CENTO

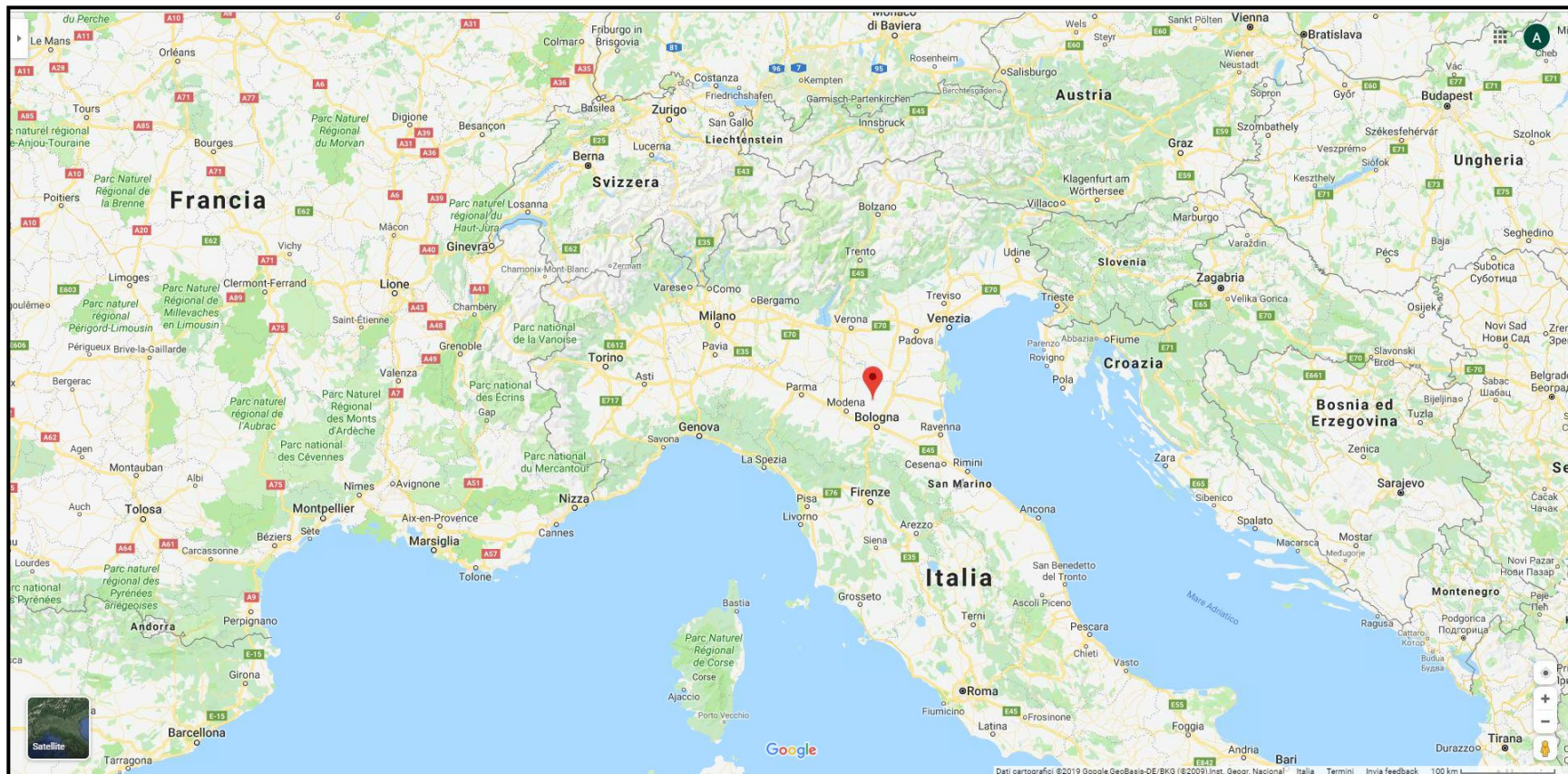ACTIVE CITIZENS
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SMALL & MEDIUM EU CITIES

Country: Italy
Region: Emilia Romagna
Province: Ferrara
Area: 64,74 km2
Inhabitants: 35.474 (updated to 31/12/2018)
Population density: 547,8 inhab./km2
Demographic profile: 17.413 males – 18.061 females
Average age: 45,02
Foreign people: 3.891 (11%)
Largest foreign communities are from Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, Albania and China

SOME FACTS...

- Cento being in an equidistant position from three big cities, is a kind of **borderland** with different historical, artistic, linguistic and culinary traditions.

- **The name** "Cento" (one hundred) is a reference to the centuriation of the river Po Valley, the deforestation and subdivision of the land by the Romans in the II century bC.

- Cento grew from its **origin as little fishing village** to an established farming town in the first few centuries after the year one thousand.

- In 17th and 18th centuries Cento experienced a golden age of architectural and urban renewal. In this period important Academies were founded, the **Baroque style** became predominant in the buildings and churches and the town took a noble appearance.

- Cento is nowadays an important industrial and **entrepreneurial pole** with companies operating at international level.
    Some of them are:
    - VM Motors producing on-road and off-road high performance industrial engines
    - Baltur s.p.a. dealing with burners, heating, renewal energy
    - Fava s.p.a. specialised in industrial pasta production equipment
    - Molini Pivetti, an important floar producer
    - Pastificio Andalini, a pasta Factory producing pasta for the mass distribution brands
    - Bonaveri s.p.a. producing artisticmannenquins and bust forms for the most prestigious fashion houses in the world.

GUERCINO, A STAR OF THE BAROQUE

Giovanni Francesco Barbieri nicknamed Guercino (Squint) (Cento, 1591 – Bologna, 1666). Despite his physical defect - he was cross-eyed -, he was infact a much refined and greatly talented painter who developed a unique pictorial style.

He worked at the service of the Church of Rome and of the nobility, renewing art with a special sensitiveness for colour and space for which he is acknowledged as one of the greatest Italian **painter** between Classicism and Baroque.

Many exhibitions have been dedicated to him, his paintings are hosted in the most important museums in the world but it is in his town that we can find the largest concentration in the world of his **works of art** including canvas, frescoes and drawings.

Guercino, *La Madonna col Bambino*

THE CARNIVAL OF CENTO

It is one of the most spectacular carnival celebration in Italy.

It is different from most European carnivals because it is a **mingling of European and Brazilian carnival traditions**, infact it is the only carvival in the world to be officially twinned with the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro.

Every year samba dancers and drummers enliven the atmosphere with colourful costumes and overwhelming music.

The Carnival of Cento is a very old festival. It has its roots in history. The exact age and origin of the Carnival of Cento are unknown, but it dates back at least to the 17th century because depictions of scenes from the Carnival can be found on frescoes by Guercino.

But while for centuries this carnival celebrations were organised mostly for the fun of the locals, in the late 1980s the Carnival in Cento was turned into an event of international relevance.

The most distinctive feature of the event is the presence of **huge allegorical papier-mâché floats** running for five Sundays in February along the streets of the town centre.

The floats, animated by sophisticated movement systems, are preceeded in the **parade** by hundred of figurants in glamorous costumes, singing and dancing in a real explosion **of joy and enthusiasm**.

The floats, whose dimensions can exceed 20 meters in height and 6 meters in width, are built by associations of **volunteers** skilled in the craft techniques of processing papier-mâché.

In the main square of the town a large quantity of balloons, inflatables, candies, toys, and gadgets of every shape is thrown from the towers of the floats towards the waiting crowds, in a general blaze of sounds and colours.

FERRUCCIO LAMBORGHINI

- On April 28, 1916, Ferruccio Lamborghini, the founder of the company that bears his name and is known for stylish, high-performance cars, is **born in the Municipality of Cento**.

- After World War II, Lamborghini founded a business making tractors near Bologna, Italy. He later expanded into other ventures and grew rich. Lamborghini's success enabled him to purchase a variety of luxury sports cars, including a Ferrari, considered one of the top cars of the time. After experiencing mechanical difficulties with his Ferrari, Lamborghini decided to start his own rival sports car company. Automobili Lamborghini was officially established in 1963, and the same year debuted its first car, the Lamborghini 350 GTV, a two-seater coupé.

- The company's logo featured a bull, a reference to Ferruccio Lamborghini's zodiac sign, Taurus the bull. Various Lamborghini models had names related to bulls or bullfighting, including the Miura (named for Don Eduardo Miura, a breeder of fighting bulls), a mid-engine sports car that was released in mid-1960s and gained Lamborghini an international following among car enthusiasts and a reputation for prestige and cutting-edge design.

CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN CENTO

- The Region Emilia Romagna where Cento is situated has emanated a standing **Law on citizens' participation** in political decisional process, which has been recently updated (L.R. 15/2018).

- Our Region's main challenge is the citizens' involvement in local life but the Municipality of Cento, although interested in building a close connection between public authorities and citizens, is not at the moment fully prepared to ensure a full inclusion of the people in the context of politic participation and to go beyond the level of information and consultation.

- Citizens are informed about the Administration on-going plans and projects, are also asked to give an opinion about topics to be debated but citizens - in the final analysis - do not affect policies. Up to now we did not have either tools or resources to improve the dialogue with citizens so as to engage them actively in decision-making.

- Nevertheless some steps have been made to encourage citizens' engagement in decision making.

  Here you are some examples:

APP MUNICIPIUM

- Municipium is the official free mobile app used since 2016 which put in connection Administration and citizens by means of communications, reports, maps and all interactive municipal services.

- Citizens can interact by sending suggestions or every kind of reports, which are collected by the Public Relations Office (URP) and then sorted to the competent office.

- At the moment citizens employing the application are about 2.540. According to 2018 statistics the reports sent by citizens by means of Municipium have been 544 and have concerned some recurrent topics such as:
  - Safety / Security
    - Green areas
    - Street circulation
    - Public lighting
    - Road maintenance

- In relation to the population, citizens using this digital technology to make their voices heard are still few and most prefer more traditional way to communicate needs or suggestions such as telephone or direct contact with the Public Relations Office staff (URP). In 2018 URP received 10.843 phone calls, 2.290 mail and 2.910 went to the front office.

CONSULTE CIVICHE

- At the moment the main form of participation are the "Consulte civiche", locally elected councils, one for each of the nine districts in which the municipal area is subdivided. The Councils' components are directly elected by the people having right to vote and residing in the competent district. Their number depends on the population of each area. They assume a mandate up to the end of the Administration in charge.

- Councils are convened by the President (elected among the members) whenever a topic is outlined to be discussed. The meetings are public and everyone interested can take part into.

- Councils' role is sanctioned by a specific municipal Regulation. They are provided with advisory and supervisory functions on the Administration's activity and can petition, present requests or bring about proposals. They can express **non-binding opinions** on some specific topics foreseen in the Regulation such as municipal Budget, urban plannings and public works' projects whose amount is over € 150.000,00.

- The experience with this form of participation allows us to focus some **critical issues**:

  - ✔ Councils are **frequently politicized** and thus they are concentrated on their "watchdog" role, just trying to find and expose errors and failings instead of finding possible strategies and solutions together with their interlocutors.
  - ✔ Councils are usually **poorly representative** of the population in its social, demographic and cultural variables so their opinion is necessarily the expression of a restricted section of people with a non-variegated profile.
  - ✔ There is moreover a **weakness in the circulation of the information**, also on the part of the Administration, so Councils are not always properly informed about the on-goings plans and projects and citizens are not informed about the Councils' meetings and the topics in agenda.
  - ✔ Members' Councils usually **have no technical competence** to understand the very complex Budget document. The outcome is that or they renounce to give an opinion or give an opinion based on a misunderstanding of the document.
  - ✔ Neither they know the rules and laws at the base of the administrative process that should convert the idea into action. This produces **friction between expectations and real possibility** and consequently frustration.

THE YOUTH LOCAL COUNCIL

- The Youth local Council is operating since 2014. It is composed of young girls and boys from 10 to 13 years. They are representatives of all local primary and secondary schools.

- More than a real form of participation, this experience is an opportunity for the younger generations to increase their **awareness of their role in the community** and to learn "in the field" the basics of civic education.

- At the beginning of the school year teachers prepare the children on the theme of civic participation and during lessons coordinate the self-nominations of the children interested in covering a role in the Council.

- Candidates state in class the reasons for their candidacy and develop proposals.

- Elections take place in classroom and the students themselves are engaged in ballot operations, under the supervision of the teachers controlling the voting process.

- The Youth local Council meets once or twice a month in the Town Hall. Political authorities do not normally attend the meeting but they can be invited by the children to answer questions arising from time to time. During the meeting children discuss, exchange their experience and ideas.

- After the establishment of the elected assembly, which normally consists of 48-50 children, some committees are set up within the assembly. Each committee deals with specific issues such as leisure, the environment or other topics of general interest. Members are generally involved in projects or experiences in and out of the classes related to the theme they are committed in.

THE PROJECT
"CENTO BENI COMUNI"

- The Municipality of Cento has won a regional call for the project "Cento Beni Comuni" (Cento Common Goods) in accordance with the regional Law n. 15/2018.

- Cento Beni Comuni is a participatory process during which municipal Administration, citizens and local associations will cooperate in writing the Rule of the Common Goods.

- What are the Common Goods? Physical places (squares, buildings, parks, etc.) or intangible assets (culture, environment, etc.) which everyone needs and which are everyone's responsibility.

- Why make a Regulation for Common Goods? To create an administration tool that governs and facilitates forms of collaboration between citizens and the Municipality through **collaboration agreements**.

- The collaboration agreements allow citizens and associations to carry out initiatives able to enhance the care and shared management of the territory's common assets.

Thank you!

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