogue and confrontation to strengthen trust in institutions



SMALL SCALE ACTION N. 1 LET'S TAKE ROOT FOR THE FUTURE

Challenge: Co-creating solutions for the city

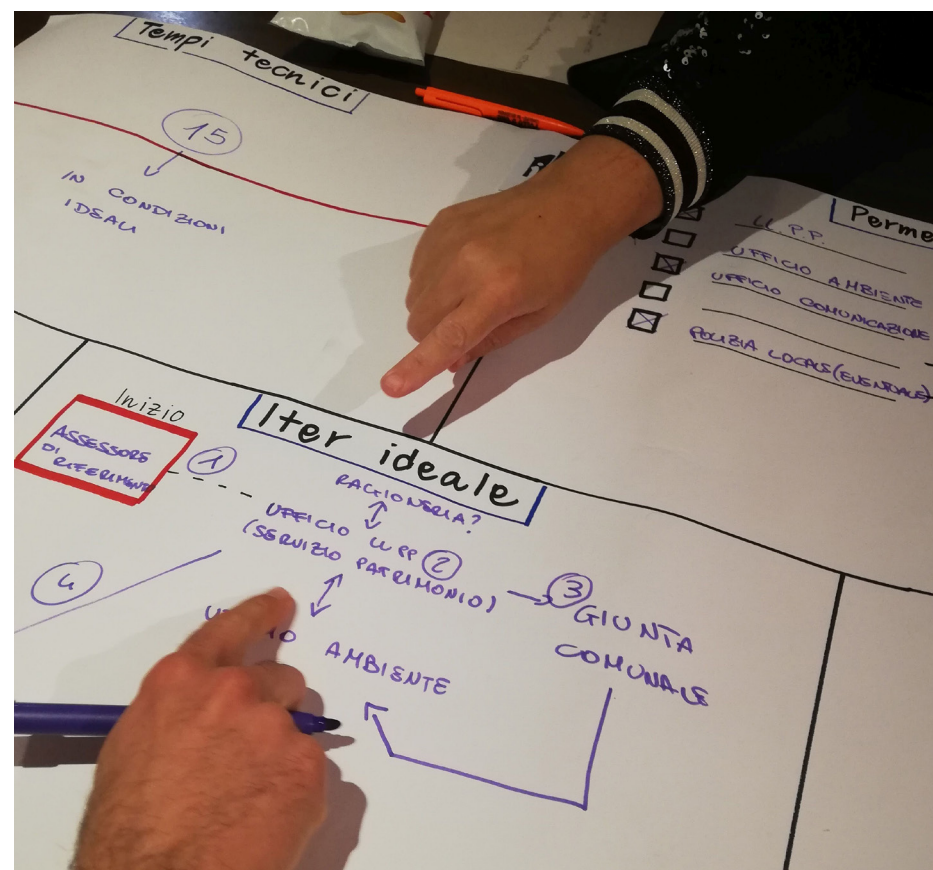
This action is an experimentation on a way of enhancing the neighbourhood councils' role in the process of co-planning by giving life to a project discussed during the meetings with ULG.

An idea suggested by a member of the association "Resistenza Terra" during an ULG meeting : « planting trees in spaces of the territory to be identified » becomes the testing ground to find ways of connecting different actors in the planning phase and in the following development of the action, where the neighbourhood councils are asked to play a cohesive key rôle.

People involved in the co-planning process:

- The Councilor in charge of Environmental policies
- 2 technicians of the Environment Service
- 1 technician of the Public Works Office

- Civil servants (from Culture, Communication and European Projects Departementes)
- Members of the Neighborhood Councils
- The President and the general secretary of the Partecipanza Agraria





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Expected results

The expected result of this Small Scale Action is to experiment and, if possible, formalize a process of co-planning among the Municipality of Cento, The Associations from the territory and the members of the neighbourhood councils. The methodology of this SSA is the construction of a round table (working group) meeting at least 2-3 times to coordinate the tree planting action. The goal is to map the place where the trees will be planted, to formalize the ideal process of collaboration and communication among different actors and finally to proceed with the planting action with the concrete help of the citizens.

Implementation of the action

Methodology: In the same room all the actors involved in the planting project worked together for the same goal. Three meetings scheduled.

First meeting

Two working groups were created operating simultaneously.

- **First group:** the citizens (members of the neighborhood councils, members of Association Resistenza Terra, president and general secretary of Partecipanza Agraria (ancient institution that manages and distrib-



utes lands every twenty years among the descendants of the first families who inhabited the territory in the past.) who had to identify the areas in which it was appropriate to plant the trees;

- **Second group:** technical board (elected official and civil servants) having the task to reflect on the more agile bureaucratic process to offer the citizen for the concrete realization of the project.

Second meeting

The first group indicated and submitted to the evaluation of the technical board the identified spaces for

planting the plants. The citizens group was asked to agree on which area they should choose among the different ones. They had to evaluate together on which parameters to base this choice. In this case it was necessary for them to overcome any “subjectivism” and to find the solution for a more collective good.

Third meeting.

Final defining of the planting locations and date, with a mandate for the citizens group to find volunteers for the grounding.



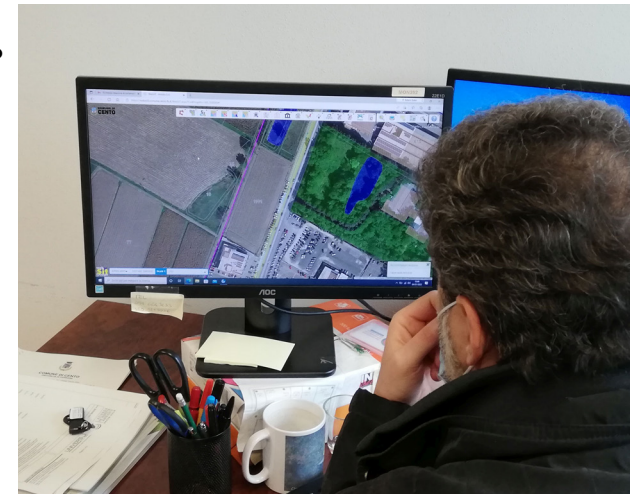
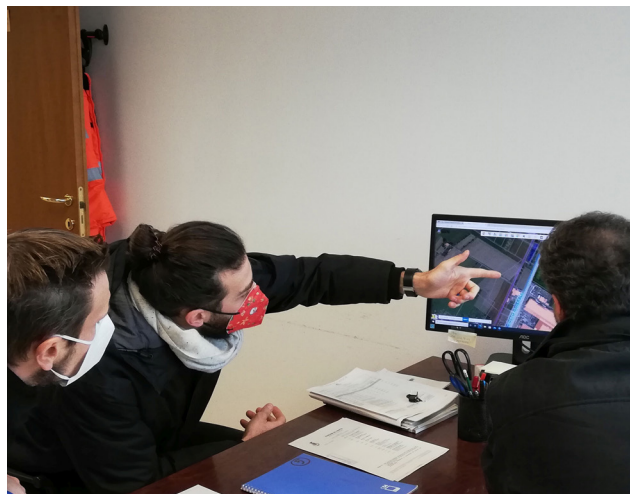
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Some quotes from people who took part in the Small Scale Action

“Even if there may be easier paths to follow, it is important to understand how to involve each partner collaborating: municipality, associations, councils and citizenship, even this could mean to undertake the most difficult solution. Only in this way will we be able to understand if the path works and can be repeated.”

“It is nice to be able to refer to a sort of database with the places chosen by each neighbourhood council, it will be important to be able to consult it in the future to organize new similar actions.”



Outcome:

- The participants that worked on this action collaborated to define the ideal spaces to plant, starting from maps and municipal spaces that are free and available.
- Two locations for planting were decided together: two sections of the cycle path along Ferrarese road and a place in the Park in Bondenese Road, in the fraction of Casumaro.
- The most suitable species for the chosen locations were then defined, starting from the plants available within the regional nurseries.

COMUNE DI CENTO	
PATTO DI COLLABORAZIONE GENERALE	
PER PIANTUMAZIONE ALBERI IN ALCUNE AREE POSTE NEL	
COMUNE DI CENTO	
Reg. <i>cfr.file SEGNATURA.XML</i>	
del <i>cfr.file SEGNATURA.XML</i>	
In Cento il giorno 25 (venticinque) del mese di febbraio dell'anno 2022 tra il	
COMUNE DI CENTO, in persona del Dirigente del Settore Lavori Pubblici,	
Arch. Beatrice Contri, con sede legale in Cento (FE), via Marcello Provenzali,	
15, P.IVA 00152130381, C.F. 81000520387, che agisce in nome, per conto	
e nell'interesse del Comune di Cento che rappresenta in esecuzione della	
Deliberazione di Giunta Comunale n. 31 del 17/02/2022	

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On spot visits were done with the technicians from the Municipality

- A Collaboration agreement between the Municipality of Cento and the association “Resistenza Terra” was drafted and then approved by the Municipal Council. The document could be an example and also be repeated for another occasions of collaboration between citizens and the municipality administration in the green topics.







Sabato 19 Marzo 2022

METTIAMO RADICI PER IL FUTURO

Piantumazione di 70 nuove piante per la Città di Cento

Ore 15:00 - Cento, Via Ferrarese
(ritrovo altezza Credem Banca)

Ore 16:00 - Casumaro, Parco Via Bondenese

Vuoi dare una mano? Porta con te guanti, una vanga e una bottiglia di plastica

Per info: tassinari.aecomune.cento.fe.it






Azione realizzata grazie alla collaborazione tra Comune di Cento, Consulte Civiche, Resistenza Terra e Partecipanza Agraria all'interno del progetto URBACT-Active Citizens

- The planting event happened on **19th of March 2022** where the participants on this SSA, together with the citizens, grounded 70 plants on the chosen locations.

A video was created as a concluding step of the experience, illustrating the actions and workshops organised in order to arrive to the final outcome: planting of the trees. https://fb.watch/cymYAR_HBO



Mettiamo radici per il futuro! 🌱 Ecco il video che riassume il percorso partecipato tra Comune, Associazioni e Consulte Civiche, che ha portato...



Mettiamo radici per il futuro! 🌱 Ecco il video che riassume il percorso partecipato tra Comune, Associazioni e Consulte Civiche, che ha portato...



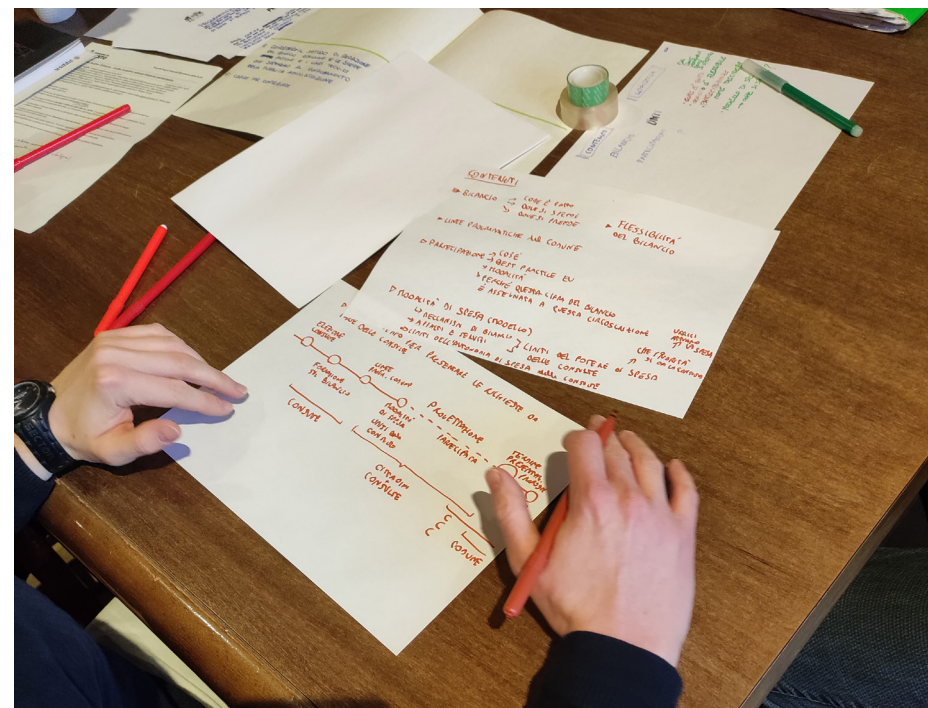
SMALL SCALE ACTION N. 2 MUNICIPAL BUDGET? WHAT'S THAT?

Challenge: Co-deciding upon public budget allocation

Description

Two workshops were held with key relevant stakeholders in order to co-design a training course on two main topics: co-deciding upon public budget allocations and active participation.

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The workshops had a twofold aim:

- it was a field of experimentation where participants had to identify the priorities to be achieved, the targets, the main needs and the most appropriate methods for the training;
- at the same time it was a place where critical issues on participatory budget are focused and investigated by different stakeholders.



People involved in the co-planning project:

- The Councilor in charge of Municipal budget
- A member of the City Council
- Technicians (Civil Servants)
- Members of the Neighborhood Councils
- Members of Associations
- Free Active citizens

Expected outcomes: the expected result of this Small Scale Action has been to create a pilot training program



addressed to the actors involved in the topic of co-deciding upon public budget allocation and active participation.

The aim was to bring together all relevant stakeholders and to identify their needs for gaining knowledge on this topic, choosing at the same time the approach and the methodologies to be used during the training.



Implementation of the action

Methodology: working moments in small groups to collect ideas (in the form of brainstorming) on logistical and content aspects of the training/pilot course.

Two meetings were organised in order to elaborate the contents of the pilot course; working in small groups, using non-formal education methodologies and debriefings in plenary.

First meeting

In the first part of the meeting through an interactive presentation, built with Mentimeter, the participants were doing a self-assessment of their knowledge in terms of public budget, participation and participatory budget. The second part of the meeting was dedicated to identify the needs in terms of training and to co-design future training courses about the public budget allocations and the participatory budget.

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Second meeting

During this second meeting the Councilor in charge of the Municipal budget was attending, making a presentation about the public budget. Afterwards the participants, divided into small groups, had to imagine training hypotheses on participatory budgeting. The groups were asked to identify the targets of the meetings, the contents and any logistical information.



The final output was an experimental training proposal jointly planned by the groups: *two “video pills”*, one on the public budget allocations and one on the participation ladder and an *experimental training session* (open to citizens), focusing on the public budget allocations and participatory budget.



The training program was therefore carried out as follows:

1. Mini Webinar - **UNDERSTANDING THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET** - The budget, what it is, how it works, programming documents, balance sheet
2. Mini Webinar - **PARTICIPATION** - The ladder of participation: what it is and how to read it; participatory budget.
3. Training session open to citizens
The public budget: getting to know it better in order to know how to interpret it by Carlotta Gaiani, Coun-

cilor in charge of the Municipal Budget.

Examples and applications of participatory budget, by KIEZ AGENCY expert in participatory processes.

Some quotes from people who took part in the co-planning phase:

"We are here to test this procedure and understand how the neighborhood councils can support similar actions in future!"

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“Participation costs lots of effort and a lot of time. But it’s worth it. Every minute.”

“I didn’t know about the Ladder of Participation... very very interesting!”

“Communication and training in participatory processes is the key. We should definitely put more effort in it”

Outcome of the training session (2 hours):

21 people attending: free citizens, members of neighborhood councils, members of associations and civil servants.

Contents:

- structure and functioning of the municipal budget and reporting of some practical examples
- Presentation of the participatory budget tool, story and adaptation to some Italian realities: case studies of Milan, Grottammare, Bologna, Anzola dell’Emilia and Zola Predosa
- Interactive exchange with the audience in developing some themes: why to apply it, how to make it work and the appreciation for the instrument.

The meeting ends with a **brief evaluation of the evening** (by means of Mentimeter), the results are reported below:

1. How interesting was the meeting (from 1 to 5) - average grade: 5
2. How much do you feel you have learned new things (1 to 5) - average grade: 4.6
3. How much has the organization been adequate (from 1 to 5) - average grade: 4.1
4. Would you attend other meetings of this kind? (Yes or no) - Unanimous vote: yes
5. Topics that could be interesting to explore in future meetings:

71





- practical methodology of the participatory budget
- culture, environment
- young people and participation
- viability - training

6. Leave a thought on today's meeting

"I see a possibility of change"

"It is useful to know that realities close to ours have a participatory budget!"

"This training session has been useful and pleasant. Hope there will be a following thought about active participation by the public administration"

"I have a feeling of being part of a community".

72





SMALL SCALE ACTION N. 3

THE GIANT'S GARDEN IS OURS

Challenges: **Supporting lively neighborhood**
Co-creating solutions for the city

Description

A day dedicated to active participation co-projected by the Municipality of Cento and some local associations. The event has been located in a public park, the “Giardino del Gigante” (Giant’s Garden) which in recent

time has lost in the citizens’ perception its function as a safe place of aggregation, having been repeatedly vandalised and neglected by people. The park, although could be a wonderful place of art and contemplation with its mosaic sculptures in the shape of animals and natural elements, needs to be regenerated and enhanced with new ideas. Above all, it is necessary to rebuild the neighbourhood inhabitants’ sense of belonging to this place and to let them rediscover the potentialities of the site.

73



The SSA has been therefore a response to the repeated acts of vandalism and negligence against the park and its works, and an occasion to listen to citizens and receive from them proposals and suggestions to enliven the garden and make it a safe and pleasant place to live fully. In order to attract as many people as possible to the Garden that day, some associations were involved in co-designing some animation activities.



IL GIARDINO DEL GIGANTE È NOSTRO
Giornata di attività e laboratori

Ore 15:00

- Laboratorio creativo Cartoline del Giardino del Gigante per bambini e adulti a cura dell'Associazione Amici del Giardino del Gigante
- Laboratorio di costruzione Le meridiane del gigante a cura dell'Associazione Astrofili Centesi
- Letture e laboratorio La carovana dei pacifici a cura dell'Associazione Tarari Tararera
- Esibizioni musicali degli allievi della scuola di musica Fra Le Quinte possibilità di provare gli strumenti musicali
- Sculture di palloncini per tutti a cura del gruppo AVIS Cento
- Mostra Gli elementi fondamentali e set fotografico a cura del FotoClub Il Guercino di Cento

Ore 16:30

- Laboratorio musicale Co-Musicando... Musica in famiglia! per bambini 0-3 anni insieme ad accompagnatori a cura di Fra Le Quinte

Ore 18.00

- Laboratorio musicale FaRe la MuSica ed esplorazione strumentale per bambini 4-6 anni

Dalle 10.30 alle 13.30 e dalle 15.00 alle 19.00

- stand per raccogliere idee su attività da realizzare all'interno del Giardino del Gigante
- raccolta adesioni per la creazione di un comitato di cittadini attivi per il Giardino del Gigante

Sabato 30 Aprile 2022
presso il Giardino del Gigante a Cento (FE)

Azione realizzata all'interno del progetto europeo URBACT-Active Citizens
Per info: tassinari.a@comune.cento.fe.it

Logos: URBACT, European Union, Comune di Cento, ACTIVE CITIZENS, Associazione Amici del Giardino del Gigante, FotoClub Il Guercino di Cento, AVIS Cento, FRA LE QUINTE, FARe la MuSica, il Giardino del Gigante, AVIS Cento.



il Giardino del Gigante

People involved in co-planning and promoting the event:

- Councilor in charge of Culture
- Councilor in charge of Associationism
- Civil Servants
- Six local Associations (Fra le Quinte, Tarari Tararera, Amici del Giardino del Gigante, Avis100, Astrofili centesi, Fotoclub Il Guercino)

Expected results

With this Small Scale Action we expected:

- to raise citizens' interest towards the park and encourage them in building a care committee for the Giardino del Gigante.
- to collect ideas and proposals from the citizens for the re-thinking and re-development of the park



- to gain active participation in the workshops organised by the local associations, making people experience a positive dimension of the site

Hopefully long term results are to put in action the suggestions received from citizens, to have an active citizens committee guarding the park and taking care of it, thus reducing the vandalism phenomenon.



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Implementation of the action:

Methodology: participatory event organized by the Municipality of Cento and local associations

- Various meetings were held for the preparation of the event and the definition of the objectives to be achieved
- Different associations were invited by e-mail to take part into the organization of the event proposing some activities for the citizens
- 6 associations from the territory expressed their interest to participate and organize workshops on different topics and for different target groups

Outcome

On Saturday 30th April 2022 the event took place.

Under a gazebo the Municipality of Cento's team collected ideas from the citizens for the improvement of the Garden. Five possible projects were subjected to



a vote and people were also invited to write their free suggestions on dedicated posters.

Citizens, filling out a form or using a special QR code, could declare their availability to enter the new citizens care committee for the Garden.

Meanwhile the six associations entertained citizens with performances and free creative labs on music, art, literature, photography, drawing and astronomy

- Five proposals from the Municipality have been voted as follows:

1. Kiosk for parties or family activities: 31
2. Annual community-sponsored cultural events calendar: 43
3. Gardening area: 22
4. Equipped area with sport facilities: 20
5. Sport activities calendar throughout the year: 9

- 22 people have given their availability to found the

citizens care committee for the Garden (update 05/05/22 - The QR codes are still hanging from the trees there and the membership campaign is still on going!)

- A remarkable number of suggestions arrived from the citizens to make the Garden safer and livable
- People in general have experienced the park in a lively and joyful way
- An idea of founding an associations partnership for the animation of the Garden throughout the year came out.

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SMALL SCALE ACTION N. 4 MR MAYOR, I WANNA KNOW...

Challenges:

- Bridging the gap between citizens and elected officials
- Get younger generations aware of the Municipal machine and responsive to participative attitude

Description: the action aimed at bringing young citizens closer to local authorities by creating a chance to familiarise with the decision-makers and encouraging to engage in dialogue with them.

Three classes from the middle school were involved in the action, whose final objective was the conduction of an interview with some key political and institutional figures: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councilors, President and members of the City Council, Municipal General Secretary, Head of the Local Police, President of the International Cultural Centre Guercino and members of the Neighborhood Councils.





Implementation of the action

Methodology: three preparatory meetings were held in the classrooms by civil servants during which the students were introduced to the roles and functions of the municipal institutional figures.

During the meetings, the students were divided into groups and encouraged to think and formulate possible questions to be addressed to their future interlocutors. A discussion in class with the teachers in the following days (about which ones could be the most meaningful questions to ask and about the issues emerged from the

80





meeting with the civil servants) completed the preparatory session.

Outcome

Some days after, interviews were conducted in the institutional places and a video of the interviews was made. Students had the chance to informally meet the local authorities and experience their complete availability to talk to them, to listen to them, to spend time with them and share the same emotion and sometimes embarrassment to be in front of a camera. And laughing together at the bloopers created an even more informal atmosphere of conversation.

All the questions produced in class but not asked in the interview have not been unanswered: students have received for each question a written answer from the addresses.

The final step of the action was the video projection at school with the Vice Mayor and the Councilor in charge of Culture attending and thus continuing in class the friendly dialogue and debate with the students.

The video can be in future a useful means for the other students of the school to learn something more about Cento's municipal authorities.

Possible output in the future is the organization of simi-



lar informal meetings at regular intervals or the creation of an institutional but informal email address dedicated to young people.

Some quotes from the people involved in the action:

“I was so excited, my hands were shaking! It was a nice and interesting experience and so funny to sit at the Mayor’s desk” (a student)

“I think this will be a nice memory and a very useful experience that will accompany them throughout their life” (a Councilor)

“Thank you for this opportunity that has positively affected the boys and the girls, making them feel active in city life and trasmitting to them the perception that the Municipality is attentive to their proposals and needs” (a teacher)

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SMALL SCALE ACTION N. 5 GUESS WHO, GUESS WHERE

Challenge: Developing a culture of participation

Description:

Active participation cannot ignore a full awareness of what is happening in one's own territory and the ability to acquire information critically through available channels.

The purpose of the action is to enable young citizens to surf the Municipal web-site and thus learning what it "tells" about the area: the forthcoming events, the public services and facilities provided, the structure of the municipal machine and the decisions taken by the governing bodies.

Surfing the Municipal website could be boring but not with Kahoot tool!

Methodology: the action consists in a 2-hour meeting in 13 classes of the middle school with two civil servants to deepen the issue of the informed participation. After





an introductory moment, the students are then invited to interactively explore the contents of the web-site.

proved by testing if it is within the reach of the younger generations and if it is, linguistically and structurally, intuitive, immediate and easily understandable.

The students divided into teams had to challenge each other in an engaging quiz game and answer questions and solve riddles by means of Kahoot, whose solutions were hidden in the pages of the Municipal website.

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Expected results:

- to help young people in easily consulting the web-site pages, learning how to acquire important information and better understand the place where they live.
- to understand how the Municipal website can be im-





10

THE ACTION PLAN

85

INTEGRATION LEVELS

Integrated urban development

VERTICAL integration

*Cooperation between all
levels of government and
local players*



HORIZONTAL integration

*Cooperation across different
policy areas and departments
of the Municipality*



TERRITORIAL integration

*Cooperation across
neighbouring Municipalities*



RESOURCES integration

*Balance between "hard"
(physical) investments and
"soft" (social investment)*

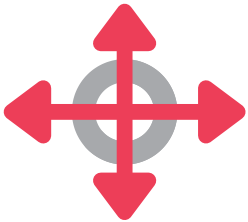


Action n. 1	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
STARTING UP THE PARTICIPATED BUDGET PROGRAM	<p>Enable citizens to decide upon the allocation of the public budget.</p> <p>Favour the citizens' participation in urban planning decision.</p> <p>Rebuild trust between citizens and city Administration.</p> <p>Arise the citizens' awareness about the functioning of the Municipal machine.</p>	<p>Empowerment of the Neighborhood Councils: through the changing of the Neighborhood councils Regulation, each neighborhood council will have the opportunity to propose by 15 September of each year some projects in the urban planning to be carried out by the Administration.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento (Municipal public works service, Municipal financial service).</p>	<p>City Council - Neighborhood Councils - citizens' in general.</p>	<p>Some current elected officials, including the Councillour in charge of administrative decentralization, were formerly members of the Neighborhood Councils and they know and share the expectations of these groups of citizens.</p> <p>There is a political will to satisfy the Councils' request to give a more influential opinion on budget topic.</p>	<p>September 2022 - then every year</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servant cat C (approx 30 hours) = € 468,90</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Amount destined to the proposed projects to be decided every year in phase of municipal budget's preparation</p>

INDICATORS

Number of projects related to the urban planning, proposed by each neighborhood council by the 15 of September of each year.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL

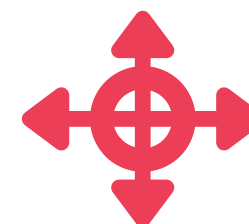


Action n. 2	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
PERSPECTIVES Artist residences Some artists are hosted for two / three weeks in private houses of different neighborhoods. During their stay, citizens are involved by the artist in interviews and contributions to "tell" the place where they live. At the end of the stay, the artists create a work of art filtered by their own aesthetic sensitivity but originating from the contributions of the locals. The work of art summarizes the cultural and social identity of the host community and it is something people have to the care of in the future.	To develop a sense of active participation and to facilitate co-operation in the life of the neighborhoods. To enlarge the diversity and number of active citizens.	Activating a participatory process through a different and alternative channel like art. Stimulating the sense of belonging to the place, the sense of identity, the care of the common goods and the importance of feeling an active part of a community. Deepening the knowledge of the territory from the citizens' point of view.	Municipality of Calderara di Reno (BO) Municipality of Cento (Municipal Culture Departement). In a network with other neighbouring municipalities.	Emilia Romagna Region Art Gallery "Adiacenze". Local artists (painters, sculptors, photographers). Municipalities of the Emilia Romagna Region Citizens in general.	Engagement of the Emilia Romagna region in co-financing the project. Lively local artists community. Strong synergies among the involved municipalities.	From July 2022 - then every year	Human resources: 1 civil servant cat C (approx 50 hours) = € 781,50 1 civil servant cat C for communication activity (approx 5 hours) = € 78,15 ----- € 6.700 for material and tools employed for the art works and for the artists' maintenance (already included in Municipal budget for 2022, partially refunded by Emilia Romagna Region)

INDICATORS

Number of work of arts produced every year - number of citizens involved by the artist in "interviews" and tangible contributions.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL





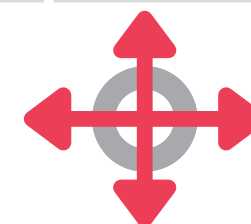
Action n. 3	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget
<p>CREATION OF A SOCIAL VEGETABLE GARDEN IN A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH</p> <p>Members of associations work side by side with the Municipality for the creation of a collective good, also favoring opportunities to support people in difficulty.</p>	Co-creating solutions for the city.	<p>To equip the city with an urban vegetable garden through participatory development of the same, with actions aimed at intergenerational collaboration and at the dissemination of a correct food and environmental culture.</p> <p>Educational Purpose: divide the creation stages of the garden into several didactic moments: each phase will see a leader subject and the participation, for training purposes, of other realities.</p> <p>Self-help: allocate part of the "pitches" to charitable associations for self-production projects.</p> <p>Permanent training projects: allocate part of the pitches for workshops held by local associations.</p>	Municipality of Cento (Municipal Environment Departement)	Association "Città verde", Association "Strade" aps, Gipsoteca Vitali (Resistenza Terra and L'Alveare), ISA Aplomb, San Vincenzo de Paoli ODV, Social centre Ugo Bassi di Cento ODV, Foundation Zanandrea, Scout Group "IL CLAN L'ORMA", Association "Cento Insieme", Citizens Committee "Parco Battiato".	Urban context with high population density, with a large non-arborized green area, close to the center, easily accessible without vehicles and inserted in a context in which there is already an established and successful participation project to the care of the green.	deadline: end of 2023	<p>Human resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 civil servant cat C (approx 180 hours) = € 2.813,40 - 1 civil servant cat D (approx 96 hours) = € 1.650 - 5 volunteers for the construction of the garden (5x 45 hours) = countervalue € 1.125 <p>€ 10.500 (wire mesh, land milling, water and electricity connections)</p> <p>€ 1.750 (55 hours for workshops)</p>

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INDICATORS

Number of events co-programmed during the 2023 by Municipality and local associations/ citizens within the "urban vegetable garden" - number of local associations and citizens actively involved in the projects and activities held in the "urban vegetable garden" - annual amount deriving by the self-production projects.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL

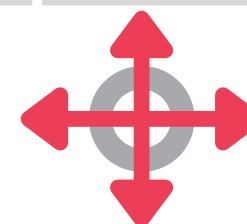


Action n. 4	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/ year
<p>S.M.A.R.T. PROJECT WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFE CENTO</p> <p>Activation of a cross working and agile procedure inside the Municipal structure able to take charge of bottom up proposals focusing on the urban safety topic in its widest meaning.</p> <p>It includes also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving citizens the chance to present projects on the focus, to be discussed with the SMART Team and to be financed by the Administration; • Neighborhood watch: establishing of networks of citizens for the active security control of the city centre/hamlets through surveillance and the reporting of situations of risk or degradation; • Co-planning of cultural and sporting events to involve citizens and facilitate the overcoming of social and cultural differences. <p>In accordance with Regional Law 24/2003 whose founding principle is the collaboration between the local police and the community.</p>	<p>To develop of a culture of participation through the concept of integrated urban safety.</p> <p>To encourage participation in the most degraded areas through socially inclusive events .</p>	<p>Promote the participation of citizens in maintaining conditions of livability and safety of the territory.</p> <p>Elimination of the factors of marginality and social exclusion.</p> <p>Affirmation of higher levels of social cohesion and civil coexistence through participated actions aimed at increasing the level of perceived safety at all levels.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento</p> <p>Local Police, Culture, Health, social services, Sport, School, Environment Services</p>	<p>Region Emilia Romagna, associations.</p> <p>Cultural and sport associations , shop owners - trade associations - citizens in general.</p>	<p>Strong citizens' motivation to recreate a safe and livable urban context especially for the resumption of commercial activities.</p> <p>Need to have safe spaces of social aggregation.</p> <p>Experimental attempts of the action already successfully taken with some groups of volunteers.</p>	<p>From September 2022 - then every year</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servant cat C (approx 100 hours) = € 1.563 1 civil servant cat D (approx 50 hours) = € 2.510,50 2 volunteers (approx 200 hours) = countervalue € 3.126</p> <p>Projects presented by citizens are evaluated and if Sustainable/ Measurable/ Achievable/ Relevant/ Time-based, financed with resources already included in the municipal budget</p>

INDICATORS

Number of initiatives and events, co-programmed each year by citizens and Municipality, focusing on the urban safety topic.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL



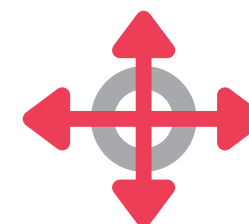


Action n. 5	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
CO-DESIGNED PATHS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN THE LOCAL SCHOOLS	<p>To develop a culture of participation in young generation.</p> <p>To bring young citizens closer to local institutions.</p> <p>To encourage involvement in the activities of local associations.</p> <p>To encourage co-creation processes among various subjects in the territory.</p>	<p>Each year students are offered training courses on active citizenship, co-designed by the Municipality, schools, associations and aggregative realities in the area.</p> <p>The active involvement in the classroom of institutional figures, municipal technicians and members of associations is foreseen.</p> <p>Direct involvement of the students in the activities of the associations in foreseen.</p>	Municipality, schools, associations.	Schools, Institutional figures (Mayor, Councillor...), officials, civil servants, neighbourhood councils, green/social/ inclusive associations, parishes, Caritas, Emporio solidale.	<p>Strong willingness shown by all the subjects involved in the course of meetings that have already taken place to verify the feasibility of the action.</p> <p>Presence on the territory of a dense network of associations.</p> <p>Close collaboration network between schools and Municipal youth information point.</p>	From September 2022 - then every year	<p>Human resources: 2 civil servants cat C (approx 50 hours each) = € 1.563</p> <p>€ 2.000,00 for material resources and reimbursement of the associations involved</p>

INDICATORS

Number of students involved, each year, in the training courses about active citizenship - level of satisfaction expressed by students, through the submission of a survey, about the quality and the usefulness of training courses - number of students actively involved in the projects and activities of local associations.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL

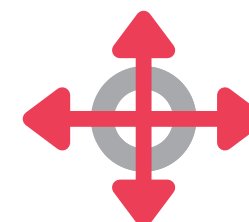


Action n. 6	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
CREATION OF A YOUTH NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL	<p>To develop a culture of participation and encourage commitment in young generation.</p> <p>Favor the connection between young groups and local institutions.</p>	<p>The aim is to create a neighborhood council of young elected people (aged 16-25) in constant dialogue with the city Administration</p> <p>The council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • become an instrument for knowledge of young people's contexts; • organize and promote cultural and sporting initiatives and activities for youth aggregation and active participation in city life • promote debates, research and meetings on youth topics ; • serve as a link between youth groups and local institutions promoting relations with the local Councils and Forums and with those of other regions, as well as developing proposals for schools, training institutions and third sector associations, also with a view to preventing youth discomfort; • draw up annual intervention plans to be proposed to the Municipality, and produce information and materials that can guide the decisions of the administration and of the subjects assigned to manage public services. 	Municipality of Cento (Municipal legal affairs service).	Schools, Universities, associations, Scout group, Tavolo dei Giovani, Municipal Youth Information Point.	<p>Strong political will to carry out the action.</p> <p>Large youth electoral following in favour of the current Administration willing to take part into the governance.</p> <p>Presence of many youth associations whose members are very motivated and with different social background and experiences in terms of voluntary associationism and political activism.</p>	2023	Human resources: 1 civil servant (approx 40 hours) = € 625,20

INDICATORS

Number of cultural and sport activities initiatives and activities for youths organized by the "Youth Neighborhood Council" - number of proposal submitted to the Municipality on youth topics, every year, by the "Youth Neighborhood Council".

INTEGRATION
LEVEL



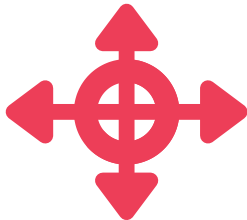


Action n. 7	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget
<p>CO-DESIGNED ACTIVITIES IN THE SOCIAL AND HEALTH FIELDS</p> <p>Network of 5 Municipalities co-deciding how to allocate Regional funds of the Social Health Plan into activities co-designed with associations</p>	<p>To arise awareness of the shared responsibility in social-health issues.</p> <p>Co-creating solutions for the city.</p>	<p>Co-planning with local associations activities for the care of people with social, health or educational fragilities.</p> <p>The Administration and local associations plan together interactive tables to identify actions supporting the most fragile or disadvantaged people (help to caregivers, support in the mobility of disabled people...).</p> <p>The actions are then carried out in the same participatory approach.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento (Municipal social services).</p>	<p>Region Emilia Romagna</p> <p>Voluntary associations</p> <p>ASL Ferrara (Local health authority)</p> <p>Municipalities of Terre del Reno, Poggio Renatico, Vigarano Mainarda, Bondeno.</p>	<p>Engagement of the Emilia Romagna Region in co-financing the project.</p> <p>Strong synergy among neighbouring Municipalities.</p> <p>Motivated local social associations.</p>	<p>2022- first semester</p> <p>2023 (only 1 year)</p>	<p>Human resources:</p> <p>1 civil servant cat C (approx 860 hours = € 13.441</p> <p>1 civil servant cat D1 (approx 1440 hours) = € 24.890</p> <p>1 civil servant cat D2 (approx 720 hours)=34.160</p> <p>€ 716.933,31 for the social and health activities (refunded by Emilia Romagna Region with regional deliberation n. 823/2022)</p>

INDICATORS

Number of co-planned activities with local associations for the care of people with social, health or educational fragilities - number of peoples with social, health or educational fragilities reached by the activities, within the 5 municipalities involved.

**INTEGRATION
LEVEL**

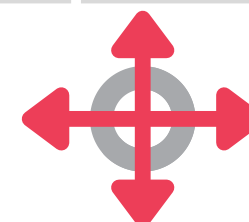


Action n. 8	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
<p>OPENING OF A FIRST CONTACT POINT IN TWO HAMLETS</p> <p>It is planned to open two first contact points in the two most populated hamlets of the municipal area (Dodici Morelli and Casumaro), in order to allow a facilitated dialogue between citizens and Local Administration.</p>	<p>Bridge the gap between the city Administration and the more isolated districts of the municipal area.</p> <p>Raise awareness among the hamlets' inhabitants on the issue of participation.</p> <p>Expand participation to broader social and anagraphic sections of citizens.</p> <p>Listening to citizens and asking their opinions.</p>	<p>The points should serve both for the request of documents or information and for the recording of proposals, suggestions or complains.</p> <p>The action aims at facilitating elders, foreign citizens and those people in general who cannot easily or independently reach the municipal offices of the main town or who are not friendly users of the digital tools.</p> <p>The contact points are managed by volunteers suitably trained for the provision of some essential services.</p>	Municipality of Cento.	Citizens in general, volunteering associations.	<p>Declared political will to decentralize some essential services.</p> <p>In the identified hamlets there are already available municipal buildings for the allocation of the points, thus making sustainable the realization of the action without a heavy investment.</p>	End of 2024	<p>Human resources: 2 volunteers (approx 150 hours each) = countervalue € 4.689 1 civil servant cat D (approx 30 = 1.506,60 1 civil servant cat C (approx 25 ore) = € 390</p> <p>€ 500,00 for the volunteers training program</p> <p>€ 800,00 for printing brochures</p> <p>5% structural cost for the locations: € 395,00</p>

INDICATORS

Number of citizens' access to contact points - level of satisfactions expressed by the users, through the submission of anonymous surveys regarding the quality and the effectiveness of the services proposed.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL





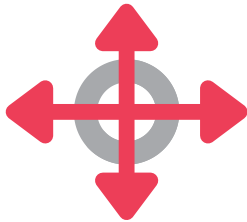
Action n. 9	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
CREATION OF A CONTACT POINT TO SUPPORT CITIZENS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF EVENTS	<p>To facilitate connection between citizens and municipal offices.</p> <p>To simplify bureaucratic procedures for citizens and for civil servants.</p>	<p>In some days of the week 1 civil servant is dedicated to help people/associations willing to organize events, acting as a connecting element between them and the municipal offices in charge of issuing permits and authorizations and favouring at the same time the communication among municipal offices.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento (Culture, Sport, SUAP, Local police departments).</p>	<p>Citizens in general, voluntary associations, trade associations, civil servants.</p>	<p>Existence of many associations organizing a great number of events during the year, in need of assistance for the complex bureaucratic process required by national legislation.</p> <p>Perceived need to create a streamlined and coordinated working modality among municipal offices involved in the same process.</p>	<p>Deadline: 2024</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servant cat C (local police service) (approx 200 hours) = € 3.000 1 civil servant cat C (SUAP Service) (approx 200 hours) = € 3.000</p> <p>€ 2.000 (for the printing of events vademecum booklets)</p>

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INDICATORS

Number of accesses to the contact point by local associations and citizens - level of users' satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of the contact point and the timing for the issue of documents and authorizations.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL

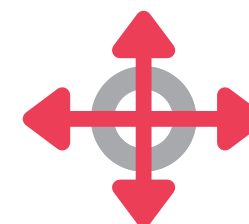


Action n. 10	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
IMPLEMENTATION OF A VOLUNTEERS REGISTER Organize and regulate the activity of citizens out of associations but willing to put at disposal their time and skills to carry out activities in favor of the community and the common good. In accordance with national Law 117/2017 "Codice del Terzo Settore".	<p>To co-create solutions for the city.</p> <p>To encourage citizens who are not member of aggregation entities towards participatory attitude.</p> <p>To spread the concept of shared responsibility in the city management.</p>	<p>Citizens who want to apply to the register can:</p> <p>TAKE CARE OF THE MUNICIPAL HERITAGE (e.g. cleaning and surveillance of areas and / or public structures such as public parks, flower beds, avenues, schools' courtyard areas etc.).</p> <p>SUPPORT CULTURAL AND TOURIST PROMOTION ACTIVITIES (eg. activities at the library, the art gallery and other cultural containers, opening and surveillance of study rooms, etc.).</p> <p>SUPPORT THE MOBILITY OF CITIZENS (e.g. supervision of incoming and school exit, transport of people in need of medical examinations, etc).</p> <p>OFFER CARE AND ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS IN DIFFICULTY (e.g. support / companionship activities for the elderly and people with disabilities, support for forms of hardship and social exclusion, meal delivery and distribution activities a domicile, etc.).</p> <p>OFFER SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES (eg. support for administrative and government municipal bodies for the preparation of meetings, events, and other institutional activities, etc.).</p>	Municipality and citizens.	Citizens in general, all Municipal services.	Cento's strong associative component constitutes an important substratum to feed the individual citizen's interest in collaborating on community meets.	<p>Regulation just approved by the City Council.</p> <p>September 2022: implementation of the Register</p>	<p>Human resources: 2 civil servants cat C (approx 30 hours) = € 470 1 civil servant cat D (approx 10 hours) = € 502</p> <p>Volunteers insurance costs to be quantified after the register's running -</p> <p>€ 3.000,00 for volunteers training course</p>

INDICATORS

Number of citizens registered - number of volunteer's hours employed for activities in favor of the community and common goods.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL





Action n. 11	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget
YOUNG-ER CARD Reorganize the deliverance of the card to the young people, in order to create a system of incentives and discounts, directly proportional to their participation to projects of "participatory democracy"	<p>Co-creating solutions city and citizens together.</p> <p>Involve younger citizens in the participatory process.</p>	<p>Increase the degree of activism and participation of young people to the community life of Cento.</p> <p>Facilitate the interactions.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento (Youth Information Point, Municipal Culture Department).</p>	<p>Emilia Romagna Region, Stores and SME, NGOs, ONLUS and youth associations, Schools, Neighborhood councils.</p>	<p>The strength of this action is the direct stakeholders' involvement in the planification and erogation of incentives and discounts.</p> <p>Moreover, the action doesn't require any economic investment, as the card's erogation is yet funded by a regional initiative.</p>	<p>deadline: 2023</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servant cat C (approx 30 hours) = € 470</p>

INDICATORS

Number of Young-Er card erogated by the Municipality - number of youths involved in projects and activities in favor of the community and common goods.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL

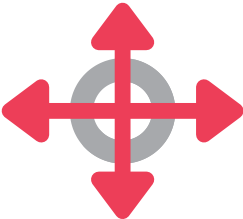


Action n. 12	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
<p>CROWDFUNDING TEAM</p> <p>Launch an educational and training path addressed to nr. 6 civil servants, in order to create a small staff inside the Municipality able to organize and manage the fundraising activities</p>	<p>Gaining skills</p> <p>Co-creating solutions city and citizens together.</p>	<p>The purpose of this action is to equip the Municipality with an efficient tool able to raise new funds for the realization of projects and ideas coming from the participatory activities of citizens and neighborhood councils.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento.</p>	<p>Fundraising School (University of Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum), Citizenry, Neighborhood councils.</p>	<p>The strenght of this action is represented by the demonstrable experience of the University of Bologna in the organization of specific learning path for Municipalities. There's moreover a strong civil servants' will to acquire this new set of skills.</p>	<p>2024 -2025-2026</p>	<p>Human resources:</p> <p>1 civil servant cat C (approx 15 hours) = € 235,00</p> <p>1 civil servant cat D = € 750,00</p> <p>training cost € 1.000,00 (for 2 civil servants)</p>

INDICATORS

Number of crowdfunding launched by the nr. 6 civil servants trained on the management and design of fundraising activities.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL



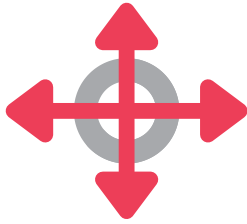


Action n. 13	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget
CREATION OF A LEARNING PATH ABOUT "PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY" ADDRESSED TO CIVIL SERVANTS	<p>Developing a culture of participation.</p> <p>Co-creating solutions city and citizens together.</p> <p>Listening to citizens and asking their opinions.</p> <p>Improve the interaction among the different Municipal offices thanks to a new awareness.</p>	<p>The expected result in terms of participatory democracy is to equip the civil servants with specific skills, in order to make them capable of activating innovative processes of listening and involvement of communities, of identifying innovative solutions to emerging needs, of stimulating co-projecting processes.</p>	<p>University of Bologna (Alma Mater Studiorum)</p> <p>Directed and organized by the professors of the II level Master "Management and co-production of participatory processes, communities and proximity networks"</p>	<p>Civil servants, Citizenry, NGOs & local associations, Trade associations, Neighborhood councils, Local administrators, Municipality of Cento.</p>	<p>The strenght of this action is the notable experience gained by the University's teaching staff in the development of specific and multidisciplinary training courses based on the needs of Public Administration's staff. The Master represents an unique example in Italy</p>	<p>Deadline: 2024</p>	<p>Human resources: 8 civil servants cat D (approx 4 hours each) = € 1.440,00 21 civil servants cat C (approx 4 hours each) -= € 1.313,00</p> <p>Cost of the training courses: € 1.000,00</p>

INDICATORS

Number of civil servants attending the training course about “participatory democracy” - qualitative analysis structured by the University of Bologna about the competences and skilled acquired by the civil servants.

INTEGRATION LEVEL

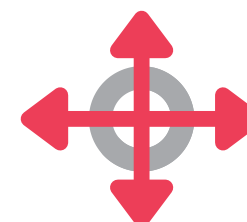


Action n. 14	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
TRAINING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS ON PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC BUDGET	<p>Co-deciding upon public budget allocation.</p> <p>Gain a better understanding of the functioning of the Municipal work system.</p>	<p>Equip the different and several actors of the local community with skills, expertize and know-how able to facilitate their comprehension on Municipality's budget, increasing, in this way, their involvement within the decision making process of the Municipality.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento.</p>	<p>Civil servants, NGOs & local associations, Trade associations, Politicians, Neighborhood councils.</p>	<p>The asset of this action is the multidisciplinary nature of the training course: each course is structured in order to accomplish the "learning needs" of the different targets.</p> <p>ULG members asked for a specific training on the issue.</p>	<p>2023 (then every year)</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servant for communication activity cat C (approx 15 hours) = € 234,00</p> <p>Training courses: € 600,00</p>

INDICATORS

Number of civil servants, citizens, members of local associations, members of trade associations and members of neighborhood councils participating to the training courses - level of satisfactions expressed by the participants, through the submission of a survey regarding the quality and the effectiveness of the training courses.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL



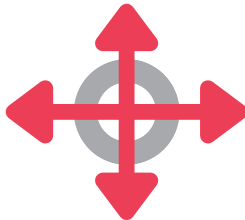


Action n. 15	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
<p>STROLLING DOWN WITH THE MAYOR</p> <p>Organization, twice a year, of an informal meeting between citizens among and Cento's Mayor. During these meetings the citizens will have the opportunity to take a walk with the Mayor through different places of Cento. They can propose and share ideas with him about the places they are visiting, and also expose their requirements and debate about the principal topics regarding the city and its Administration.</p>	<p>Co-creating solutions city and citizens together.</p> <p>Listening to citizens and asking their opinions.</p> <p>Bridging the gap between elected representatives and citizens.</p>	<p>The expected result in terms of participatory democracy is to increase the citizens participation to the political and administration life of Cento, giving to them the possibility to expose their point of view to the local authorities without any kind of filter.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento.</p>	<p>Local Municipal authorities, experts, Citizens in general.</p>	<p>The principal asset of the action is represented by the strong will of the elected officials to facilitate the creation of a "constructive space" open for the dialogue and the genuine debate with citizens.</p> <p>Another asset is represented by the community enthusiasm for this new kind of initiative, experienced for the first time.</p>	<p>2023-twice a year</p>	<p>Human resources: 2 civil servants cat C (approx 28 hours each) = € 880,00 1 civil servant cat D (approx 8 hours) = € 400,00</p>

INDICATORS

Number of citizens involved in the strolling.
Number and quality of the proposals and suggestions coming from the citizens.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL

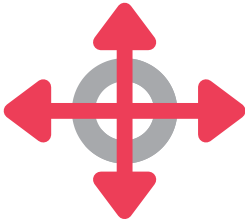


Action n. 16	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget/year
<p>ADHESION TO "DECIDIM" PLATFORM</p> <p>The Emilia-Romagna region, in accordance with the regional law 15/2018, has adopted an official digital platform having the role to manage the participative processes within the regional territory. Within this context, the Municipality of Cento will adopt the same digital platform, producing some adjustment, in order to make the platform fitting to Cento's context and requirments.</p>	<p>Co-creating solutions city and citizens together.</p> <p>Listening to citizens and asking their opinions.</p> <p>Encouraging the sharing of responsibility in decision making.</p>	<p>The principal expected result in terms of participatory democracy is to have an efficient digital tool with which people can speak up, raise issues and express their opinions on topics to be decided, feeling that they are being heard and that their proposals have been taken into account.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento.</p>	<p>Emilia Romagna region, Local administrators, Neighborhood councils, Civil servants.</p>	<p>The most important asset is represented by the strong support in terms of know-how and skills provided by the Emilia Romagna region to the municipalities willing to join the "Decidim" platform. Moreover, the platform and its functionality will be proposed to the entire citizenry and will be organized a series of meetings having the aim to involve and help the people lacking of technological skills.</p>	<p>deadline: 2024</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servants cat C (approx 30 hours) = € 470,00</p> <p>Platform : € 1500/year</p>

INDICATORS

Number of issues and suggestions raised up by the citizens through the Decidim Platform - level of satisfacion expressed by citizens, through the compilation of a brief online survey, about the efficiency and usability of Decidim.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL





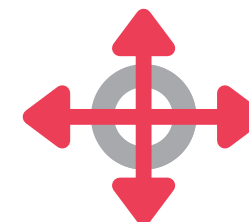
Action n. 17	Challenges	Results	Leader	Stakeholders	Assets	Timeframe	Budget
CREATION OF AN "ENERGETIC COMMUNITY" IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CENTO	<p>Co-creating solutions for the city.</p> <p>Co-deciding upon public budget allocation.</p>	<p>The expected results in terms of "participatory democracy" concern the creation of an "energetic community", having the role to negotiate, together with the local authorities, the employment of money from the energetic surplus.</p> <p>The local enterprises, the citizens and the involved stakeholders have the opportunity to co-decide how to allocate the financial resources for works and projects useful for the whole community of Cento.</p>	<p>Municipality of Cento.</p>	<p>Emilia-Romagna Region, medium and big enterprises of Cento (mainly VM Motors, Baltur, Negrini Salumi, Molino Pivetti), Citizenry, NGO&Associations.</p>	<p>The main asset of the action is the tight and constant cooperation with the Emilia Romagna Region, which has destinated a team of experts to support the Municipality's staff in the realization of this action.</p> <p>The involving power and the high rate of innovation of the action can attract a remarkable number of stakeholders and participants.</p>	<p>2022-2023</p>	<p>Human resources: 1 civil servant cat D1 (approx 50 hours) = € 860,00</p> <p>€ 70.000,00 completely funded by the Regional call "Laboratori territoriali per l'innovazione e la sostenibilità delle imprese dell'Emilia Romagna" - (Municipality of Cento eligible for funding by Regional deliberation 317/2022)</p>

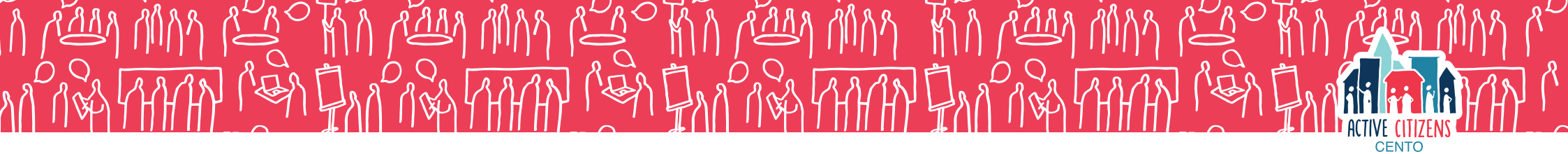
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INDICATORS

Number of members actively involved in the energetic community - amount of money deriving by the activities of the energetic community - number of projects realised in favor of the community and common goods thanks to the Energetic community's profits.

INTEGRATION
LEVEL





104 TIME FRAME

ACTION		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
1	Starting up a participated budget program					
2	Perspectives					
3	Social garden					
4	SMART project					
5	Co-designed paths in the schools					
6	Youth Neighborhood Council					
7	Co-designed activity in social field					
8	First concact points in hamlets					
9	Contact point for events' organization					
10	Volunteering register					
11	Young-ER card					
12	Crowdfunding team					
13	Training path on participatory budget for civil servants					
14	Training sessions on public budget for citizens					
15	Strolling down with the Mayor					
16	DECIDIM Platform					
17	Energetic community					



RISKS ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIES

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RISKS ANALYSIS

Cento's Action Plan, like many of the new medium and long term programs, can be affected by a series of potential risks which could negatively influence the action table's implementation and the achievement of the different integration levels.

Risks are mainly connected to the specific characteristics of the Action Plan, i.e. the **massive number of actions** to implement, the **high innovation degree of some of them** and their **"versatility"** requiring the involvement, even in a single action, of more than one Municipality or of different municipal departments or stakeholders belonging to various areas of Cento's community. These peculiarities could represent a real obstacle to the actions' successfulness in small municipalities, as Cento is, lacking a long-lasting tradition in terms of participative process.

Even the **restricted number of civil servants** could represent a tangible stumbling block to the pursuit of different integration levels within and outside the municipality. As a matter of fact, the **innovative working approach** generated by the Action Plan, based on the cooperation within municipality's services and on a constant "dialogue" with the citizenry and the civil society, could be perceived by the civil servants as a worthless and **hard methodology responsible for bringing additional tasks to their ordinary activity flow.**

This perception could push a part of the municipality's staff not to be collaborative and even to reject their involvement in the Action Table's implementation. The outcome would be the slackening of the horizontal integration's process.

Another identified risk concerns the involvement and the willpower of





the local political authorities to pursue a governance based both on the constructive interaction with citizens and on a decision-making process grounded on participative democracy. As a matter of common knowledge the participatory method has the effect of slowing down decision making and, on the contrary, the urgency of responding to social emergencies with timely actions and thus gaining consensus could lead elected officials to speed up the process at the expense of participation.

Unpredictable political changes within the City Council's could moreover generate a reconsideration of the Action Plan and determine the stall or the suppression of specific actions.

This scenario would cause a strong decrease of the citizens' confidence, not only towards the project's purposes, but also with respect to the usefulness perception of their activism within the political dynamics of their city. Again, the possible friction between expectations and what is at the end realistically achievable, for example in those actions where citizens are asked to give ideas

for projects to be carried out, could cause in active citizens or stakeholders disenchantment and the desire not to invest any more energy in the participatory process. Nor other possible risks should not be underestimated such as the fact that new and unforeseen needs could change the policy's priorities leading decision makers to **redirect public resources towards other destinations**.

Or again that the **enthusiasm of the citizens themselves may diminish over time** in consideration of the effort and time generally required by participatory practices. The citizens could also be particularly motivated to pursue some specific and more popular topics in which the participative processes are implemented (i.e. allocation of municipal budget) but to be otherwise less interested in others, although they may equally benefit the community. In this last case



some apparently less impactful actions would be destined to fail.

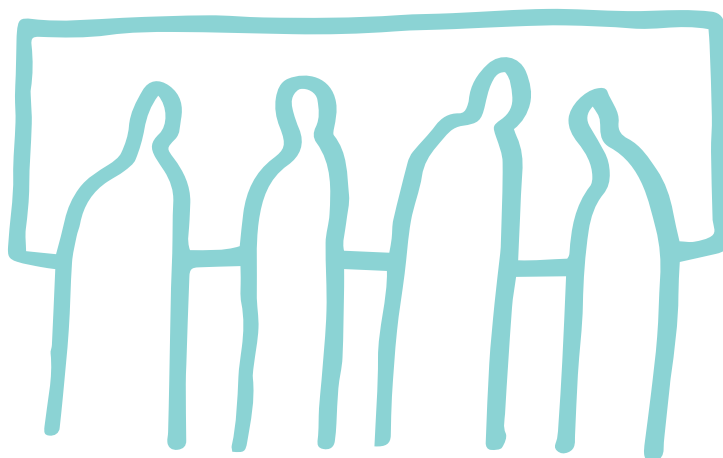
In this way the vertical integration process would be, inexorably, damaged.

Another element that should be considered is the existence of a plurality of participatory methods which can be classified on the basis of the criteria and approaches employed. Methods can differ greatly in characteristics, limits and potentialities (i.e. World Cafè, Appreciative Inquiry, Scenario building process, Deliberative Polling...). **The choice of a method unsuitable for the stakeholders, context or issue of a given action could lead to its failure.**

Cento's Action Plan is moreover characterized by specific actions based on territorial integration, in order to accomplish common projects and design solutions to

problems and needs shared by the communities of the involved municipalities. This level of integration is susceptible to the **electoral shifting and to the turning over of political figures** who could become less motivated or interested in a participatory or co-planning approach. The possible development of power dynamics more subjected to territorial individualism, due to a different political alignment, could doubtlessly represent an obstacle to the cooperation among municipalities.

Finally the complexity of the slow-moving municipal machine often held back by **cumbersome administrative procedures** could represent a deterrent to the development of some participatory processes, despite the good will of the elected officials. Unfortunately, it's a matter of fact that the legislative framework in which the Municipalities are moving does not go along with the inno-





vative and much more dynamic participatory practices.

In order to minimize and prevent the effects and the influences of the above-mentioned risks, some strategies need to be put in place. First of all it is necessary to schedule a precise information campaign about the Action Plan's purposes and the results and the advantages obtained by the community with the fulfillment of each action. The campaign should highlight the role played and the value brought by all the characters involved. In addition to that, a series of training seminars and workshops need to be proposed to raise the citizens, civil servants and all the municipality's stakeholders' awareness on the importance of the participative democracy process and the benefits deriving from its establishment in the city policy.

It is also essential that the municipality takes care of the relationship with the stakeholders on an ongoing basis, even outside the purely participatory context. Periodic and informal meetings for exchange, information and simple updates can certainly help in averting the

risk of a loss of confidence and motivation.

An in-depth assessment of the participatory method to be adopted on a case-by-case basis should be also made (i.e. if online / face-to-face, options of participants' selection, forms of communication that is to say "one-way" or with opinions' exchange...).

A further essential aspect is the definition of a set of monitoring indicators, in order to have a constant and global view of actions' status.

Each action will have specific indicators, analyzing the achievement timeline, the outcomes, the use and destination of the funds and the presence of external unknowns able to influence the actions' trend. Moreover, all the subjects involved in the implementation of the actions will be the addressees of scheduled qualitative and quantitative polls. This allows us to test their degree of satisfaction and to acquire their advice and remarks from which it is possible to "calibrate" on-going adaptations.

POTENTIAL RISKS

- Complex dynamics underlying the Action Plan
- Lack of a long lasting experience in participatory process
- Demotivation/discouragement/lack of collaboration of the municipal staff
- Political turning over
- Redirection of municipal budget
- Successfulness of actions depending on neighbouring subjects
- Friction between expectations and what is realistically achievable
- General or partial decreasing of citizens' interest over time
- Plurality of participatory methods
- Overwhelming bureaucracy

STRATEGIES

- Widespread and frequent communication campaign on the actions during all the phases of their implementation
- Targeted training courses to gain skills and awareness on the added value of the participatory processes
- Periodic and informal meetings with the stakeholders
- Attentive evaluation of the participative method on a case-to-case basis
- Set of monitoring indicators to measure the degree of satisfaction in order to modulate the actions according to the context's "mood".

COMUNE DI CENTO



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Quaderni della Partecipazione della Regione Emilia Romagna,
by Sabrina Franceschini

Photo: View of Cento by Edoardo Alberghini

Front cover photo: The Rocca of Cento by Nadia Sacenti



