



BOLOGNA

ITALY

KEY FEATURES OF THE CITY

Demographic Facts

- around 377.000 residents on 14.000 hectares
- around 53.000 inhabitants within the historical center
- around 550.000 daily users, 181.157 in the historical core

Urban figures

- Density
- Porticoes
- University city

Heritage

- Registered heritage: The Porticoes of Bologna
- Inscription: UNESCO Tentative List
- Date of submission: 2006

EXISTING GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

Development and Management Plans

- Municipal Structural Plan (PSC)
- Town Planning Building Regulations (RUE)
- Municipal Operative Plan (POC)

Responsible Authorities

- Bologna Municipality
- City Forum

Legislation for the protection and management

- Emilia-Romagna urban planning law no.20 of 2000

MAIN ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Balance between natural inhabitants and migrants in the city centre
- Dissemination of centralities throughout the city
- Interweaving of metropolitan co-operation and city Quarters

KEY ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE-BASED REGENERATION STRATEGIES

- 'Modern' heritage and the widened historic center
- Public space
- Horizontal subsidiarity

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNT

- Redefinition of the 'borders' of the historical centre
- Reinterpretation of the systems of mobility, open spaces and connecting elements
- Setting up of participatory processes



8.3 Bologna

Bologna is a medium-sized city in Northern Italy and the capital of the Emilia Romagna Region, located in a strategic position at a compulsory point of passage as a transport hub for goods and people from the North to the South.

The city of Bologna can be considered as a good example in the evolution of the approach to the historic city, by virtue of both the key role played in the conservation movement of historic centers since 1960s, and of the ongoing regeneration strategies related to the development of planning instruments in the last decade.



8.3.1 Key features of the city

Demographic facts

The dense character of the city – further increased by a steady growing of foreigner residents – is based on a population of 377.000 residents on a territory of 14.000 hectares (Gabellini, 2006: 75); around 53.000 inhabitants live within the historical center. At the same time, the estimated daily population is around 550.000, with 181.157 users in the historical core. It is thus possible to count two users for each resident, so that one third of the population uses the urban historical center, daily (City of Bologna, 2007). The metropolitan area of Bologna counts up almost 900.000 inhabitants, thus resulting to be officially recognized by the Italian government as a “metropolitan city” (Gabellini *et.al.*, 2012).

Urban figures

Above and beyond the role of strategic knot in the Italian infrastructural system, multiple nature of urban forms are the distinguishing features of Bologna and its territory today, including both tangible and intangible aspects affecting the urban tissue.



Among the several elements involved, at least three key aspects should be highlighted as deemed essential to describe the role of the city in relation to the issue.

Density. Firstly, the above-mentioned dense tissue which characterizes the urban structure of the city – resulting from a compact and planned municipal territory – surely represents a fundamental feature of the inextricable relation between urban heritage and the preserved artifacts. For a better understanding of the current structure of the city, three main historical phases may be schematically identified in the transformation of the building fabric of medieval construction. In the 13th century, the greatest expansion of the city outside of the medieval town, implemented through the formation of “boroughs” and defining a very peculiar building fabric, characterized by constant and continuous use of the building porch type. In the 15th century, urban policy in Bologna focuses on the transformation of the urban environment by resetting the existing, in a process of demolition, reconstruction or remodeling of old or degraded buildings. In the 16th century, the approach to “demolition – rebuilding” is replaced by a more prudent “reorganization” of the construction. The city centre developed over 900 years within the area of the medieval town walls, demolished at the end of the 19th century and replaced by the ring road.



Porticoes. From a closer perspective to the architectural and urban themes, a second fundamental aspect relates directly to the presence of the *porticoes*, meant as much more than just functional components, but rather as the guiding figure of the urban structure. Thanks to this element of construction continuity (although in the 15th century they were absent in the *castrum* of the old Roman Grid), Bologna holds a double primacy: it is the city with the world's largest number of porticoes, and San Luca is the world's longest portico, with about 38 kilometers of development inside the historical centre.

University city. A third issue to be mentioned, in the effort to synthesize the complexity of Bologna, is related to the dominant character of *university city*. Seat of the world's oldest university, whose presence dates back to 1088, Bologna holds an indisputable role as a centre for cultural, art and scientific progress. The deeply rooted, long-standing relationship between the city and the academia has determined the historic evolution of the urban settlement and has been a key issue in the public debate.

Heritage

A specific reasoning about the architectural and urban heritage of the city should be developed starting from the premise of the recognition of the historical center of Bologna as a



unique and high performing part of the city: a determinant factor of urbanity. Bologna thus represents a paradigmatic case, in which “for the first time, as far as we can recognize today, the methodological conception of a scientific as well as historical and morphological urban analysis has been laid down with a view to treating the historical centre as a complete monument in its totality” (Zimmerman, 2001: 2).

Today, the historic centre of Bologna is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List. Particularly, since 2006 the area of the Porticoes of Bologna included into the city walls of the XIIIth century have been proposed in the Italian application for the WHL, by virtue of their “outstanding universal value” thanks to “their great diffusion and permanence” (UNESCO, World Heritage Tentative List).

8.3.2 Existing governance mechanisms

A well known aspect of the governance mechanisms of Bologna is the “explicitly decentralized public organization which has been the main pillar of this urban structural architecture: the idea was to take quarter councils and quarter assemblies, respectively, as means of a democratic integration of decision making by transparent, self-organizing groups as counterparts of the private sphere of the family organization” (Zimmerman 2001: 2).

The municipality is administratively divided into 9 quarters, while for the planning purposes the territory is divided into building blocks.

Development and management plans

In recent years (2004–2009), the Municipality of Bologna completely revised the territorial spatial plan, approving the following documents, provided under the Emilia-Romagna urban planning legislation (no.20 of 2000):

Municipal Structural Plan (PSC). The PSC interprets the urbanization processes, showing their spatial extension, delineates a strategy open to the implementation of the other metropolitan municipalities and suggests perceptible figures, referring the strategy to physical space.

Town Planning Building Regulations (RUE). The RUE connects and reorganizes the rules to project different urban ‘materials’ (single buildings and open spaces) and urban patterns.

Municipal Operative Plan (POC). The POC programmes the realization according to the PSC strategy and priorities. The need to adapt the plans system to the new regional planning law of the year 2000 went hand-in-hand with the need to re-discuss the city’s development prospects, looking beyond the framework defined more than 20 years ago, with the latest Master Plan (City of Bologna, 2009).

Responsible authorities

Bologna Municipality is the responsible authority for the process of drawing up the structural urban planning tool defined by the Emilia-Romagna bylaws. The Municipality has set up an additional participatory tool for the development of the Structural Plan, namely the **City Forum**. In order to work together on the contents, the Forum is made up of representatives of the institutions and civil society and provides shared measures through participatory town planning workshops. The activation of these consultative forums is a key

peculiarity of the governance processes developed for Bologna, with the aim of encouraging the participation of citizens in the definition of the new strategies, particularly pursued on a double level: at the local level through consultations within the Quarters (meant as constituencies), and at the city level through the forum “Bologna changing city”.

Legislation for the protection and management

The Emilia-Romagna urban planning legislation no.20 of 2000 defines the legal framework for the structural plan, as part of the new development plan. Under the sub-regional law, the structural plan is entrusted with the task of identifying the strategic directions for the development of the city area, together with the preservation of integrity and cultural identity.

8.3.3 *Main issues to be addressed*

As a direct corollary of the de-centralized approach above-mentioned, one of the core issues concerns the necessity to **maintain the existing inhabitants inside the city centre**. In this perspective, the establishment of a housing rehabilitation program funded by the municipality follows the interpretation of Bologna “as an urban structure of nearness and vicinity aiming towards the concrete public life”, oriented to the preservation and rehabilitation of the old centre without the original residents being driven out by property speculation.

At the same time, the **integration of the increasing number of migrants** — together with the relation between the established population and newcomers — represents a fundamental issue to be addressed.

In order to preserve and update the aim to “intercept the common perception” (Gabellini, 2010: 65) — inherent character of the city history of planning and development — a multiplicity of levels are engaged, such as: the dialectic among heritage, facilities and social fabric inside the city core; the interweaving of tangible and intangible infrastructures; the “**dissemination of centralities throughout the city**” (Evangelisti, 2008: 111).

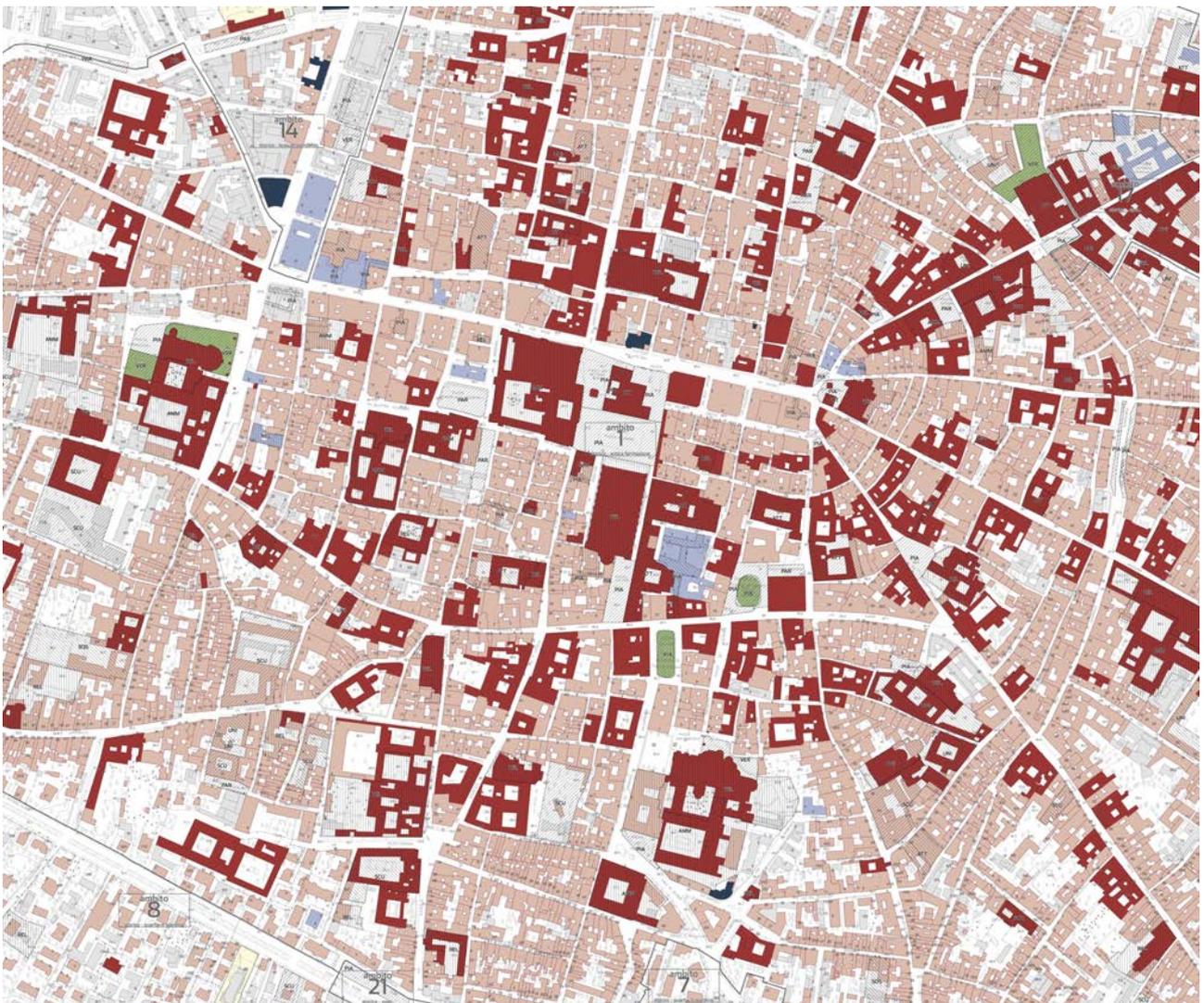
Through the plan for the historical center of Bologna in 1969, and the subsequent public housing program of 1973, the city center becomes the symbol of a new way of managing urban and social transformations within the ancient settlements, paying attention both to the permanence of its natural population, through encouraging a participatory planning process and collective involvement in public decisions, and the survey of historic built environment and its features.

In the last decade, in order to define the Structural Plan, the Administration of Bologna has chosen to value relations and to search synergies with all the institutions of the territory, the subjects that compose the economic and social tissue and the citizens. Main aim of this activity is to **conjugate institutional metropolitan co-operation and promotion of a new role for the city Quarters**, as a support to the decisions of the City Board. The construction of the strategic framework was thus preceded by a phase of involvement of citizens through “paths” of information and listening.

8.3.4 Key aspects of the culture-based regeneration strategies

Taking into account the development of the last 15 years, it is possible to highlight some key aspects of a strategy based on “conservation and renewal to improve livability in historic patterns” (Gabellini, 2011: 295), and in which — with respect to the city centre — “the structural development of a progressive conservation of historical urban substance has been prepared in an exemplary (if not paradigmatic) manner” (Zimmerman, 2001: 2). The development of the policies related to the Structural Plan, together with the earlier the application for the European Capital of Culture for the year 2000, represents the two most significant moments in the history of the development of cultural strategies, based on the recognition of the city’s long cultural history and the need to reinforce its image abroad.

“Modern” heritage and the widened historic center. The purpose of inserting the historic city into an overall process of regeneration of the contemporary territory finds in the case of Bologna an emblematic example, acting on a double scale: a “broaden” historic centre and a wider concept of heritage. In Bologna, the ancient core - meant in traditional terms as the place of the recognized historical parts of the city - has been reinterpreted as a wider ensemble, also including more recent expansions and less “consolidated” architectural and urban structures. Already in 1969, the Plan for Bologna introduced the idea of integrated conservation of historic ensembles, which held that conservation cannot be limited to



preservation of visual and aesthetic character but must also include consideration of underlying physical, social, and economic structures. This allowed the effective revitalization of historical urban tissues, taking into account at the same time the artifacts, the elements which constitute the exterior and interior of urban spaces and the behavioral processes of local subjects, in order to accomplish a balanced and efficient development of the entire urban structure. Nowadays, the Structural Plan for Bologna, aimed at “protecting its physical and environmental integrity as well as its cultural identity” (Gabellini, 2006: 75), pursues as its main tenet the preservation of the complex of both tangible and intangible structures, as well as the larger citywide systems. According to this view, among the several aspects of particular interest within the Bologna plan, it should be useful to mention the importance given to the city’s typological and morphological character as a basis for future interventions, and the adaptation of monuments and historic buildings to house public services, in the perspective of preserving “Agglomerations of historical and architectural interest”, as described in the system of constraints and safeguarding measures of the PSC legal framework.

Furthermore, the role of the “modern” relicts of the city’s industrial past have become potential “heritage” places, involved into mechanisms of regeneration able to blow new life into these structures. The conservation and enhancement of architectural heritage - also including these productive artifacts, now devoid of their original meaning and use - was thus already one of the main points of the Bologna 2000 framework, further addressed by the new Plan. As happened with the transformation of the so-called Ex Sala Borsa, or Former Stock Exchange, into Italy’s largest multimedia library, through the Bologna 2000 agenda.

The conservation actions for the Opera House, through the eponymous Foundation, represents a result of the art heritage strategy and has been followed by the enforcement of the development plan approved by the Foundation itself.

The project Manifattura delle Arti involved the transformation of a former trade fair into a cultural district through the aggregation of previously scattered cultural institutions belonging both to the Municipality and the University: a new location for the GAM, a space to house the Cineteca, and also the institution of Lumière Art Film Theatre, Film Commission and Communication and Film Studies Department.

Further transformations are related to the project Bologna of Museums – launched within the Bologna 2000 agenda – based on the coordination of public and private museums, to be pursued through integrated strategies. The opening of the new venue of the Gallery of Modern Art in 2007 – Forno del Pane – represents one of the effects of the programme, also leading to the establishment of Bologna Civic Museums Institution by the City Council in 2008.

Public space. The reinterpretation of the city heritage into a wider perspective, including also the recent expansions and modern artifacts of the old productive system, also deals with the potential role of the public spaces of the city as heritage places. According to this perspective, the regeneration strategies adopted by the Structural Plan entrust the open spaces of the city with new roles and values, and the pedestrianization of the historic centre represents one of the main actions.

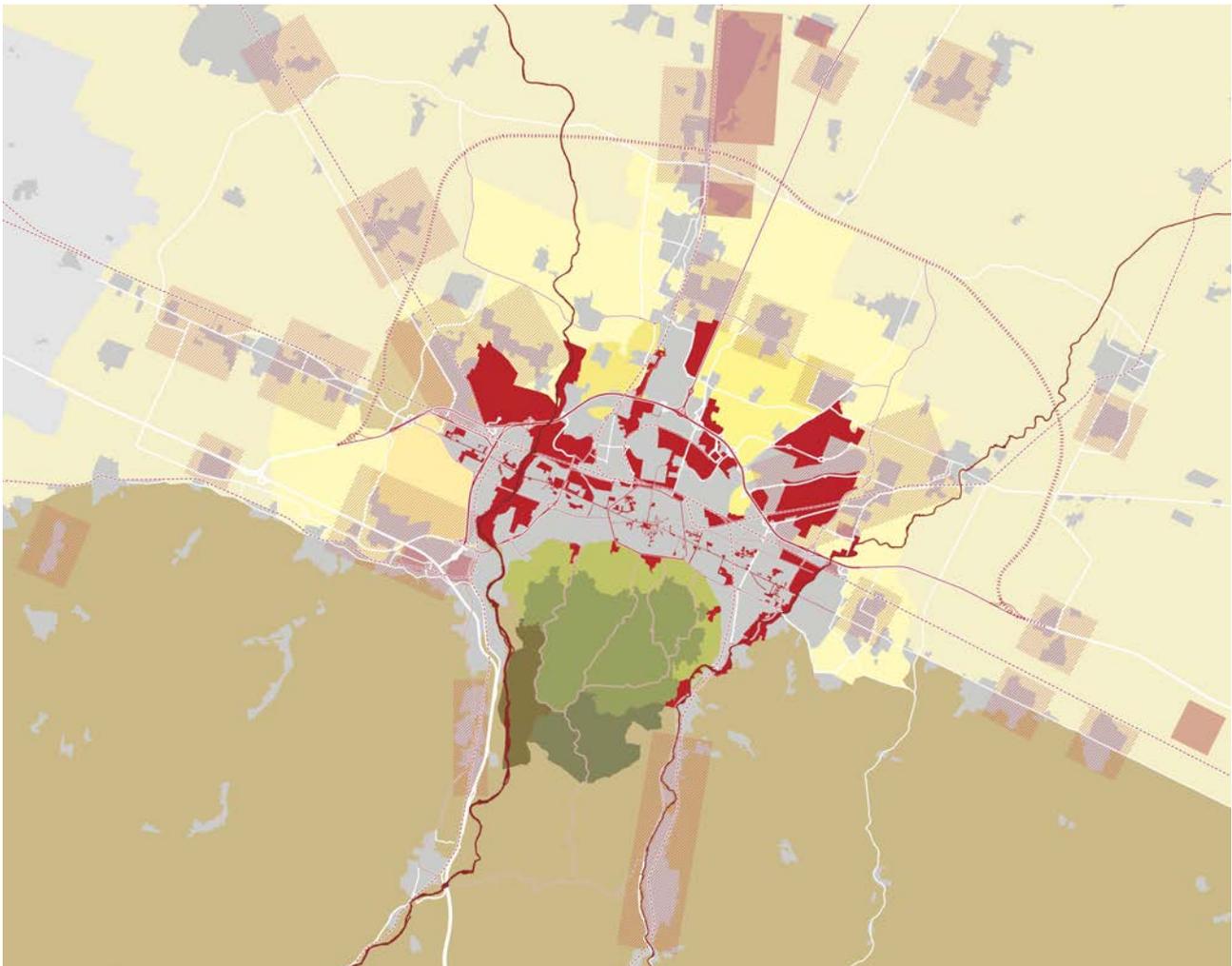
For what concerns the interpretation of regeneration strategies aimed at involving the historic centre in its urban dimension, among the “Seven Cities” identified by the Structural Plan, the two “Cities of the Via Emilia” focus the attention on these parts of the city. The rehabilitation of the main road (through a new public transportation network) represents the premise for the enhancement of the habitability and the definition of new centralities. The Via

Emilia configures as the backbone of the places of memory and rooted identity, but at the same time allows a glimpse of the most inconsistent undergone transformations. The contradiction between the west and the east of the road may become the incentive to develop new and diversified design strategies, also aimed at “reconstructing” proximities and transversal relations, for long time interrupted and perhaps lost.

Horizontal subsidiarity. Further key aspects of the culture-based regeneration strategies applied in Bologna relate to the tangible and intangible dimension of integrated strategies aimed at developing and improving public facilities within the city. In order to highlight some fundamental steps in this perspective, four themes can be taken into account: the role of the university city, the specificity of the creative dimension of Bologna in the field of music, the potentialities of the high number of libraries, and the theatre system.

Among the main “images of change” (Gabellini *et.al.*, 2012) in the development of Bologna, the role of the University gains relevance as a factor of urban re-composition (Bonfantini, 2012), synthesized by the slogan “In Bologna people study” (Gabellini *et.al.*, 2012).

The university is thus meant as an urban transformation factor, as an element able to affect the development of the contemporary city (Perry & Wiewel, 2005), to transform space and urban relations by establishing new spatial implications. The “re-composition” effects that university settlements may have on the urban structure of a city thus constitute one of the main issues to be addresses within the culture-based regeneration strategies, also taking into consideration the risk that such a highly specialized functional node may lead the form of the “citadel” in the urban fabric, as a challenge for a better habitability.



An additional aspect to be highlighted is the application for the UNESCO nomination as Creative City of Music, in 2006, through which Bologna has been the first Italian city and second in Europe receiving this acknowledgement, also becoming part of the UNESCO “Network of Creative Cities” by virtue of the city’s contribution to music.

The potentiality inherent in the presence of more than 15 public libraries in Bologna has been addressed through the unified Bologna City Libraries Institution in 2008. Though the Bologna 2000 framework already had this vocation, symbolized by the project for the Sala Borsa, the centralization and enhancement of the libraries system constitute the fundamental goal of the Institution. For what concerns theaters, the project for Villa Pini should be mentioned, aimed at transforming a former private hospital into a Theatre Service Hub with participation of the bank foundations.

8.3.5 Outcomes and lessons learnt

Bologna represents a paradigmatic case in the reinterpretation of the role of territorial spatial plans as regeneration devices able to enhance the identity dimension of the city while updating its structures to the contemporary needs. The main outcomes emerging from the study can be synthesized in three key aspects.

The first aspect concerns the “paradigm shift” in the interpretation of the historic city as a wider ensemble, through the **redefinition of the “borders” of the historical centre**, and the transition from the idea of historical centre to the concept of historical city meant in its overall dimension. This passage involves not only the urban scale of the city tissue, but also the architectural scale of the artifacts that built up the fabrics and tissues, which show their potential to be manipulated as places able to recall both identity values and updated needs.

The second aspect is related to the reinterpretation of public space as a potential place for the redefinition of the relations among the different elements involved in the urban development. The case-study shows how — by intervening on the **systems of mobility, open spaces and connecting elements** — it is possible to act on the habitability of the city itself.

The third theme to be mentioned deals with the role of public facilities meant as a form of horizontal subsidiarity, acting at the interface between tangible and intangible dimensions, by involving at the same time the citizens into **participatory processes** and the physical structures of the city entrusted with new social roles and urban tasks.

8.3.6 Perspectives for the future

In relation to future perspectives and the possibility to read Bologna as a reference for different urban contexts, the investigation on the recent and ongoing development highlights the successful potential of a strategy based on a double interweaved level: the overall device, able to define an open and dynamic network, constantly dialogues with the specificity of each urban, social, environmental condition, so as becoming a vehicle for an integrated approach to differences. The encounter and juxtaposition of different populations, urban forms that function in different ways, networks of varying dimensions into a unique urban fabric represents the expression of a reinterpreted identity, able to involve the historic city — from the consolidated ancient parts and the less structured “additions” — into a process of regeneration acting on a multiplicity of spatial and interpretative levels.