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Bologna and its porticoes: a thousand years' pursuit of the "common good"

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Bologna from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages

It is well known that Bologna boasts a remarkable architectural feature that distinguishes it from other European cities and towns[1]: the long sequence of façade porticoes lining most of its streets, both in the historic city centre and in parts of the suburbs.

To those born in Bologna or who have lived there for many years, this distinctive characteristic seems obvious, but it did not appear by chance nor over a short time. It was the result of a long process that has its origins almost a thousand years ago, when documentary evidence shows that certain dwellings were built with porticoes and, more interestingly, these porticoes, for both private and public use, were built not on public land but on private property.

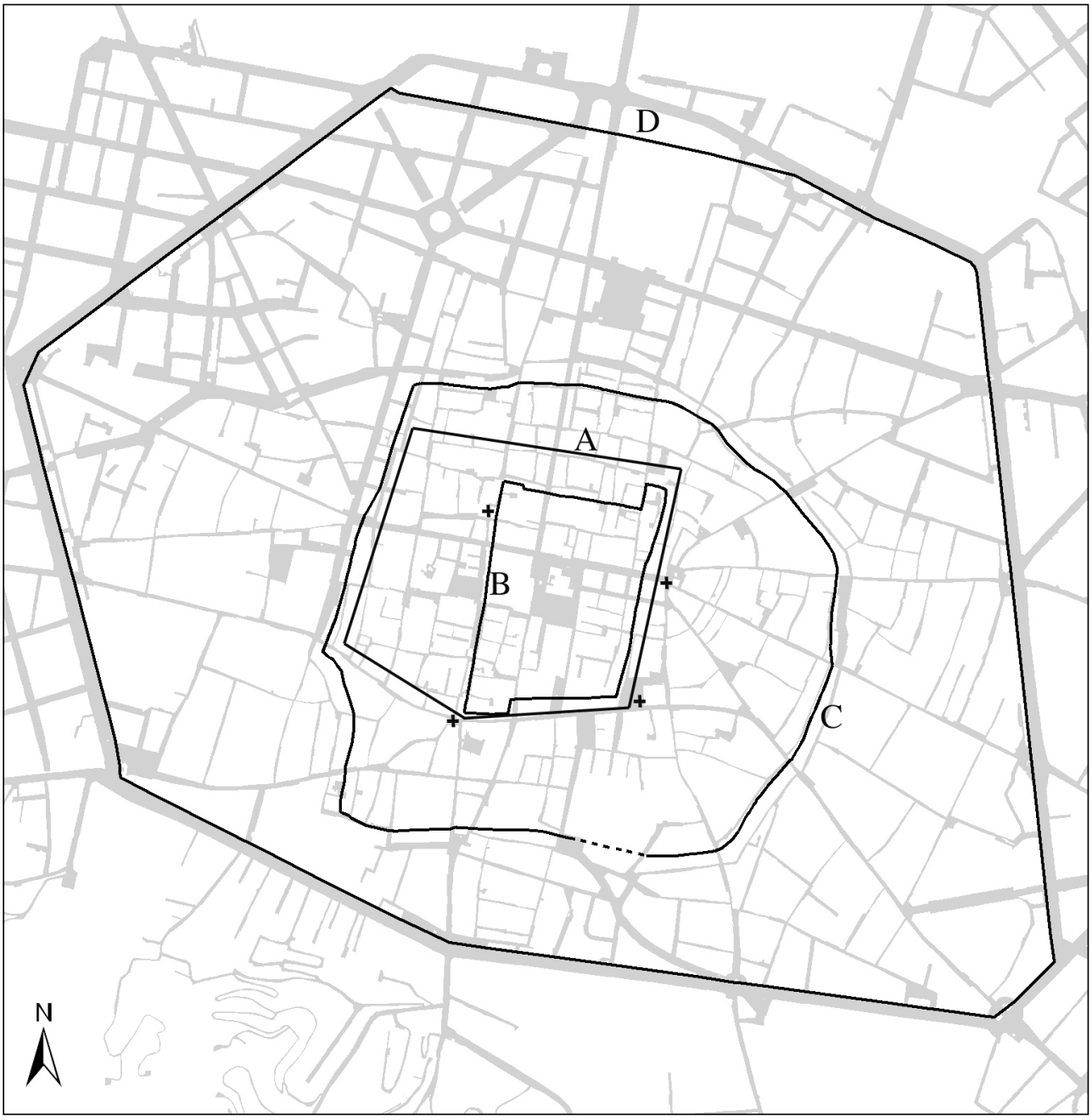
In order to understand the evolution of this complex property law system, it is necessary to outline the phases of urban development, determined by political, social and economic factors, adapting the urban fabric to various needs over a long period of time spanning from the crisis of late antiquity to the 13th and 14th centuries [Fig. 1].

The Roman city of *Bononia* was a well laid out settlement, extending over an area of about 40 ha [Fig. 1A]. *Cardines* and *decumani* formed an orthogonal plan where archaeological research shows that the dwellings were built without porticoes[2]. The political and economic crisis affecting the Roman Empire from the 3rd century onwards reached both town and country: *Bononia* also felt it severely. On a journey along the Via Aemilia in the 4th century, St. Ambrose, the influential Archbishop of Milan, observed that the towns on that consular road were so badly deteriorated that they appeared semi-destroyed, almost like corpses ("*semirutarum urbium cadavera*")[3]. Indeed, *Bononia* shrank to less than half of the original area, and was enclosed within a solid circle of walls known as Selenite walls [Fig. 1B] from the name of the large chalk ashlars of Monte Donato from which the fortifications were built. Even in this much smaller settle-

[1] For an overview of European urban porticoes, see *I Portici di Bologna nel contesto europeo / Bologna's Porticos in the European Context*, Ed. **F. Bocchi**, **R. Smurra**, Bologna 2015.

[2] See *Alla ricerca di Bologna antica e medievale. Da Felsina a Bononia negli scavi di via D'Azeglio*, Ed. **R. Curina [*et al.*]**, Florence 2010.

[3] Epistolae 39 (Patrologia Latina 16, col. 1099).



1. Bologna urban development phases – A: Roman *Bononia*; B: Selenite walls (ca. 5th century A.D.); C: Torresotti walls (mid-12th century); D: *Circla* walls (1226-1227). Map in: *I Portici di Bologna e l'edilizia civile medievale*, Ed. F. Bocchi, Bologna 1990, p. 69

ment, where the Roman street layout was conserved, there were no porticoes: the ones that can be seen today date back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Sources from the following centuries described as "*civitas rupta antiqua* [ancient city in ruins]" the part of the Roman town outside the Selenite walls[4].

However long it may take, periods of economic decline come to an end sooner or later. In the 8th century, a certain amount of building work took place even outside the Selenite walls. The first signs of cautious development came with the Longobard conquest (727/728), with the military headquarters located along the eastern Via Aemilia (the present-day Strada Maggiore). In the second half of the century, with the end of Longobard rule and the constitution of the Papal State, to which Romagna belonged, Bologna was able to enjoy a fairly long period of peace that favoured recovery. Signs of economic revival were increasingly evident in the 10th century, a trend seen in other European cities. Population growth was evident in urban and rural areas[5] along with improved economic conditions, that attracted serfs escaping from their feudal masters to the cities in the hope of a better quality of life.

Migration from rural areas to the cities gave momentum to economic activities, especially craft production and trade, giving rise to demand for buildings for the growing urban population. At the same time, substantial changes in the social structure took place, with a new enterprising stratum of society emerging in urban centres[6].

The records of the monastery of St. Stephen in Bologna provide valuable insights into the phases of urbanization occurring between the 10th and the 12th centuries outside the Selenite walls to the east of Porta Ravegnana, where orchards and vineyards, owned by the monastery and to a lesser extent by laypersons, were crossed by streets linking the city to the surrounding territory. These were valuable plots, that could satisfy the demand for new houses, but as ecclesiastical property they could not be put up for sale, as under canonical law they were destined to help the needy. The monastery therefore adopted an ancient leasehold system known as emphyteusis (with the payment of ground rent for a duration of 99 years) regulating the concession of plots of land on which leaseholders built homes at their own expense over which they held leasehold rights, while paying an annual ground rent to the freeholder[7]. This leasehold system operated in other towns and cities where ecclesiastical and lay landlords owned land suitable for development[8].

In the eastern area of Bologna, along the streets arranged in a radial pattern, the monastery marked out rectangular plots about 7 m from front to back, with a street frontage of about 3.5 m; the innermost area of the blocks, managed directly by the monastery, was intended for the production of fruit and vegetables. Documentary sources give us a limited amount of information about the appearance of the dwellings. Each house usually consisted of a ground floor, used as a workshop, and an upper floor.

The emergence of porticoes

In order to gain insight into the significance of the diffusion of the porticoes in Bologna[9], it is necessary to identify when and in which parts of the city the phenomenon started and developed. Determining

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[4] **F. Bocchi**, *Bologna nei secoli IV–XIV. Mille anni di storia urbanistica di una metropoli medievale*, Bologna 2008, pp. 17–34.

[5] See **G. Pinto**, *I nuovi equilibri tra città e campagna in Italia fra XI e XII secolo*, [in:] *Città e campagna nei secoli altomedievali*, Spoleto 2009.

[6] See **R. Bordone**, *La Società cittadina del Regno d'Italia. Formazione e sviluppo delle caratteristiche urbane nei secoli XI e XII*, Turin 1987, p. 188.

[7] See **F. Bocchi**, *Suburbs and suburban areas in medieval Italy*, [in:] *Extra muros. Vorstädtische Räume in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit: Espaces suburbains au bas Moyen Âge et à l'époque moderne*, Ed. **G. Thewes**, **M. Uhrmacher**, Wien 2019, pp. 372–374.

[8] See *Le Sol et l'immeuble. Les formes dissociées de propriété immobilière dans les villes de France et d'Italie (XIIe–XIXe siècle)*, Ed. **O. Faron**, **E. Hubert**, Rome 1995.

[9] See **H. Sulze**, *Die Entwicklung der strassenhalle Bolognas*, Dresden 1921; **E. Sulze**, *Gli antichi portici di Bologna*, "Atti e Memorie della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna" S. 4, Vol. 18 (1927–1928); **F. Bocchi**, *Un simbolo di Bologna: i portici e l'edilizia civile medievale*, [in:] *Simbolo e realtà della vita urbana nel tardo Medioevo*, Ed. **M. Miglio**, **G. Lombardi**, Roma 1988.

the time exactly is not easy, because the documentation is abundant and often unpublished. What so far seems to be the earliest evidence documenting the existence of a portico dates back to the year 1041, but since it is the renewal of a contract (*ad renovandum*), it refers to a previous contract the precise date of which is not known. This contract is the lease to a shoemaker and his wife of a plot of land with a house situated outside the Selenite walls, near the *trivium* (crossroads) of Porta Ravegnana. The building, facing onto the present-day Strada Maggiore, was located on a plot of 39 m^2:

> outside the city of Bologna, at the Crossroads of the Trivio di Porta Ravegnana, bordering on Strada Maggiore, a plot of land with the house and all that is above and inside the house in its entirety, measuring in length on both sides of thirty feet [i.e. 11.40 m deep][10] including the portico and its access, and on the two opposite ends nine feet [i.e. 3.42 m, that was the length of the façade][11].

From this lease we can infer that the portico incorporated into the façade was part of the plot, so it did not encroach onto public land. A number of leases dating back to the 11th century in addition to the one dated 1041, relating to the same eastern sector of the city, survive. They show that in the course of the century, and even more so in the following century, the plots were located farther and farther away from the Selenite walls, and they were larger and larger. This documentary evidence shows that residential building was increasingly taking place in the area of expansion of the city on plots owned by ecclesiastical bodies or individuals. As in the previous period, the portico was not built on public land but on the plot specified in the lease. This is a crucial factor that distinguishes the ownership of the land on which many Bolognese porticoes were built, in contrast with those to be found in other medieval cities.

As noted above, in 1041 the plot was in an extramural settlement, an area of new development just outside the early medieval city walls. On the other hand, within the confines of the city walls, private building had few porticoes which "illegally" occupied public land. In the extramural settlement, everything seems to have been well regulated, including the right of way of passers-by, although the porticoes stood on private property, a principle that remains unchanged even a thousand years later.

The shaping of Bologna porticoes

The new residential buildings in the areas just outside the Selenite walls incorporated a wooden portico built on the plot. This constituted an innovative architectural configuration and legal concept compared to the situation within the city walls, where many buildings dated back to an earlier period, and had been erected with different purposes and requirements. The *civitas*, the city of Bologna confined within the Selenite walls, contained housing and other buildings necessary for urban life throughout the early Middle Ages. Outside the walls some development had taken place, but without the protection provided by the Selenite walls. The economic development that was slowly taking place towards the end of the first millennium made the available space inside the *civitas* insufficient for the needs of a growing population. It is well known that city walls were an expensive infrastructure, replaced in the case of absolute necessity and only when economic conditions allowed. Therefore, in the first place, an attempt was made to make the most of the building land and any free space within the city limits. The Selenite walls had offered shelter to the townspeople of Bologna for centuries and refuge to the inhabitants of the suburban areas, especially from 899 onwards at the time of the dreadful incursions of the Hungarians, lasting until the middle of the following century. However, the availability of space within the city was increasingly

[10] One Bolognese medieval foot is equal to 38 cm.

[11] See **G. Feo**, *Le Carte bolognesi del secolo XI*, Bologna 2001, p. 98.

limited. Alternative solutions were sought. The most widely implemented was the creation of extra space by projecting the first-floor load-bearing beams at the front of the house onto the street, thus creating an overhang projecting outwards. In the 9th–11th centuries, in order to avoid the risk of collapse, these structures were supported by sturdy wooden pillars resting directly on the public land. The genesis of the medieval portico within the area enclosed by the Selenite walls, with the occupation of public land (both at first-floor level and on the ground), was typical of Italian cities in the early Middle Ages, since the minimal level of governance facilitated the appropriation of public land for private use.

From private use of public land to public use of private land

For many years private encroachment onto the streets did not attract much attention from the public authority due to the lack of control by the city government. In the second half of the 11th and at the dawn of the 12th century, in the Italian city states significant social changes took place, also due to the different composition of the city dwellings as a result of the improved economic conditions. Following the collapse of the previous governing order, the emerging elite explored ways to fill the political vacuum[12]. The key question is why such a strong need to build houses with a portico occurred, at least in areas of new development and where, presumably, many new urban residents were engaged in various trades. It was not just a matter of protecting passers-by from the rain and the heat of the sun, as the Grand Tour travellers pointed out in the 18th century[13]. It was rather the fact that the space under the portico enabled craftsmen to work outside in the daylight, at any time of the year, especially when manufacturing bulky objects, as in the case of carpenters and coopers, or when there was a need to lay out fabrics and skins to dry, or when was no space to store raw materials [Fig. 2]. In addition, it was possible with appropriate precautions, such as placing a barrier on the side of the street, to avoid rainwater run-off, so that in bad weather, when the street became muddy, passers-by could get past while the craftsmen were at work under the portico.

At the end of the 11th century and especially in the following century, the governments of the cities of central-northern Italy, strengthened by popular consensus, were taken over by the leading families who set up autonomous civic governments or Communes. This was also a period of significant growth for central-northern Italy, and sooner or later all the cities and towns built a new circuit of city walls, to protect the districts that had been built up outside the original city centre. Bologna built the second circuit of walls, known as the Torresotti walls [Fig. 1C], in the mid-12th century, to defend the city from incursions by the armies of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, aiming at re-establishing the power of the Holy Roman Empire over the cities, by reducing the political autonomy of communes[14]. This newly walled settlement, four times the area enclosed by the original fortifications, comprised both the first settlement in which porticoes came to encroach on public land, and the more recently urbanized area in which this situation was more carefully regulated. At the heart of the city were the services and sites of civil and religious power: Piazza Maggiore with the Palazzo Comunale [Fig. 3], and not far away San Pietro, the cathedral.

Despite recurring conflicts between some northern Italy urban communities and the emperors (Frederick Barbarossa and Frederick II), the need to deal with the chaotic situation caused by encroachments onto the public highway became evident. One of oldest surviving records concerning this issue is from

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[12] On Italian communal movements, with a focus on Milan, Pisa, and Rome, in the 11th and 12th centuries, see **C. Wickham**, *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century*, Princeton, N.J. 2015.

[13] See **G. Roversi**, *I portici negli scrittori stranieri*, [in:] *I Portici di Bologna e l'edilizia civile medievale*, Ed. **F. Bocchi**, Bologna 1990 (reprinted in 2019); **R. Sweet**, *'Beauty and convenience': British perceptions of Bologna and its portici in the age of the Grand Tour*, [in:] *I Portici di Bologna nel contesto europeo / Bologna's Porticos in the European Context.*

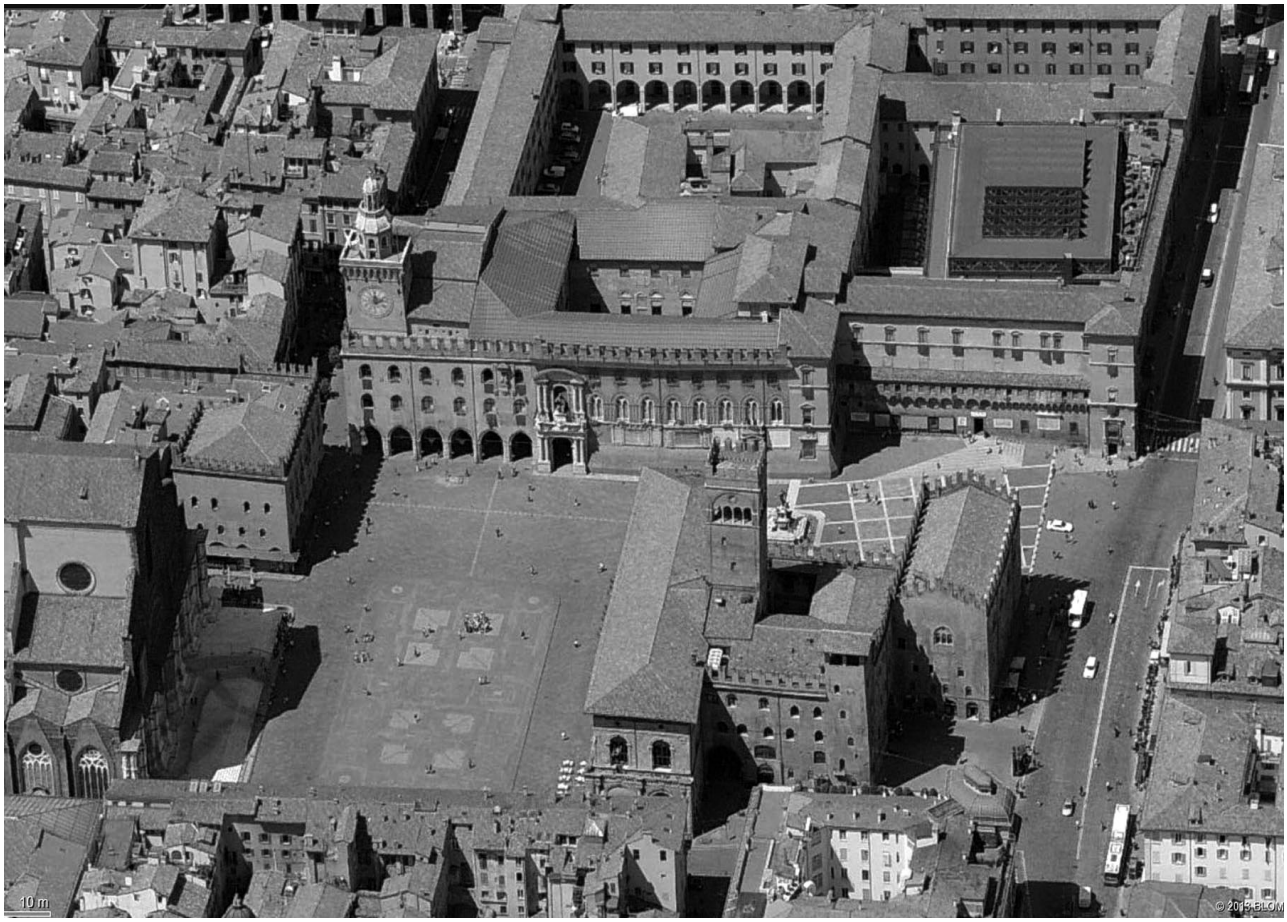
[14] See **P. Foschi**, *Le Fortificazioni di Bologna in età federiciana. Dalla cerchia dei Torresotti alla Circla del 1226*, [in:] *Federico II e Bologna*, Bologna 1996.

2. A carpenter at work under the portico of his house. The inscription says: "*Iste est magister Nicholaus de Rasiglio qui cotidie laborat sub porticu domus sue diebus feriatis et non feriatis* [This man is master Nicholaus de Rasiglio, who works every day under the portico of his house, both on weekdays and on festival days]". Photo: Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Documenti e codici miniati,* n. 1, c. 1r, 1264

Vicenza in the present-day Veneto. At the beginning of the 13th century, the commune of Vicenza ordered the demolition of about 100 unauthorized porticoes and external stairs invading public land and hindering free movement along the street. This decree highlights the fact that the ruling elite had the power to issue orders that impacted on the entrenched interests of individuals[15].

In Bologna during the 13th century, it became necessary to put in place a tighter and more accurate control over public space due to demographic and economic. In 1226–1227, some 70 years after the erection of the Torresotti walls, it was decided to build an outer circle of city walls [Fig. 1D], known as the Circla. This 7 km circuit, almost entirely demolished in 1902, proved to be large enough to satisfy the demographic growth until the end of 19th century when the first master plan was adopted by the urban planning department (1889). During the 13th century the urban population amounted to 50 000, a figure that makes Bologna a medieval metropolis. Documentary evidence from the early 13th century casts light on the efforts of the Commune to rearrange certain areas of the city, particularly the medieval settlement adjacent to the Selenite walls. In the administrative records it is possible to discern the concept of Bolognese porticoes: private houses were now required to have porticoes for public use built on private land.

[15] See **G. Da Schio**, *Decreto edilizio emanato a nome del Comune di Vicenza l'anno MCCVIII*, Padova 1860; **R. Smurra**, *La Determinazione delle linee di confine. Sapere e prassi dall'Antichità all'Età comunale*, "Kronos" 2008, Supplemento 4.



3. Piazza Maggiore, seen from the East; *right:* Palazzo del Podestà and Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo; *top:* Palazzo d'Accursio and its tower. The building, a former private residence, became in succession a granary, seat of Papal legate, and municipal seat of the Comune of Bologna; *left:* Palazzo dei Notai and basilica of San Petronio. Photo: Google Earth

As mentioned above, porticoes gradually became obligatory in Bologna, for the convenience of passers-by but also for craftsmen in their workshops. It is a situation quite different from other Italian cities, where porticoes were built exclusively in cases in which permission was granted to use public land.

The City of Bologna adopted measures that impacted on private interests when it was certain that it would be able to enforce these measures. All these developments took place in the middle of the 13th century in a system of governance with the political support of merchants, tradesmen and craftsmen belonging to guilds.

The 13th century and the widespread construction of porticoes

In the 13th century, a period of significant urban growth, a number of planning regulations were already in place, though they could not be strictly applied to historic buildings. In Bologna, new development took place in compliance with the urban planning regulations, whereas in the historic city centre the existing buildings were less subject to these regulations. As a result, in the case of existing private buildings it was necessary to remove any unauthorized features hampering movement along the street and to draw up records of the rainwater drainage discharging onto public land, implementing a sort of building amnesty. For these reasons in 1245, and at regular intervals until 1294, a commission of surveyors and representatives of the city government carried out detailed surveys in order to indicate the boundary between public and private space.

These surveys were carried out in three main squares: Piazza di Porta Ravegnana, the site of a long established market in the area around the Garisenda and Asinelli, the two towers already in place at the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century; Piazza Maggiore, where the government buildings were located and the daily market was held[16]; and the piazza of the Saturday market (the present-day Piazza VIII Agosto). Similar surveys were carried out along the streets running outside and inside the defences, in particular the Torresotti and Circla walls. The valuable records describing this crucial phase of urban planning in Bologna are known as *Libri terminorum*, i.e. the books in which the boundaries between public and the private land were made visible by means of stakes or pickets (*termini*) placed on the ground. The accuracy of the measurements with a detailed record of the position of each picket and the measurement of the overhangs made it possible to ascertain whether the boundary ran outside the columns that supported the porticoes[17].

In the middle of the 13th century, in connection with the rise to power of the guilds and the constitution of the Popular commune, the first city statutes were issued. These consisted of a body of laws collecting local customs and resolutions taken by various committees to regulate social and community life. The statutes, drawn up between 1250 and 1262, paid great attention to the rapid expansion of the city, especially over the previous 100 years, a period that had seen the flourishing of the Studium (the University), the construction of Torresotti walls (mid-12th century), that within a few decades proved insufficient, and ultimately the Circla walls (in the 1220s). The statutes consolidated the existing regulations governing public land, setting up specific offices for this purpose. In this way, infringements of public land and the displacement of pickets were subject to sanctions[18], but at the same time streets, squares and porticoes were made more accessible, urban decorum and public hygiene were promoted by closing the narrow alleyways at the side of houses where sewage was discharged, thus laying the foundations of what was to become the city's sewage system.

The laying of paving, the removal of obstacles along the streets, the construction of underground drains in the place of alleyways gave rise to the need to take account of the porticoes, as by the middle of the 13th century, the network of porticoes was extensive. During the 12 years recorded by the statutes (1250–1262) hundreds of resolutions were taken for the laying out of the brick paving, straightening of the roads, and the rearrangement of many inefficient features[19]. The existence of porticoes described as *columne* (wooden pillars), is widely recorded in the statutes, either as a result of an order to remove them, or because a street was to be widened, forcing the householders to rebuild them farther back from the street frontage[20]. In particular, a large number of provisions were recorded for the area between the second and third circle of walls, that was characterized by the division into numerous plots.

The statutes of the mid-13th century, however, include not only orders concerning specific buildings or streets, but also general rules that were to become laws in subsequent statutory codifications, and even some that are still in force today. Essentially, the first rules regulating the public use of the existing porticoes were adopted. It was forbidden to occupy the public streets with porticoes, overhangs and drips; it was also required to keep porticoes clear of any mobile or fixed elements (carts, wood, poles, bars) that

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[16] See **R. Smurra**, *The Palatia Comunis Bononie and their commercial facilities in the 13th and 14th centuries*, [in:] *Städtische Wirtschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Franz Irsigler zum 70. Geburtstag*, Ed. **R. Holbach**, **M. Pauly**, Köln 2011.

[17] See **M. Venticelli**, *I "libri Terminorum" bolognesi*, [in:] *Medieval Metropolises. Metropoli medievali: Proceedings of the Atlas Working Group International Commission for the History of Towns*, Ed. **F. Bocchi**, Casalecchio di Reno 1999.

[18] See **R. Smurra**, *Prassi amministrativa e spazi di circolazione cittadini come immagine urbana: Bologna alla fine del Duecento*, [in:] *Imago Urbis. L'Immagine della città nella storia d'Italia. Atti del Congresso Internazionale (Bologna, 5–7 settembre 2001)*, Ed. **F. Bocchi**, **R. Smurra**, Bologna 2003.

[19] See *Statuti di Bologna dall'anno 1245 all'anno 1267*, Ed. **L. Frati**, Vols. 1–3, Bologna 1869–1880, passim.

[20] See *Statuti di Bologna dell'anno 1288*, Ed. **G. Fasoli**, **P. Sella**, Vol. 2, Città del Vaticano 1939; **G. Gozzadini**, *Note per studi sull'architettura civile in Bologna dal secolo XIII al XVI*, Bologna 1875.

would prevent free movement on foot and horseback, reduce the amount of headroom and prevent access thus endangering passers-by. By means of these regulations, porticoes were making the transition from semi-private use, which had been one of the reasons for their construction, to become more and more available for public use. Above all it was not left to the discretion of householder whether or not to build porticoes, which in any case had to be built on private land.

Towards the end of the 13th century, with the enactment of anti-magnate legislation and the establishment of an even more rigorous and exclusive guild-based popular government, the control by governing bodies over the city paid increasing attention to compliance with urban planning regulations and protection of public space as shown by the statutes issued in 1288[21]. The 10th book of the statutes contains 72 rubrics entirely dedicated to urban management, public health and hygiene, maintenance activities, measures against pollution and fire prevention. Rubric 52, in particular, deals with the mandatory construction of porticoes:

> We hereby order that all those who are under the jurisdiction of the city commune of Bologna, having houses or plots without porticoes, in the city and suburbs, in places where it is customary for porticoes to exist, are to have a portico built if it is not already in place, on the street frontage [...] and they shall be responsible in perpetuity for its maintenance at their own expense[22].

The specification that the portico was to be built in places where it was customary extends the obligation to almost the entire urban and suburban area, as we can see from the results of this provision still visible today [Fig. 4]. At the same time, it allowed the centre of the city, which had been protected for centuries by the Selenite walls preserving elements of the Roman street layout, to maintain its historical characteristics. Moreover, the fact that over the centuries householders were obliged to maintain the portico, albeit for public use, is evidence of the strength of these provisions, based on customs consolidated over a long period and not considered to be an imposition.

At the end of the 13th century, medieval buildings in Bologna had already acquired characteristics that would be maintained in the following centuries, although renovated. The sturdy chestnut pillars of the porticoes were replaced by brick; the *asenari* (transversal beams that supported the first floor or the roof) were covered with plaster. From the 15th century onwards, the portico was no longer an additional feature, but an integral part of the building at the time of construction. The typical structure of the houses, however, did not change, allowing the buildings of Bologna to preserve the characteristics that emerged during the 13th and 14th centuries.

The transformation of the porticoes between the Middle Ages and the early modern age

In the 13th and 14th centuries, it was not just minor domestic buildings that were constructed with wooden porticoes[23]. Public buildings and aristocratic *palazzi* also had imposing porticoes with high chestnut pillars (locally known as *stilate*). There are few surviving wooden porticoes in the city, partly because of the ordinances that since the 14th century onwards, reiterated several times afterwards, required the wooden pillars to be replaced by masonry columns, to prevent fires. However, not all householders com-

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[21] Similar concerns can be found in other administrative documentation – see **R. Smurra**, *Prassi amministrativa e spazi di circolazione cittadini come immagine urbana*….

[22] See *Statuti di Bologna dell'anno 1288,* Vol. 2, p. 163.

[23] See **S. Nepoti**, **J.B. Ward-Perkins**, *The medieval houses with wooden supports of Bologna and its province*, "Archeologia dell'architettura" No. 14 (2009); **P. Guidotti**, *L'approvvigionamento dei materiali edili: il legno e la selenite*, [in:] *I Portici di Bologna e l'edilizia*...

4. Bologna historic centre and porticoes distribution (bold lines), amounting to 38 km. Map in: *I Portici di Bologna e l'edilizia civile medievale*, Ed. F. Bocchi, Bologna 1990, pp. 73–74

plied with these ordinances. Among the few surviving wooden porticoes that have come down to us, a fine example is Casa Isolani in Strada Maggiore, a private residence belonging to a wealthy family. The portico still consists of the original tall wooden pillars up to the fourth floor [Fig. 5]. The portico of the Palazzo Comunale, in Piazza Maggiore, also had wooden pillars dating back to 1200, though they were replaced in the 15th century. The only round-arched Romanesque portico, with exceptionally high masonry columns, is that of the Palazzo Arcivescovile or Episcopal Palace, dating back to the first half of the 13th century. An example of an exceptionally wide portico, about 7 m wide, is the round-arched portico adjoining the northern nave of the basilica of Santa Maria dei Servi (13th century), designed at the end of the 14th century by Antonio di Vincenzo, the architect of the basilica of San Petronio[24].

In the 15th century, although Bologna was officially part of the Papal State, the Bentivoglio family wielded seigniorial power over the city. Giovanni II Bentivoglio, lord of the city from 1463 to 1506, reorganized and renovated parts of the urban fabric, particularly those where his family's houses had resided

[24] See **A. M. Matteucci**, *Antonio di Vincenzo e la cultura tardogotica a Bologna*, Milan 1987.

for generations. Giovanni built an imposing palazzo with a portico (destroyed in 1506, when the Pope took definitive possession of the city) in Via San Donato, just outside the Torresotti walls[25]. In this area the works commissioned by Giovanni II included the construction of a piazza overlooked by an impressive stable block; nearby the parish church of Santa Cecilia, where the Bentivoglio family worshipped, with the cycle of frescoes with the history of Santa Cecilia begun by the artist Francesco Francia, "interpreter of the gentle Humanism of Bologna bentivolesca"[26]; and the apse of the basilica of San Giacomo, where the family's burial chapel is located. On the outside of the southern aisle of the basilica, Giovanni II had a Renaissance portico built at the city's expense[27], with *all'antica* terracotta frieze displaying his effigy (1477/1478).

With the end of the Bentivoglio lordship (1506) during the papacy of Julius II, Bologna became definitively part of the Papal Church. The Papal Legate or his deputy governed the city to all intents and purposes, though officially the Bolognese Senate, presided over by the *Gonfaloniere*, acted alongside the Papal Legate. The Senate was an assembly consisting only of limited number of aristocratic families. The Bolognese Senate had neither decision-making nor executive powers, but senatorial families enjoyed privileges, the most obvious and symbolic of which was the right to erect a palazzo without any obligation to build a portico. This allowed them to erect palazzi between two streets like those in Rome, emphasizing the supremacy of the aristocratic families over the rest of the population, who had to comply with the obligation to build a portico[28].

Not all senatorial families built a palazzo occupying an entire city block, but even when conforming with the customary architecture, they took the opportunity to display their prestige[29]. Many splendid 16th-century palazzi were built with porticoes and are an integral part of the urban fabric, giving a sort of uniformity of the street they form part of, including Palazzo Malvezzi-Campeggi in Via San Donato (1522), Palazzo Bolognini Amorini in Piazza Santo Stefano (1520) [Fig. 6], Palazzo Fava Marescotti (1573) in the present-day Via Manzoni, and Palazzo Magnani (1570) in Via San Donato which has a state room frescoed by the Carracci in 1590[30].

Under the Papal State an important role in urban planning was played by Pier Donato Cesi, deputy of the Papal Legate Carlo Borromeo from 1560 onwards. He was responsible for the urban renewal commissioned by Pope Pius IV, determining the current layout of Piazza Maggiore with the construction of the fountain of Neptune and the Portico dei Banchi. Cesi was also in charge of the construction of the Archiginnasio [Fig. 7], the first public seat of the Studium, an important manifestation of cultural policy, aimed at maintaining control over higher education[31].

In the 15th–16th centuries the eastern side of Piazza Maggiore, until that time a mix of private buildings from different periods, was reorganized, whereas on the other three sides the buildings had been renovated with porticoed façades, and the basilica of San Petronio was under construction. The 16th-century renovation project aimed at adapting the façade of the Portico dei Banchi, designed by

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[25] See **R. Schofield**, **M. T. Sambin de Norcen**, *Palazzo dei Bentivoglio a Bologna. Studi su un'architettura scomparsa*, Bologna 2018.

[26] *Sala 13: L'arte durante la signoria dei Bentivoglio*, http://www.pinacotecabologna.beniculturali.it/it/content_page/27-sala-13-l-arte-durante-la-signoria-dei-bentivoglio (access date: 27.05.2020).

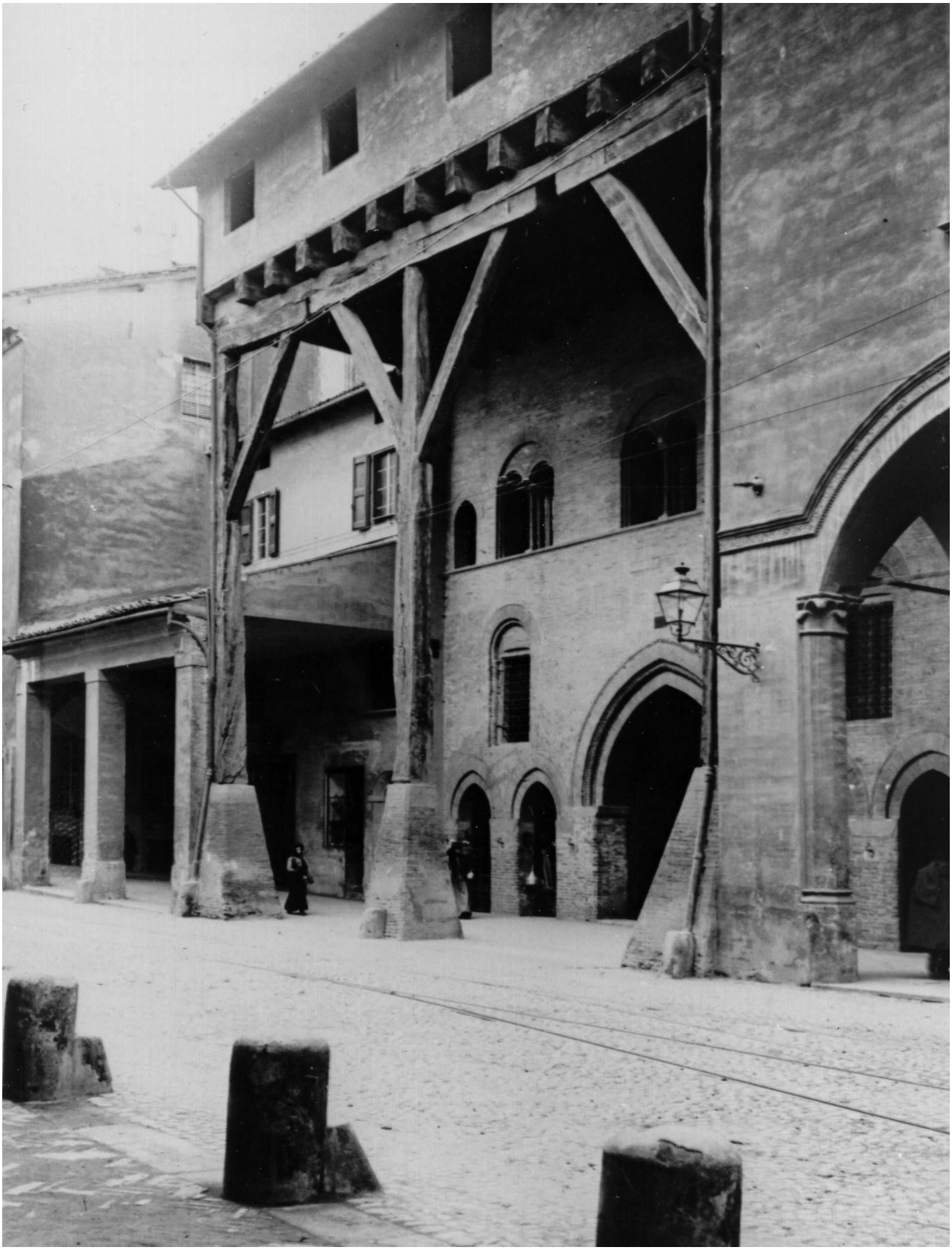
[27] The expenses amounted to 3,633 lire, 7 soldi, 3 denari – see **C. Ghirardacci**, *Della historia di Bologna. Parte terza*, Ed. **A. Sorbelli**, Città di Castello – Bologna 1915–1932, p. 216.

[28] See **G. Cuppini**, *I Palazzi senatori a Bologna*, Bologna 1974.

[29] See **G. Roversi**, *Palazzi e case nobili del '500 a Bologna. La storia, le famiglie, le opere d'arte*, Bologna 1986.

[30] See **F. Ceccarelli**, *L'architettura del portico bolognese tra medioevo e prima età moderna*, [in:] *I Portici di Bologna nel contesto...*

[31] As noted above, the Studium was an important stimulus to the urban development – see **F. Ceccarelli**, *Scholarum exaedificatio. La costruzione del palazzo dell'Archiginnasio e la piazza delle Scuole a Bologna*, [in:] *L'Università e la città. Il ruolo di Padova e degli altri atenei italiani nello sviluppo urbano*, Ed. **G. Mazzi**, Bologna 2006.



5. Strada Maggiore, Casa Isolani, on a period photograph, first half of the 20th century. Photo: Fototeca della Fondazione della Cassa di Risparmio in Bologna

Jacopo Barozzi (known as il Vignola) in 1565 [Fig. 8], to the taste and architectural style characteristic of the Roman Renaissance, of which Pier Donato Cesi was a leading exponent[32]. The Portico dei Banchi in Piazza Maggiore, extending with the Pavaglione, the "pavilion" under which the silkworm fair was held, and continuing with that of the Ospedale della Morte (the present-day Civic Archaeological Museum), is the continuation of the portico of the Archiginnasio. This portico, more than 300 m long, is not interrupted by side streets, which are accessed through archways. This fine example of Renaissance architecture consists of round-arched porticoes, in which the columns are linked to each other with iron rods, in the same way as the columns fixed to the wall of the building with rods, many of which were put in place after the devastating earthquake of 1504–1505[33].

Porticoes outside the city walls: from San Luca (1674) to the Treno della Barca (1957–1962)

The porticoes of Bologna are to be found throughout the city whose *forma urbis* and size, defined in the 13th century, remained largely unchanged until the last decade of the 19th century, when the first settlements outside the Circla were planned. In the city centre there are 38 km of porticoes standing on both sides or just one side of the street [Fig. 4]. Outside this urban area there are porticoes dating back to the early decades of the 17th century mainly leading out from the city gates, towards extra mural religious buildings. Moreover, in the urban development outside the medieval walls, which began with the 1889 master plan, there are long stretches of porticoed streets, although with less density than in the historic city centre, since the layout of the plots was no longer the same. Indeed, in these new plots, the residential building was often surrounded by a garden, so that the façade was set back from the street and as a result the portico had no reason to exist. However, where the residential building was constructed directly on the street, many porticoed sections are to be found.

The most significant architectural project of a devotional portico outside the medieval city walls dates back to the second half of the 17th century, to the famous arcade leading to the sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca on the hill of the Guardia [Fig. 9], the site of pilgrimages since the 12th century. This portico, the construction of which was started in 1674, consists of a long flat stretch from Porta Saragozza to the Arco del Meloncello, from which a steep climb leads to the basilica[34]. The portico, which measures 3.8 km, consists of 666 arches and 15 chapels, with a total elevation of over 215 m. It has a characteristic that was unusual in Bologna until then: it is not a portico that was an integral part of a residential building, but a covered passageway that has no counterpart among buildings within the city, in the surrounding territory, or elsewhere[35].

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[32] See **R. Tuttle**, *Piazza Maggiore. Studi su Bologna nel Cinquecento*, Venice 2001, p. 218. The façade of the Portico dei Banchi is three storeys high, 96 m long, and less than 10 m wide.

[33] The earthquake swarm began on 31 December 1504 and ended in May 1505 – see **E. Guidoboni**, *Effetti dei terremoti a Bologna dal Trecento al Seicento*, [in:] *Atlante storico di Bologna*, Ed. **R. Dondarini**, **C. De Angelis**, Vol. 3: *Da una crisi all'altra (secoli XIV–XVII)*.

[34] See **P. Foschi**, *Le Vie d'accesso al santuario e la costruzione del portico*, [in:] *La Madonna di San Luca in Bologna: otto secoli di storia, di arte e di fede*, Ed. **M. Fanti**, **G. Roversi**, Bologna 1993.

[35] The object that comes closest in terms of function, though not in terms of length, is the portico (1746–1780) leading from the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Monte Berico (Vicenza). It is 700 m long, consists of 150 arches, for a total elevation of more than 100 m from the point of departure to the Sanctuary.

6. Palazzo Bolognini Amorini Salina, 16th-century senatorial palace and its portico. Photo: C. Pelagalli

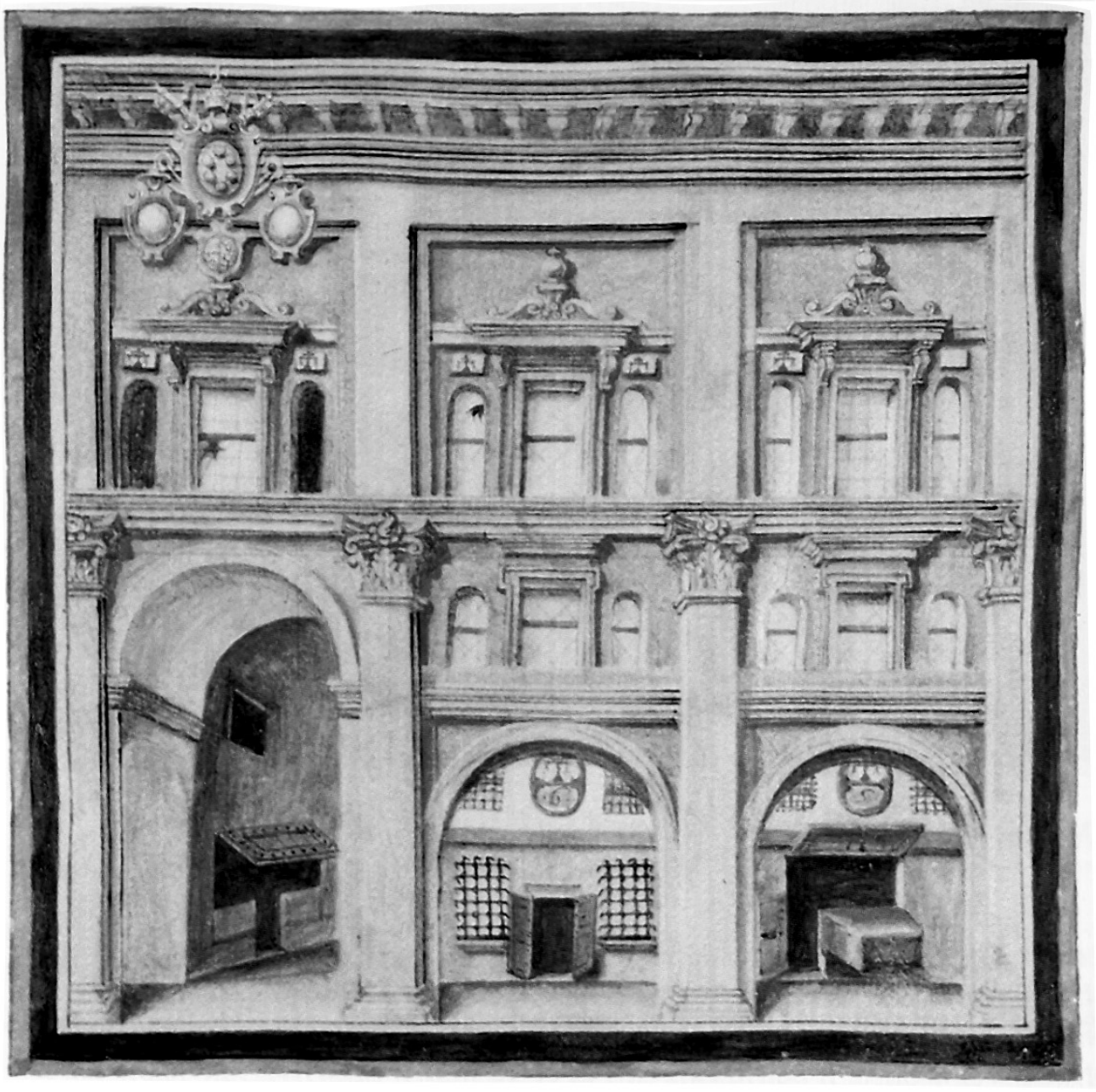
7. Portico del Pavaglione: Archiginnasio e dell'Ospedale della Morte. Photo: F. Ceccarelli

Mention should also be made of the modern portico known as the Treno, located in the suburban district of the Barca, 5 km from the city centre, for which it is hard to find a comparable construction [Fig. 10]. It is a residential and commercial development designed by the architect Giuseppe Vaccaro and built between 1958 and 1967, that continues for 580 m. The Treno does not have a counterpart in the city of Bologna, and it is not comparable to the Portico di San Luca, or covered walkways in other European cities.

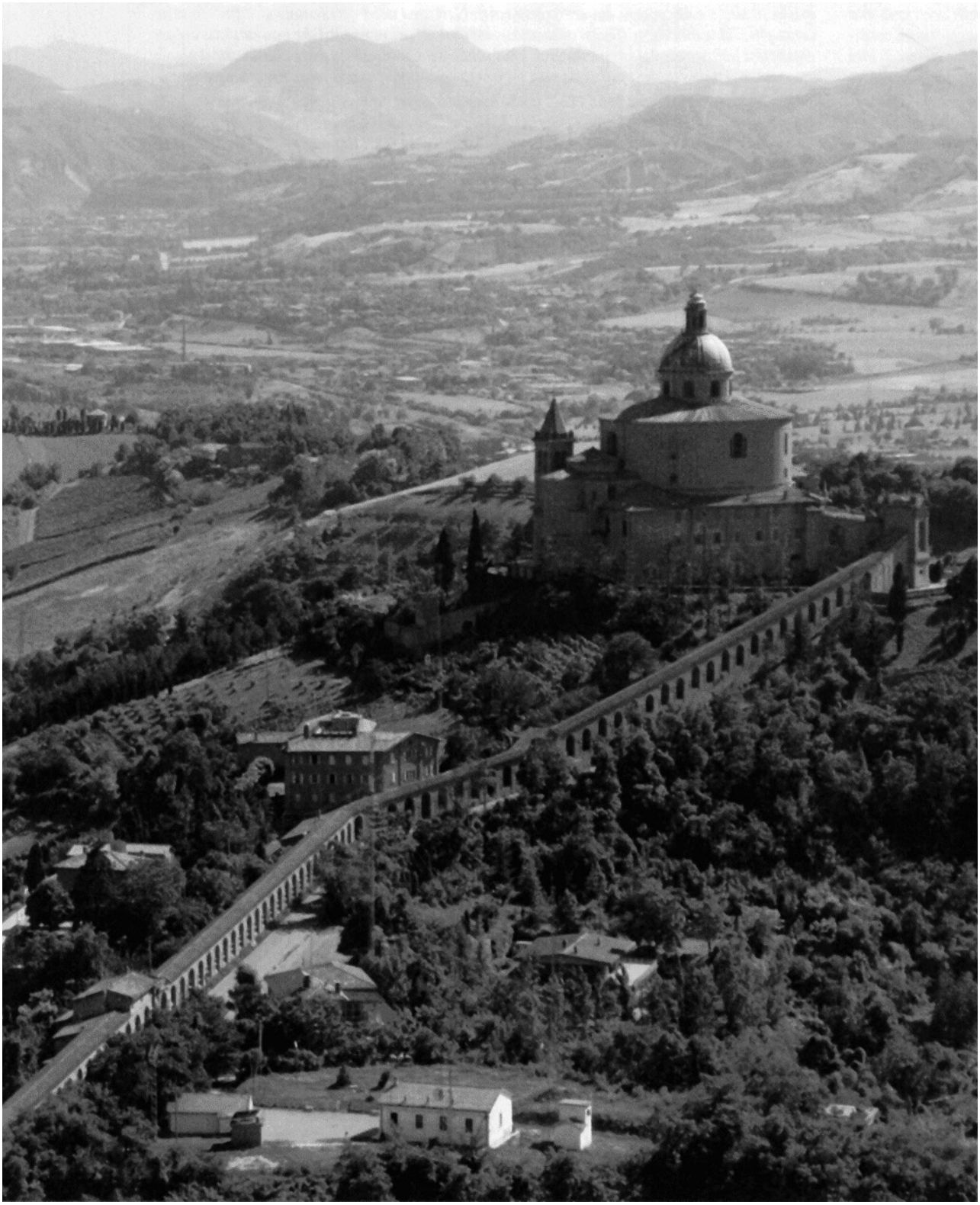
Conclusion

If today Bologna is known as the city of porticoes, this is due to the buildings erected over the past thousand years. Initially porticoes were a characteristic of new development outside the city walls in areas that were still partly rural, but settlements that were modern at the time, comparing to the city within the early medieval walls, which survived the Roman city affected by the crisis of late antiquity. There was no turning back from those innovative developments. The porticoes were shared with the community by the householders, who at the same time were entitled to use all the other porticoes in the city. They were convenient places to work and cultivate social relations and have continued to fulfil these functions over the centuries.

The residential buildings were replaced, in some cases several times, but the porticoes have survived. Architectural styles and the size of the houses have changed, following fashion and periods of prosperity. Most palazzi of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, as well as the houses of middle class and lower-income groups were characterized by the presence of a portico, an element of identity for the inhabitants of the city. Bologna has always been an inclusive city, starting from the early Middle Ages when it attracted fugitive serfs from the countryside and small landowners in search of a better life, and later when it



8. Portico dei Banchi in Piazza Maggiore. Photo: Archivio di Stato di Bologna, *Campione* di S. Maria della Vita, 1595–1601



9. Basilica di S. Luca and so-called portico, a 17th-century covered passageway, ca. 4 km long, leading to the sanctuary on the hill of the Guardia. Photo: E. Pasquali

10. Treno by the architect G. Vaccaro, a residential building built between 1958 and 1967 within the suburban district Barca. Photo: Google Earth

hosted thousands of students from all across Italy and Europe[36]. Porticoes are part of the way of life for both locals and newcomers. When in the 19th and 20th century it became necessary to rebuild medieval buildings that had fallen into disrepair, porticoes were sometimes incorporated into modern buildings, now and then into buildings inspired by Romanesque and Gothic architecture, but in any case they were an integral part of the urban fabric. Even the terrible damage caused by bombing during the World War II had a positive effect by leading to rebuilding the porticoes as they were and where they were, although the architectural style was contemporary. The significance of porticoes for the identity of the city is such that they have managed to survive for over a thousand years, and they are now ready for another millennium.

Słowa kluczowe
portyki, Bolonia, analiza historyczna, średniowieczne statuty i przepisy, struktura i cechy formalne portyków

Keywords
porticoes, Bologna, historical analysis, medieval statutes and regulations, structure and formal characteristics of porticoes

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Summary

FRANCESCA BOCCHI, ROSA SMURRA (University of Bologna), Bologna and its porticoes: a thousand years' pursuit of the "common good"

Medieval cities featured porticoes, especially in market areas; however, many porticoes disappeared over time. This paper deals with the emergence and continuity of Bologna porticoes underlining the property law system which supported the continuity and maintenance of Bolognese porticoes. While describing the structure of the medieval wooden portico and its evolution, the article also illustrates the phases of urban development and the political, social and economic factors which determined such a continuance of Bolognese porticoes.