

# BOLOGNA



# The University and the city

A relationship that has lasted for over nine hundred years

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The relationship with the city of Bologna has been central to the development of the Alma Mater ever since its origins in 1088, when teaching became free and independent of the ecclesiastical schools in Bologna.

## History

### Emperor Fredrick I Barbarossa and the edict 'Constitutio Habita'

In 1158, Emperor Fredrick I Barbarossa issued a *Constitutio Habita* establishing that every school of learning should constitute a *societas of socii* (pupils), presided over by a *dominus* (master) who was to be paid with money granted by the Students. The Empire pledged to protect all those students who had to travel from any interference from political authorities.

Fredrick I issued this Edict to reward those scholars who had supported his claims to the rights of the Empire. For the first time Bologna's professors were faced with the difficult problem of handling the relationship between the University and the political power.

The Empire came into conflict with the Italian cities which had become independent Communes.

In 1176 the Italian Communes faced Fredrick Barbarossa in the battle at Legnano where they defeated him. The University, however, survived the collapse of its protector.

Nonetheless, the communes tried to favour the *societates* and Bologna University teachers were asked to swear an oath that they would not teach outside the city walls. Their tenure was secure, on condition that they limit themselves to teaching exclusively in Bologna.

This shows that even then, and perhaps earlier, Bologna had become a goal for many students from all over Europe, attracted by the fame of its teachers. Moreover, the existence of the University brought the commune international prestige.

### The creation of the universitates and the contradictory relation with the Commune

Students in Bologna did not accept the ban on migration: the most important secession occurred in 1222, and led to the establishment of a University in nearby Padua.

In order to withstand the Commune, the students formed groups according to their places of origin. In Bologna there were the *Citramontanes* (Italians, but not Bolognese) and the *Ultramontanes* (non-Italians, living on the other side of the Alps, such as the French,



Students in the 12th century.



*Collegio di Spagna.*

*Collegio di Spagna,  
axonometric picture.*

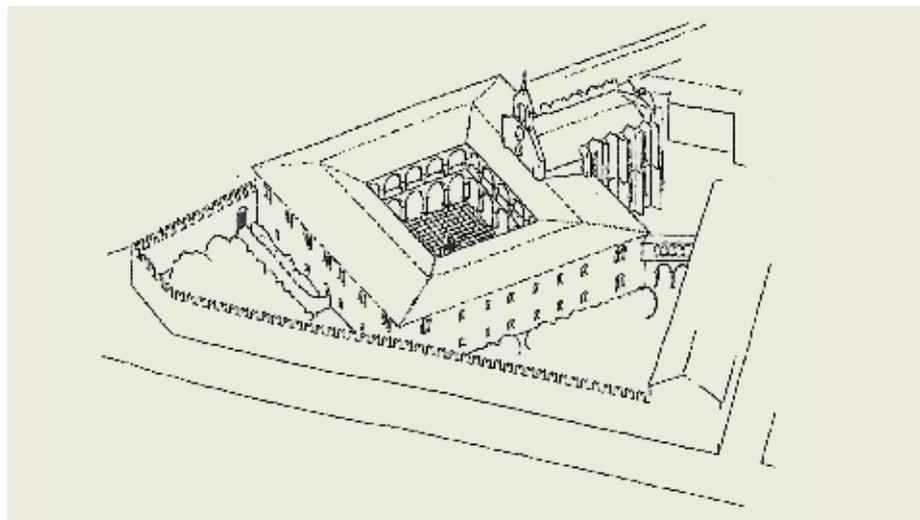
Spanish, Provençal, English, Picard, Burgundian, Norman, Catalan, Hungarian, Polish, German).

These groups, called the *universitates*, were associations of students who sought to establish their autonomy by coming to terms with the local power.

### **The rights of the foreign students**

In 1219 Pope Honorius III granted the Archdeacon of Bologna the authority to award university degrees. The students were permitted to secede and the Rectors of their *universitates* (who were students, not professors) were not obliged to swear the oath to the Commune.

In 1230 the Commune granted the same rights to foreign students as Bolognese citizens had, and the students agreed to pledge that they would not leave the *Studium* during the study period.

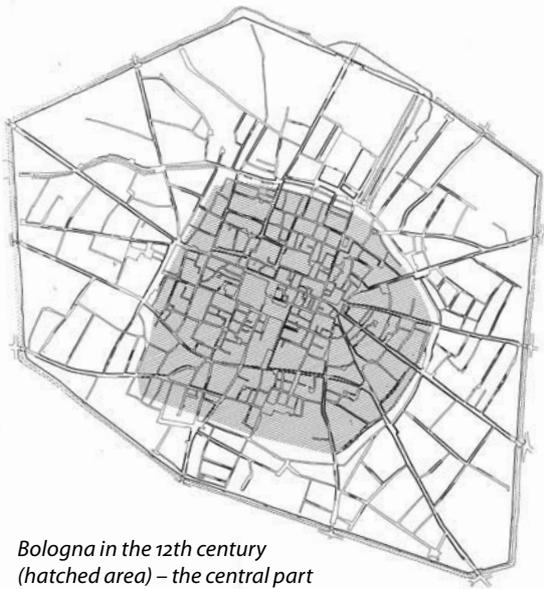


### **The creation of University Colleges**

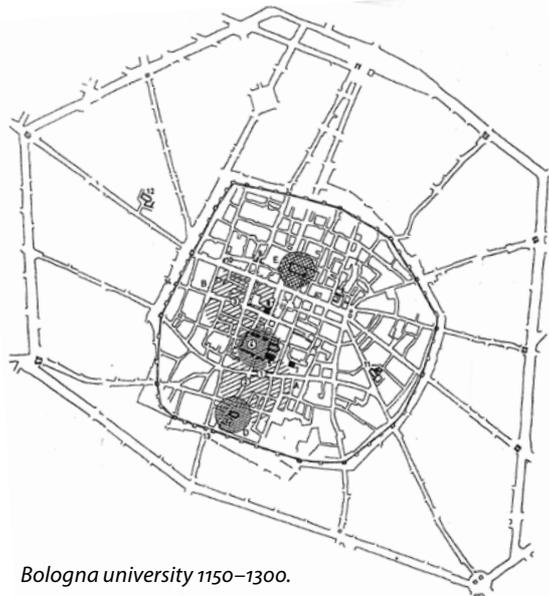
In the Middle Ages there were over 2,000 students in Bologna, many of whom were without any private means of support. It became necessary to defend them from the exploitation of landlords (unfortunately, still a problem

today with more than 80,000 students in the city of Bologna). Several noble families and high prelates donated money for the foundation of University Colleges: the Avignon College, Spanish College, Flemish College, amongst others.

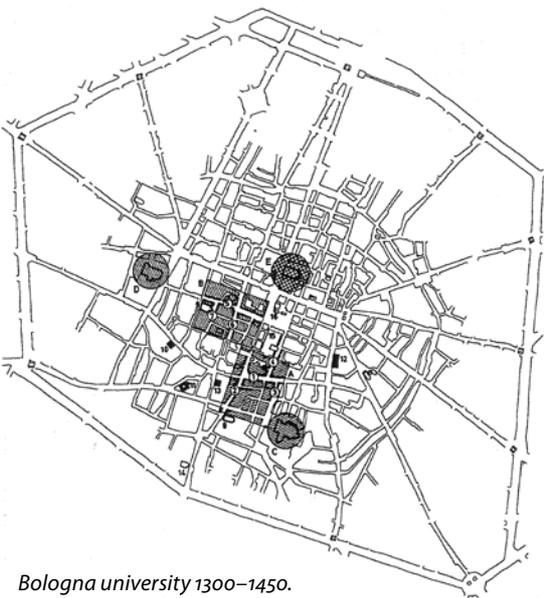
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*Bologna in the 12th century (hatched area) – the central part of today's inner city.*



*Bologna university 1150–1300.*



*Bologna university 1300–1450.*



*Bologna university 17th century.*

In the early centuries of the University's existence, the teachers were paid with money collected directly by the students (called 'collection'). However, the students did not always contribute to the collection, so the Commune had to step in to guarantee the continuation of their studies. Hence, around the mid-14th century it was the Commune that paid the salary of the most famous professors. That is how the triangle of the medieval University was formed, i.e. a triangle of professors, students and the Commune.

#### **The governance of the Alma Mater**

Until the 16th century students hired and rewarded the professors, controlled their performance and negotiated the university's place in the city.

Later, Bologna became dependent upon the Papal rule: the Rectors disappeared, and the university gradually became a state organisation, while the real control of the *Studium* fell into the hands of the Cardinal Legate, who represented the Pope. A long period followed during which the university was run by a variety of students and professors until, in Napoleon's time, the figure of the Rector was reintroduced, but then as a professor.

*The 300-year-old Specola, or observatory, with a Museum of Astronomy, at Palazzo Poggi. Here are also the several of the university's specialist museums.*

*The courtyard of Palazzo Poggi.*



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Part of Bologna in the 17th century, with the famous medieval fortification towers at Porta Ravegnana.

*The main street of Bologna, Via Rizzoli, towards the medieval fortification towers. To the right is the town hall, Palazzo Comunale.*



### **The university today** **The University of Bologna and the city of Bologna in recent years**

Until a few years ago, the university of Bologna was situated inside the city. The university's continuous development

has meant that in time the strategies for the location of new sites has varied according to the specific situations.

The original settlement was in the city centre. Then followed the 19th century development of the area to the north-

east of the historic centre, the building of some sites 'out of town' (Engineering Faculty in the 1930s), the separation of a decentralised faculty to an outlying municipality (Veterinary studies at Ozzano in 1992), the founding of new sites





The central square of Bologna, Piazza Maggiore. To the right is Palazzo Comunale, to the left is Palazzo di Re Enzo and in the background is Palazzo dei Notai.

in four cities in Romagna (Forlì, Cesena, Rimini, Ravenna in 1989). The students regularly enrolled for courses in these four cities are 20,000.

The university and the City Council have in the past few years agreed on a new development strategy inside the city of Bologna taking into account the needs of both the students and the residents.

**University – City co-operation  
University and City Council new strategies: the improvement and modernization of the sites situated in the historic centre**

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The relocation of the Faculty of Veterinary Studies and Agricultural Studies has made possible the demolition and reconstruction of the obsolete build-

ings (lecture halls for the Faculty of Law in Via Belmeloro) and the reorganisation of the green areas and services in the zone situated in Via Filippo Re (new nursery and teaching halls).

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Here are the departments with an artistic direction: the Department of Communication Sciences, the laboratories for Music, Theatre, Cinema of the Faculty of Arts, the Modern Art Museum and the Cineteca (both of them belong to the City Council) together with



*New residential buildings, adapted to old building traditions, near the Department of Communication Sciences.*

two cinemas and a research library specialised in cinema.

The university teaching hospital Sant'Orsola is further upgraded thanks to investments and the development of a Cardiology Centre and a Surgical Centre.

#### **The scarcity of public spaces for students in the historic centre**

The University and the Council come together to lay down new strategies for the development of public spaces, with particular attention to the spaces in Via

Zamboni and Piazza Verdi that are characterised by urban and social decay.

Although 20,000 students attend the decentralised sites of Bologna University in the Romagna region, 80,000 students remain in the medieval historic centre of Bologna, which has a population of 370,000 inhabitants, both by day and by night.

The lack of public places for young people to socialise and enjoy low-cost entertainment and to 'experience' the city as their own natural campus makes the students consider the historic city-



centre as their own public space, especially during the night.

This situation easily results in congestion and difficult cohabitation with the citizens who live in parts of the city that are crowded with students.

Moreover, as a student has said in a recent survey 'If we pay 350 Euros a month for a bed, then we too have the right to a piece of sky and a piece of the public square, don't we?'

### **University and City Council new strategies: the creation of university facilities located in areas outside the historic centre.**

A new construction strategy is now being implemented with the creation of university facilities in areas outside the historic centre, on the intermediate outskirts of the city.

These are large areas, empty or no longer used, for which integrated settlements are planned, and where the new university facilities are inserted into a metropolitan context that used to have a different purpose. New parts of the city are thus being developed and the uni-

versity's metropolitan integration into the new social and cultural context can be brought about.

This strategy is a significant part of the creation of the *railway city*, i.e. the creation of the backbone strategies behind the council's metropolitan plan (known by its acronym PSC). The *Città della ferrovia* identifies the chain of metropolitan spaces (new railway station, Trade Fair, management centres) that host international relations, where the utmost accessibility and concentration of excellence allow many different populations to meet: the contemporary demographic mix. This is the city



where in the next few years the most important transformation will take place, where the settlements that grew up before and after the urban and industrial revolutions will be linked to each other; the historic Bologna and the neighbouring Bolognina, separated by the railway tracks.

It is the metropolitan shape that lies at the heart of the restructuring that the PSC seeks to govern, something that represents the new image of Bologna in Italy and in the world.

The relocation of some of the University buildings, partly already taking place (the faculties of Chemistry, Astronomy and the Astronomical Observatory, Pharmacy and Biotechnologies

in the *Navile* area; the new Faculty of Engineering in the *Lazzaretto* area, the Faculty of Agriculture in the wholesale market area, known as the CAAB), is part of the plan to ease the pressure on the historic town centre.

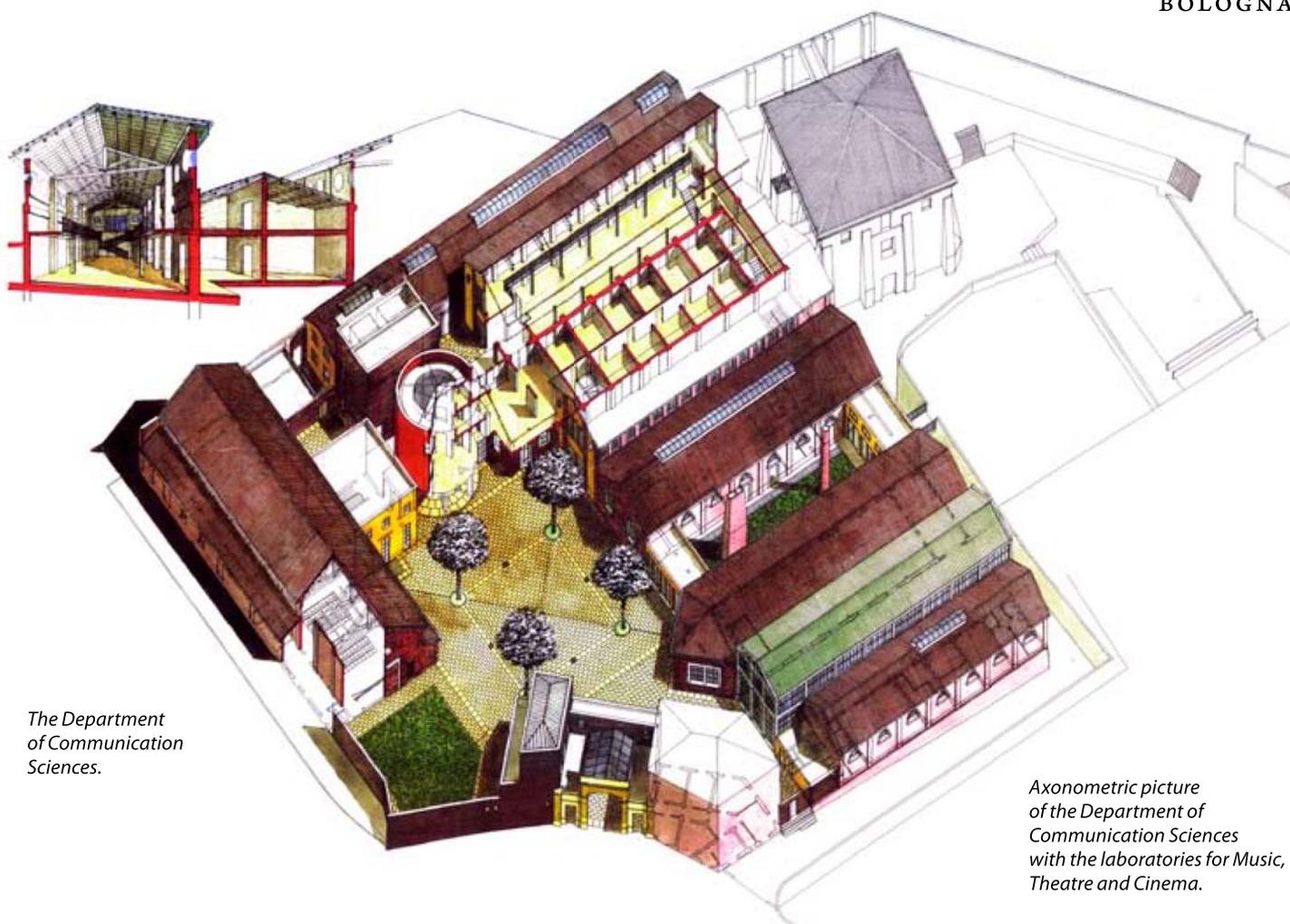
The success of the strategy presupposes the integration of areas for study within the metropolitan context (for housing and services) and an adequate system of public transport. From this point of view, all the new sites, at the *Navile* and at *Lazzaretto* but also at the Bolognese Agro-Food centre (CAAB), satisfy these requirements.

The provision of rented accommodation close to the new sites tends to reduce the pressure from this type of de-

mand on the central and semi-central zones.

The implementation of plans for the former fruit and vegetable market and the *Bertalia-Lazzaretto* area has provided student halls and this may also happen in other locations.

The *Bertalia-Lazzaretto* area, in a central position but still isolated from the infrastructural belt, is a newly built-up area that in 2001 was the subject of an international competition for design and planning commissioned to plan a mixed form of urban settlements. Indeed, the solution suggests the presence of houses and a university park, management, welcoming and trade activities, as well as public services. The plan is inspired



*The Department of Communication Sciences.*

*Axonometric picture of the Department of Communication Sciences with the laboratories for Music, Theatre and Cinema.*

by the settlement forms and the relations that characterise the historic centre, and involves the creation of a new urban centrality. The completion of the road and infrastructure network of the north-western area, and the proposals of the PSC for the links with the city's new settlements will transform this hitherto isolated sector of the city into an area of easy access, both by means of public transport (bus, station-airport shuttle, subway-tramway, inner city light railway) and with private transport. In this area some sites of the Faculty of En-

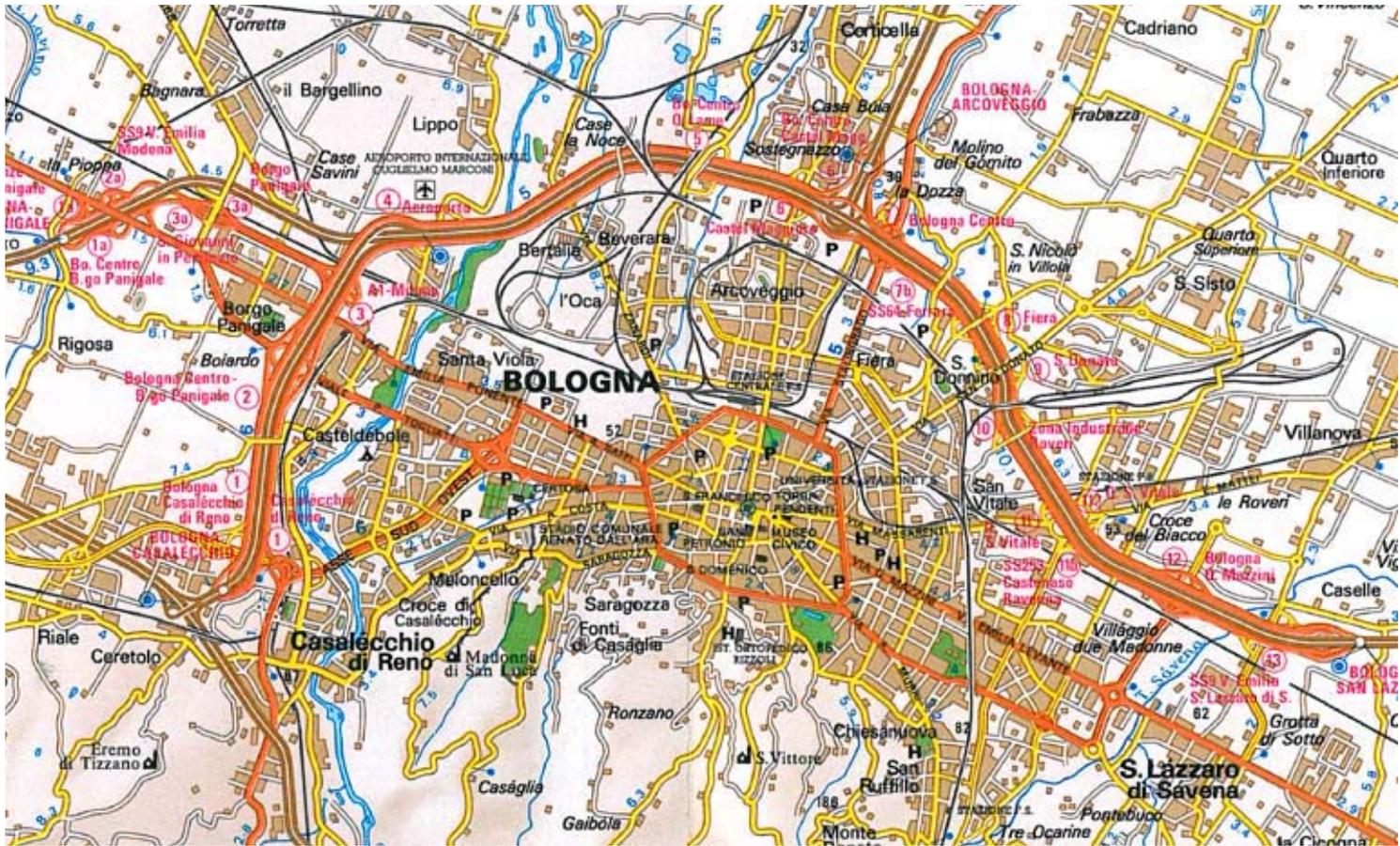
gineering have already been made; the project also provides for students accommodation.

In a zone of great historical and environmental interest, on either side of the Navile canal, close to one of the locks used to control the waterways and the production of energy beside the research centre HQ of the *Centro Nazionale delle Ricerche* (Cnr), a new University pole is about to be made, dedicated to the technical and scientific faculties, which will host the Departments of Chemistry and Astronomy, the As-

tronomical Observatory, the Faculty of Pharmacy, the degree course in Biotechnologies, and a science and technology museum in the ex-electricity power plant of the Battiferro.

Near the settlement there is already a student residence and another one, with over 200 beds, is going to be made in the nearby restructured area of the old fruit and vegetable wholesale market.

The context in which the Faculty of Agriculture has settled is different, at CAAB. It is a large area dedicated to trade, logistics and management where



Map of Bologna with the planned urban rail system and development areas for the university.

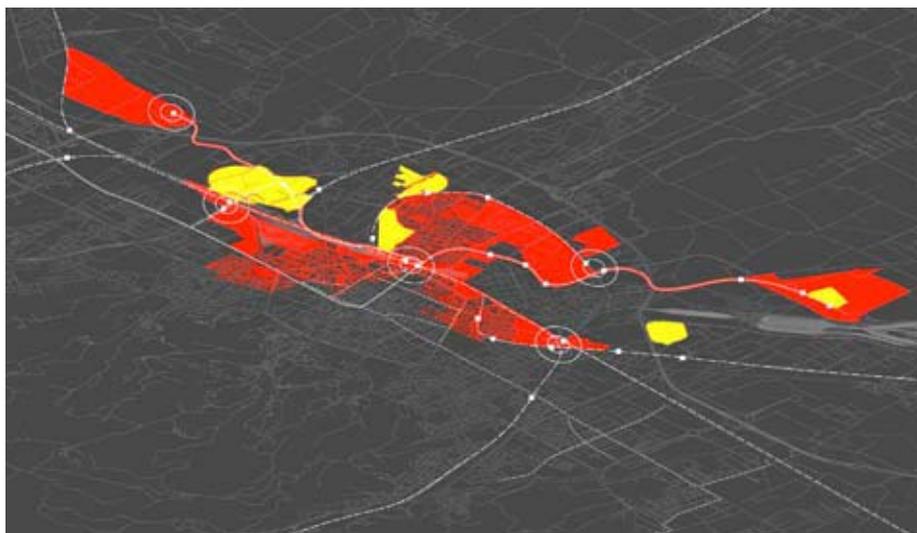


Illustration of the strategic development plan, the Railway City (Città della ferrovia).

the arrival of the Faculty of Agriculture represents an interesting integration between different yet compatible uses. Greenhouses for experimental cultivations are going to be built shortly near the main Faculty buildings.

The upgrading of the university sports fields in Via dell'Industria, with the construction of new buildings of the Faculty of Sports Sciences, in a recently built-up area, filled with residences, (with some halls of residence already built) represents an interesting experiment of integration between sports facilities and urban and university leisure facilities.

**The promotion of both a technological and innovative centre and a new exhibition and entertainment area**

A very interesting project for the development of the city and the university has recently been undertaken by the Emilia–Romagna region, together with the Municipality. It concerns the reconversion from the manufacturing and productive use of the state-owned Tobacco Company to a centre of promotion of technological and scientific innovation, located in the northern part of the city, along the same railway line that can serve as a link with the other university centres currently being developed. The idea of situating inside an existing building (a building of great architectural quality, designed by Pier Luigi Nervi in 1952) a research centre serving the local productive system, in which University synergies are forged, together with public research centres (ENEA) and private bodies, seems to make possible the creation in the city of a centre for the promotion and start-up of new innovative companies, which the whole productive system can benefit from. Inside the facility the head offices of the university's business incubator 'Almacube' could be located.

The proximity of the plant to the large exhibition and entertainment area of Parco Nord, the Trade Fair district and the residential area of the Bolognina neighbourhood, where there are disused factories which the PSC plans to reconvert, allows us to imagine the development of a zone of great interest for the young population, a great pole of

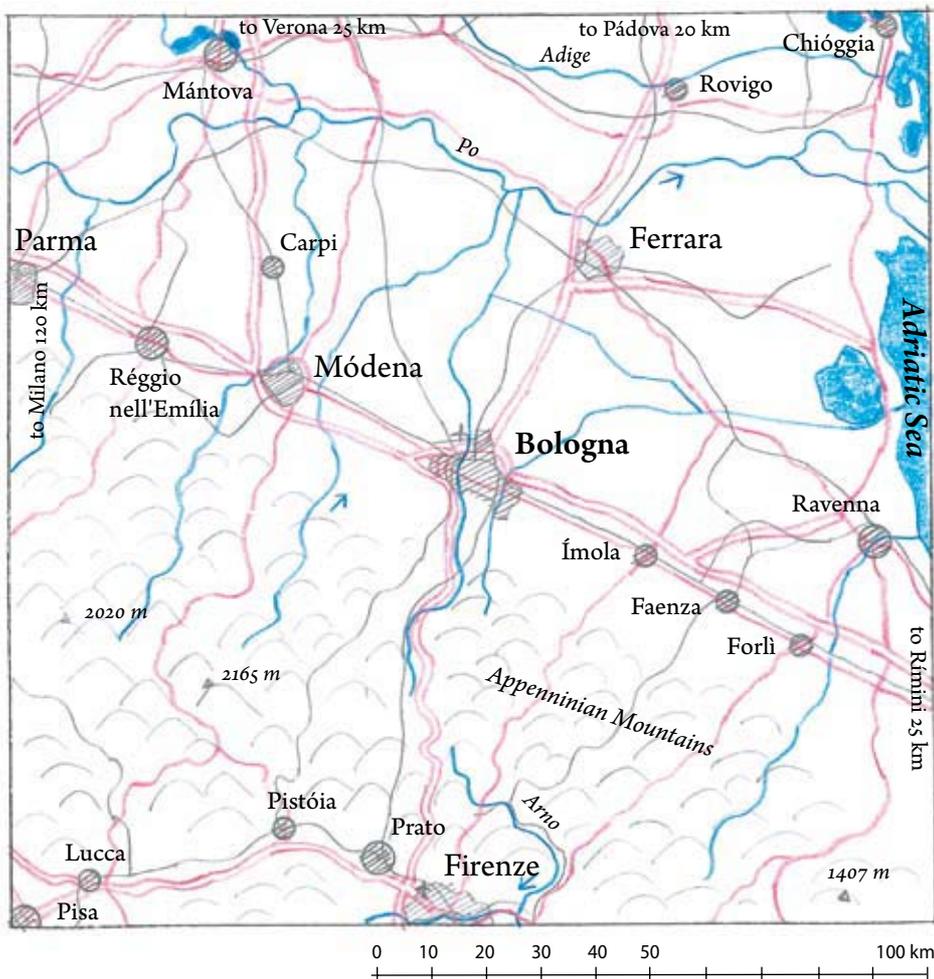


*Projects for new buildings of the Faculty of Engineering at the Lazzaretto, in north-west Bologna.*



*Projects for new buildings of the Faculty of Engineering at Lazaretto area, details.*

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Bologna is a main centre and communication node in northern Italy, where the historic axes Rome–Florence–Venice–Verona is crossing the straight via Emilia from Milan and Turin in the west to the Italian Adriatic Coast, continuing to Bari and Brindisi. The main communication line from the Arno and Tiber valleys crossing the Apenninian Mountains to the river Po plain. This is a densely populated part of Italy, but not dominated by a single large metropolis. The distance to Milan is more than 200 km. Along via Emilia there is a chain of cities, like pearls of different sizes on a string. The distances between each of the cities Parma, Réggio nell'Emília, Módena, Bologna, Ímola, Faenza, Forli,

Césena and Rímìni is 15–30 km. In the Po basin there are several large cities, like Ferrara, Mántova and Ravenna, and a large number of small villages. The north edge of the Po basin (outside the map) has another chain of cities, Venice–Padua–Vicenza–Verona–Bréscia–Bérgamo and further to the west, Milan. In this part of Italy many cities compete with each other in a common transportation network but most of them have a strong identity of their own. Bologna is one of the most important towns in the area. South of Bologna is the sparsely populated Apenninian mountain region.

cultural and immaterial production for the city of tomorrow.

A university spread out across the whole metropolitan territory, easily accessible and connected to the city's access nodes, created from high-quality architectural blueprints (most of the time obtained by means of architectural prize competitions), renews and reinforces a relationship characterised by a strong form of urban integration that has always been a point of great importance for both 'town and gown'.

### About the authors

Roberto Grandi is professor of Communication and Vice Rector for International Affairs at the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna. Member of the Board of the Observatory of Magna Charta. He has published several books and articles in national and international journals on: Mass Communication, Modern Culture, Cultural Studies, Political Communication, Public Communication and Consumer Behaviour. From 1996 to 1999 he held the office of Deputy Mayor on Culture at the Municipality of Bologna.

Virginio Merola (born 1955 in Caserta). At the age of 5 his Family moved to Bologna, where actually he lives and works. After getting a degree in Philosophy at the University of Bologna, he began to work as a trade unionist. He started his political career in 1995 as President of the Savena District, one of the 9 districts of the Municipality of Bologna. Since 2004 he is the Town Councillor for Urban Planning and for Housing Politics in the Municipality of Bologna.