

University Cities: A Strategic Resource of Small and Medium-Sized Cities in Europe

Gastone Ave

Introduction

This chapter addresses the challenges posed in Europe to second-rank cities by the university institutions located within their boundaries. The main thesis is that universities, while also having a key role in European nation-capital cities, like Rome or Berlin, or in world-class metropolises, like Paris and London, exert their driving force best in small and medium-sized cities. Here, universities can be new engines of cultural and economic landscapes. These engines are so powerful that the growth of many European cities and surrounding regions depend on how successful they are in attracting the key factors of university life: public investments in research and education, the best faculty staff, students, private entrepreneurs, and philanthropic actors. In addition, university cities may take advantage of a free and constant flow of communication activities directed both to selected audiences of investors and to the general public, generated by locally-based universities.

The outcome is a free flow of activities of urban co-marketing which allows a university city to building a sound image of itself as hub of creativity, technology, culture, and future-oriented entrepreneurship—all factors eagerly sought by international investors in search of a place to land. However, the positive impact of universities on surrounding areas may be highly curbed by the lack of support from adequate policies and investments within their own city, region, and nation. University institutions should be sustained by local, regional, and national decision-makers who, together with the European Union, should act accordingly to bolster the positive influence of universities on host cities.

A Long Trail of Cooperation Between Cities and Universities

Cities and universities have cooperated with each other since the early days. The relationship between universities and cities from medieval times in Europe to the present has already been the subject of in-depth studies.¹¹⁹ The university in the western world is the oldest institution, along with the Catholic Church, that man has ever conceived. Universities are conservative institutions inherently, and they do all what it takes to ensure their continued existence.

Since the beginning, universities have had a special relationship with small and medium-sized cities. This is quite evident in Italy, the country where the majority of universities were founded in the first three centuries of their existence. In fact, if we take a look at the ranking of the oldest universities in the world we can see that out of 23 established in the 11th-14th centuries, 12 were founded in Italy.

Year of Foundation	University	Current Location
1088	University of Bologna	Bologna, Italy
1096–1167	University of Oxford	Oxford, United Kingdom
1170	Université de Paris (Sorbonne)	Paris, France
1209	University of Cambridge	Cambridge, United Kingdom
1218	University of Salamanca	Salamanca, Spain
1222	University of Padua	Padua, Italy
1224	University of Naples Federico II	Naples, Italy
1240	University of Siena	Siena, Italy
1241	University of Valladolid	Valladolid, Spain

¹¹⁹ See for example the following reference texts: J. Kenneth Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973); Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages: Salerno. Bologna. Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [orig. Oxford: Clarendon Press], 1895); Lawrence Stone, ed., *The University in Society*, 2 vols (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974); J. Kenneth Hyde, "Universities and Cities in Medieval Italy," in *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present*, ed. Thomas Bender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 13–21; Massimiliano L. Salvadori, ed., "Le università medievali," in *La Storia* 5 (Torino: Utet, 2004), 376.

Year of Foundation	University	Current Location
1290	University of Macerata	Macerata, Italy
1290	University of Coimbra	Coimbra, Portugal
1293	University of Alcalá	Alcalá de Henares, Spain
1303	Sapienza University of Rome	Rome, Italy
1308	University of Perugia	Perugia, Italy
1321	University of Florence	Florence, Italy
1336	University of Camerino	Camerino, Italy
1343	University of Pisa	Pisa, Italy
1348	Charles University of Prague	Prague, Czech Republic
1361	University of Pavia	Pavia, Italy
1364	Jagiellonian University	Kraków, Poland
1365	University of Vienna	Vienna, Austria
1386	Ruprecht-Karls University of Heidelberg	Heidelberg, Germany
1391	University of Ferrara	Ferrara, Italy

Table 1: List of the first universities founded in the world in the 11th -14th centuries (Table by Stefano Paleari, adapted by the author).120

The list (see Table 1) is opened by the University of Bologna, created in the year 1088, and thus the oldest university in the world, and it is closed by the University of Ferrara, established in the year 1391. The Italian *Rinascimento* (Renaissance) of the 15th and 16th centuries is certainly rooted in the prosperity reached in the previous three hundred years, whose most evident sign is the construction of a great number of cities. The creation of so many universities in these two centuries has also been explained by the political subdivisions of Italy in those times, seen sometimes as an *anarchical* state of affairs

120 This table has been adapted by the author from: Stefano Paleari, presentation at *The University and the City: An Agenda for the New Century*, CRUI Conference, University of Pavia (Italy), September 9–11, 2015, as reported by University of Pavia website, accessed January 10, 2016, http://www.universitacitta.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Paleari_Presentazione_Pavia_9sept15.pdf, 3–4.

in that country.¹²¹ Instead, this number of universities is a signal of wealth, proven by the existence of many cities and infrastructures in a restricted geographical area, albeit subdivided into several small princedoms. Italy has become known as the nation of 100 cities, as nowhere else in history have cities been built so numerous, one close to the other. The presence of cities is a clear sign of wealth. For the first time in history, mankind produced an institution, the university, as an organization independent from the church and from political rulers of the time, where people were dispensed from manual work to research and teach as a way of life.

Along these lines, it is relevant to note that in Italy “the places where universities succeeded were cities in the middle rank, the sort of city which, around 1300, had a population of around twenty to forty thousand. Cities of that size—such as Siena, Perugia, and Ferrara—were the places that were successful.”¹²² Kenneth Hyde goes on to note that “in the fifteenth century a deliberate policy pursued the Italian territorial state to place the university in the second city, so that the state of Milan favored the university of Pavia, Florence eventually transferred its university to Pisa, and Venice took over the existing university of Padua.”¹²³

Universities flourished in second-rank cities not only in Italy but also in the rest of Europe. We may note with no surprise that among the most populated cities in Europe,¹²⁴ those above 100,000 inhabitants—between the 14th century and the 17th century, only Paris, Naples and Rome—hosted a university, while the other cities in this cluster (Venice, Milan, Palermo, Messina, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Seville, London) did not.

Eventually, after the French Revolution and with the surge of the industrial revolution in England and elsewhere, European industrial cities became powerful magnets which lured the population from the countryside as never before. Industrial cities grew in size at an unprecedented pace and most of them became the siege of one or more university institutions. But small and medium-sized cities continued to be a sort of natural habitat for the oldest universities of Europe and also for new ones. A similar path can be ob-

121 The adjective *anarchical* is often used, for example, by Hyde, “Universities and Cities in Medieval Italy.”

122 Hyde, “Universities and Cities in Medieval Italy,” 15.

123 Hyde, “Universities and Cities in Medieval Italy,” 15.

124 To see a best approximation of which were the largest European towns at the time one may refer to: Massimiliano L. Salvadori, ed., “I mutamenti demografici in Europa,” in *La Storia* 6 (Torino: Utet, 2004), 161.

served in North America. Here the first pilgrims and migrants from Europe to the Boston area set up the Massachusetts Bay Colony, whose Great and General Court decided to set up Harvard College, the oldest institution of higher education in the United States, in 1636. The first college in the new world was not established in Boston but in *Newtowne* (renamed *Cambridge* in 1638).¹²⁵

Cooperation Between Universities and Cities in the U.S. and Canada: The Cases of New York, Chicago and Montréal.

One of the most interesting books¹²⁶ published recently on the topic of the relationships between universities and cities from medieval times in Europe to present days was the outcome of a conference organized to mark the centennial of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at New York University (NYU) in 1986–87. The editor of this book, Thomas Bender, draws a comparison between New York and Chicago, saying that “from the very beginning the University of Chicago has been associated with its city,”¹²⁷ while neither NYU nor Columbia University have been connected so closely to their hometown, New York. He concludes his introduction by making reference to Nathan Glazer, an author of a chapter in the same book, saying that since World War II both universities—NYU and Columbia, plus a third one located in the same urban area (City University of New York, CUNY)—have become more and more *dependent* on the fortunes of their host city. Why did he employ the term *dependent* instead of, for example, the word *interdependent*?

This question is not irrelevant to the aim of this chapter, as it may cast some light on the role of the university towards its host city: does this role change according to the size of the hosting city? I think that the answer is a positive one, as the cases of New York and Chicago show. There is an invisible dividing line between the two categories of cities. On one hand, there

125 As reported on the official website of Harvard University, “Historical Facts,” accessed May 22, 2016, <http://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/harvard-glance/history/historical-facts>.

126 Thomas Bender, ed., *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

127 Bender, *The University and the City*, 9.

are nation-capital cities, if not world-class megalopolises like New York, with one or more universities located within their boundaries. On the other hand, there are small and medium-to-large size cities like Chicago with one or more universities.¹²⁸ In the first group, the location of high-level public and private institutions and enterprises of any kind is so intense that the influence of universities on the local urban environment is diluted to the point that they are not able to assume a leading role for the development of the host city. University institutions in this case are still important, but do not set the pace of development of the city, with perhaps some exception in some highly specialized sectors. Whilst in the second case, the influence of university institutions may be so strong as to determine the fortunes of the host city on economic, social, and political grounds if not, in a few cases, the rise and fall of the whole host urban area.

Bender puts under the spotlight the fact that between universities and surrounding urban communities there has always been a strict liaison of mutual support. Within this fact, I argue that the international hierarchy of the host city matters more than the size of the university. In the case of a world-class city like New York, it may come as no surprise that NYU, Columbia University, and CUNY (or one may add any other possible university institution located there) had no choice but follow the city rather than pretend to lead its development.

The relationship between the city of New York and its universities since World War II has been analyzed by Nathan Glazer.¹²⁹ He states that the above-mentioned three universities will continue to do in the future what they have done in the past in terms of education, training, and research activities: “adapting to change rather than guiding it.”¹³⁰ This is not a second-best option for universities in the case of a world city like New York, and it has nothing to do with the quality of teaching and research done by the above-mentioned institutions. It is simply a matter of scale. The city of New York has become far too large, complex, and important on the international scene to rely entirely on university institutions located there for its future.

128 Sharon Haar, *City as Campus: Urbanism and Higher Education in Chicago* (Minneapolis, MN, United States: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

129 Nathan Glazer, “Facing Three Ways: City and Universities in New York Since World War II,” in *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present*, ed. Thomas Bender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 267.

130 Glazer, “Facing Three Ways,” 287.

Apart from the unique case of New York, the relationships between universities and cities in the United States are usually seen as a powerful driver for development of local communities. The Obama Administration's Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) initiative has set a goal of increasing cooperation between universities and host cities. The National Resource Network, which is part of SC2 initiative, supports the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU), which is an institution committed to improving urban universities' engagement in increasing prosperity and opportunity in U.S. cities and in tackling key urban challenges. Membership of USU includes more than 35 public urban research universities representing all U.S. geographic regions. In the list of coalition partners there are, for example, New York University (NYU), the University of Southern California, and the University of Chicago.

The National Resource Network (NRN) aims to deliver innovative solutions to U.S. cities to address their economic growth challenges. According to David Eichenthal,¹³¹ Executive Director of the National Resource Network, in a speech at a meeting of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU), universities may play at least four major roles in cities:

- Economic drivers of the local economy, as universities are among the largest direct employers of host cities, not to mention their indirect economic effects on the area;
- Critical players in economic development in research to foster a city's ability to retain and grow jobs;
- Institutional support for local government capacity;
- Knowledge development as a source of policy and research expertise for local government action.

All these roles are played, to some degree, by all universities, regardless of their public or private nature, in all urban areas of the United States. However, it is likely that universities located in medium-sized cities, by U.S. standards, have better chances to play a prominent role as leaders of economic and social growth of their host cities. Urban universities need to be sustained by cities much as cities necessitate universities to have more chances to shield international competition by attracting new advanced enterprises and new talents. Personal trust is an essential component of cooperation initiatives.

131 David Eichenthal, *Universities Play a Vital Role for Cities Well-being*, speech at USU, July 9, 2014, text quoted from the website of the National Resource Network, accessed October 15, 2015 <http://www.nationalresourcenetwork.org/>.

A good example of this mutual action based on personal trust is probably that of the University of New Orleans, which is described as “one of the region’s foremost public resources.”¹³² This university and the city of New Orleans often carry out co-marketing initiatives under the logo of NOLA, which stands for New Orleans and the State of Louisiana. The synergic action of the city and University of New Orleans with the State of Louisiana was certainly one of the keys of New Orleans recovery after Hurricane Katrina, which struck the city in 2005. Should city efforts to mend the hurricane damage have relied primarily on federal government support and funding, the city would still be on its knees.

Striving for cooperation between cities and universities can also be found in the city of Montréal, Canada. While it is not the largest city in the country, Montréal is probably the city with the highest ratio of university students compared to the resident population. In this context, Concordia University plans to hold an international forum on the relationships between university institutions and university cities. This conference, named *UniversCITÉÉS*, is expected to occur in 2017, and it is one of several proposals that Concordia University submitted to *Je vois Montréal*, an initiative launched by the City of Montréal¹³³ as a collaborative platform for citizens’ participation. Concordia University also proposed a special fund dedicated to the cultural integration of international students. Selected foreign students would receive credits that would be exchangeable for artistic activities in Montréal. Whenever an open method of government is experimented at local level, like in the case of Montréal, those who carry the responsibility of managing city or university affairs are bound to meet, cooperate in a stable institutional association, and work knee-to-knee for a common goal.

132 See the mission of the University of New Orleans in its official website, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.uno.edu/about/mission.aspx>.

133 In detail, this proposal was launched by Jacques Ménard, Concordia chancellor and president of BMO Financial Group, in partnership with the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montréal. The initiative called *Faire Montréal* was launched originally in French since Montréal and its region (Quebec) are a French-speaking part of Canada. See for further details the website of the City of Montréal (Canada), accessed November 10, 2015, <https://fairemtl.ca/>.

European Networks of University Cities and University Institutions

In Europe the relationship between university and city has not yet yielded all its positive effects. As in North America with USU, in Europe several networks of universities place cooperation with cities among their core goals.

For example, UNICA¹³⁴ is a network of universities from the capitals of Europe, comprising 46 universities from 35 capital cities of Europe, combining over 150,000 staff and 1,800,000 students. In October 2015, the network celebrated its 25th anniversary in Brussels. In 2006, the network organized a student conference on *University-City Citizenship*. In 2010, UNICA created a platform (called *UNI-Capital Platform*) to enhance the dialogue between city and regional government officials with universities to tackle a variety of issues, including innovation, research and entrepreneurship, citizenship, mobility, internationalization, and sustainable development of cities.

UNICA is a network of universities, and capital European cities are seen as a target of the network rather than mission partners. This is probably a shortcoming common to any other kind of just-university network, including for instance, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) in the U.S. There may be the risk, both for UNICA and USU, that cities play a passive role. To mitigate this risk, other networks in Europe, as described below, ensure that membership is granted to both universities and host cities willing to identify mutual challenges and solutions.

The European Union (EU) has investigated the best ways to ameliorate the linkage between universities and local public authorities with a special focus on how to integrate young people—not necessarily university students—into the life of local communities and in the development of cities. The integration of youth in society is a goal where the combined action of universities and host cities may prove to be very effective. Recently, the challenge of how to better link universities to regional growth has been the topic of a specific EU guide.¹³⁵ The document presents, among other things, five case studies of relationships between universities and cities as examples of best practice. It is relevant that all case studies concern small or medium-

134 See UNICA official website, accessed November 24, 2015, <http://www.unica-network.eu/>.

135 EU Guide *Connecting Universities to Regional Growth* (Brussels: EU European Commission DG Regional Policy, 2011), Smart Specialisation Platform 3, 1–81. The document can be downloaded from the EU Commission website, accessed December 10, 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/universities2011/universities2011_en.pdf.

sized cities: Karlstad in Sweden (fewer than 90,000 inhabitants); Newcastle upon Tyne in England (about 280,000); Tarragona in Spain (fewer than 160,000); Krakow in Poland (about 760,000); Cornwall, a peripheral region of England (combined population of under 550,000, scattered across many villages and small towns).

At the national level, there are associations of cities that regard themselves as university cities. This is the case, for example, of the *Association des Villes Universitaires de France* (AVUF), founded by the City of Rouen in 1993.¹³⁶ At the European level, there are at present only two well-established networks of university cities and university institutions: *EUniverCities Network* (Delft, The Netherlands) and *Unitown—University Town Network* (Ferrara, Italy). A third network, named *UniversCités*, was announced in a conference promoted by the University of Geneva (Switzerland) at the end of 2015. This initiative¹³⁷ seems, even in its title, very similar to that proposed by Concordia University in Montréal (Canada) for 2017. Let us examine the main features of the two existing European networks which comprise both university and city institutions, *EUniverCities* and *Unitown*.

EUniverCities is a European network launched in 2012. The network aims to exchange and spread the knowledge, expertise, and experience about city-university cooperation across Europe. It is comprised of ten medium-sized cities and universities which have agreed to work together (*in tandem* according to the network definition) in order to give university cities more visibility within Europe.¹³⁸ It seems to be focused on innovation and technology transfers between universities and cities, but it is open to a broad range of domains of city-university cooperation. The network seems to prefer a decentralized working method, rather than general conferences addressed to all members.

It includes,¹³⁹ as of the end of 2015, the following 26 members in 13 small and medium-sized cities in 12 European nations: City of Aalborg / Aalborg University, Denmark; City of Aveiro / University of Aveiro, Portugal;

136 See for further information AVUF website, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.avuf.net/>.

137 See the conference *UniversCités: Une plate-forme de gouvernance entre institutions académiques et municipales*, as on the website of University of Geneva, last updated November 20, 2015, <http://www.unige.ch/gsi/fr/actualites/universcites/>.

138 See the homepage on the web site of *EUniverCities*, accessed January 6, 2016, <http://eunivercitiesnetwork.com/>.

139 Data are those on the website of the network, accessed January 6, 2016, <http://eunivercitiesnetwork.com/>. However, the University of Parma (Italy), listed as member, does not appear in the map of members of the same site and it does not mention

City of Delft / Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands; City of Ghent / Ghent University, Belgium; City of Lausanne / University of Lausanne, Switzerland; City of Linköping / Linköping University, Sweden; City of Lublin / Universities of Lublin, Poland; City of Magdeburg / Otto-von-Guericke University and University of Applied Sciences, Germany; City of Norrköping / Linköping University—Campus Norrköping, Sweden; City of Lecce / University of Lecce, Italy; City of Tampere / Tampere University of Technology, Finland; City of Trondheim / NTNU University of Science and Technology, Norway; City of Varna / Universities of Varna, Bulgaria.

Unitown—University Town Network was, as of the end of 2015, the largest network in Europe of university cities and universities.¹⁴⁰ It was first discussed as a project at the University of Ferrara in the 2012, then it was established as a legal nonprofit organization (NPO) in the form of an association of university cities and university institutions by two founding members: University of Ferrara (Unife), and City of Ferrara, in December 2013. The stated mission of this NPO is to devise and test good practices designed to ameliorate the complex relationships between high educational institutions, municipalities, and other local government bodies. As in the case of the *EUniverCities Network*, the core program of *Unitown* is focused on university-city cooperation. Consequently, admission is sought from both institutions (university and municipality) of the same city. The admission policy is more flexible than *EUniverCities*, and in any given place either the university or the city may apply and be admitted even if the other supposed *tandem* partner does not do the same. This flexibility is intended as an incentive to join the network for all potential partners, without having to wait until the other institution in the same city is ready to make the same move.

The members, as of the end of 2015, are as follows: University of Ferrara, Italy; City of Ferrara, Italy; Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland; City of Turin, Italy; University of Minho, Braga / Guimarães, Portugal; City of Braga, Portugal; City of Guimarães (Portugal); University of Turku, Finland; University of Turin, Italy; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; University of Economics, Katowice, Poland; Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic; City of Trento, Italy; City of Siena (Italy); City of Urbino (Italy); ISIA-Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche, Urbino, Italy;

EUniverCities on its website, last updated July 20, 2015, <http://www.unipr.it/internazionale/obiettivi-e-strategie-di-internazionalizzazione/associazioni-internazionali-aderite>.

¹⁴⁰ See the website of this network, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.unife.it/international/networks/unitown>.

University of Urbino, Italy; University of Siena (Italy); University of Perugia, Italy; University of Genova, Italy; University of Innsbruck, Austria; University of Pavia, Italy; University of Parma, Italy; University of Basilicata, Italy; City of Potenza, Italy; University of Bergamo, Italy; City of Bergamo, Italy; University of Camerino, Italy; Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania.

The idea of setting up a network of cities and universities was first presented as a project at an international conference held in Ferrara (Italy) in October 2013, before the network was founded at the end of December 2013. That meeting was highlighted, among others, by a keynote speech by Roger Kemp, who presented some best practices of town and gown relations in the United States. It is worth noting that, here too, most of the best examples available in his book¹⁴¹ come from small and medium-sized cities, not from America's largest megalopolises. The conference was attended by representatives of universities and municipalities from 12 European cities: Estonia (Tartu), Finland (Turku), Italy (Turin), Lithuania (Kaunas), Germany (Giessen and Regensburg), Greece (Thessaloniki), Poland (Katowice and Krakow), Portugal (Braga) and Slovenia (Koper).

Over half of the potential partners, especially cities which attended the October conference in 2013, did not apply to join *Unitown* once the network came into existence. I refer to the cities of Turku, Kaunas, Thessaloniki, Katowice, and Krakow, plus both universities and cities of Tartu, Kaunas, Giessen, Regensburg, and Koper. This case shows that cities were somewhat reluctant to see the benefits of an association with universities. Yet, if *Unitown* is to design the best practices for cooperation between city and university, their presence is crucial. Despite the fact that the initial proposal of setting up the network received more rejections than positive responses from the conference participants, the association called *Unitown—University Town Network* was eventually established on 27 December 2013 by the two founding partners (Unife and City of Ferrara). The first six members were admitted at the end of February 2014 (Jagiellonian University; City of Turin; University of Minho; University of Turku; University of Turin; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki).

Since 2014, Unitown has engaged its members on a number of activities with a clear focus on city and university mutual interests.¹⁴² Selected top-

141 Roger L. Kemp, *Town and Gown Relations: A Handbook of Best Practices* (Jefferson, North Carolina, USA.: McFarland, 2013).

142 A selection of *Unitown* activities is reported on this page of the *Unitown* website, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.unife.it/international/networks/unitown/town-gown>.

ics go from plain vanilla issues, such as housing for students,¹⁴³ local public transport, city life, and use of public spaces for entertainment activities, to more complex themes. For example, in 2014 an international student workshop was dedicated to the challenge of providing institutional representation in city hall councils to the university students who do not have residency status. As a result, in 2014 the City of Ferrara decided to establish a regular joint commission (including students) whose task was to review issues of interest for student life in the city, and come up with proposals for the City Council. Another initiative concerned the application of UNESCO's Historical Urban Landscape principles in several European cities. A couple of international workshops in 2014 opened up a debate over whether to regenerate the urban zone where the 16th century headquarters of Unife are located in Ferrara, as these headquarters will be restored after the earthquake of 2012. The network presented a selection of best practices between university and city institutions in a book published in 2015.¹⁴⁴ Other initiatives were designed and developed by Unitown members in their own city. For example, in 2015 the City of Potenza and the University of Basilicata promoted an international conference¹⁴⁵ on the role of universities in building new cultural landscapes in Potenza, Matera, and in the region of Basilicata, in the south of Italy.

While *Unitown* is so far the largest network for university and city cooperation in Europe, with its 29 members in 21 small and medium-sized cities in eight European nations, this NPO has a high representation of Italian universities and cities, about half of the total. In October 2015, *Unitown* signed an agreement with ANCI, the association of Italian municipalities, to establish common initiatives for city and university cooperation.¹⁴⁶ These facts, if not balanced sooner or later by other projects and by increased affiliation with other European partners, may result in narrowing the focus of the

143 Gastone Ave, "Gli alloggi per studenti nelle città universitarie: Un fattore di competizione territoriale," in *Città universitaria: Dalle buone pratiche all'identità*, ed. Paolo Ceccarelli et al. (Ferrara: Faust Edizioni, 2015), 50.

144 Paolo Ceccarelli et al., *Città universitaria: Dalle buone pratiche all'identità* (Ferrara: Faust Edizioni, 2015), 13.

145 See the press release from the University of Basilicata on its website, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://portale.unibas.it/site/home/comunicati-stampa/articolo2964.html>.

146 See the leaflet of the conference, last modified October 15, 2015, <http://www.unife.it/comunicazione/news-folder/unife-culture/unifeculture-2015/ottobre/a-torino-la-rete-unitown-partecipa-alla-sottoscrizione-del-protocollo-di-intesa-anci-crui-per-la-collaborazione-tra-citta-e-universita-nello-sviluppo-dei-territori-urbani-e-del-paese>.

network onto one single country. There may be the risk of losing the benefit of exchanges with peer institutions from other European countries. However, at the general assembly held in Pavia in 2015 the network confirmed its European focus.

Challenges of University Cities in the Global Competition Between Nations and Urban Areas

First of all, what is a *university city*? A straightforward answer is a city whose economic and social driver is the university with all its direct and indirect activities. But the role of universities in the local economy is just one component of a more balanced answer. In fact, the role of universities as economic drivers of cities has been perhaps overemphasized. Instead, universities should be seen as strategic resources for their local communities, as well as for their regions and nations, and not just as cash cows for their economic spillover effects on local suppliers and labor markets. It has already been argued by Paolo Ceccarelli that universities may be seen as business enterprises, but their roles go a long way further than that.¹⁴⁷ Universities, he argues, are strategic resources which need to be utilized within urban contexts to avoid the negative effects of relocations outside the urban core, a move which often gives way to unexpected negative consequences for the city, as in the case of the relocation of UNAM (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*) from the center of Mexico City to external locations.

High-level education and research institutions like universities, whether public or private, do have a key role as landowners and / or real estate developers. This is true in many European cities like, for example, Oxford and Cambridge (UK), Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany), Innsbruck (Austria), Rouen (France), Delft (The Netherlands), Leuven (Belgium), Turku (Finland), Krakow (Poland), Salamanca (Spain), Guimarães (Portugal), and Thessaloniki (Greece).

In Italy, where the university as an institution was introduced in medieval times for the first time ever in history, as mentioned earlier in this chapter,

¹⁴⁷ Paolo Ceccarelli, *La città universitaria: Una risorsa strategica da utilizzare meglio*, in *Città universitaria: Dalle buone pratiche all'identità*, ed. Paolo Ceccarelli et al. (Ferrara: Faust Edizioni, 2015), 13.

there are many well-known cities that historically depend on their university (for example: Ferrara, Padova, Pisa, Siena, Perugia, Urbino, Naples). In addition, there are several cities, especially in the south of Italy, where the establishment of brand-new universities in the last 50 years through national investment projects has had a major positive impact on the image of those cities as well as on their economic base.¹⁴⁸ This is the case, for example, for the Italian cities of Pescara, Salerno, Cosenza, Reggio Calabria, and Potenza. University institutions may play a leading role as real estate owners and developers even in large cities or metropolises, where their role is important but not the major driver of local growth, as in the case, for example, of New York¹⁴⁹ or other large cities in the U.S. and Europe.¹⁵⁰

Cities can benefit from locally-based universities not only on economic grounds, such as spin-off, patenting, technology transfer and the like, but also in terms of cultural development, as stated, among others, by the former head of CRUI (Italian university rectors association), Stefano Paleari.¹⁵¹ The contribution of universities to a creative city may have a long-term positive effect on the global attractiveness of the host city because, among other things, it can be very effective in revamping the city image as a good place for young people.

However, the young section of the population (say between 18 and 35 years of age) is very mobile in all countries. The youth can flock to a city allegedly open to university students, but they can also move out of that same city at high speed if behind the urban marketing messages, launched by the media experts of the local government institutions and the university, there is not the expected urban product—a true university city. For example,

148 See for instance: Nicola Martinelli and Piero Rovigatti, eds., *Università, città e territorio nel Mezzogiorno* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2005); Mosè Ricci and Piero Rovigatti, eds., *Università e città* (Roma: Palombi, 1996); Piero Rovigatti, “Università e processi di trasformazione urbana: Il caso di Pescara,” in *Archivio di Studi Urbani e regionali* 60–1 (1997): 219–50.

149 David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel, *The University as Urban Developer: Case Studies and Analysis* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005).

150 Wim Wiewel and David C. Perry, *Global Universities and Urban Development* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008); Patrizia Ingallina, “Universities and Research Centres: New Attractions and Territorial Competitors? The French Example in the Whole Milieu of the Grand Paris,” *Urbanistica* 149 (2012): 10–2.

151 See Stefano Paleari, key-note presentation at *The University and the City: An Agenda for the New Century*, CRUI Conference, University of Pavia (Italy), September 9–11, 2015, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.universitacitta.it/>. On the same issue with very similar conclusions see: David Eichenenthal, *ibid.*

enrollment numbers at the University of Innsbruck (Austria) decreased by about six thousands as a consequence of the introduction of a modest tuition fee implemented by the national government in October 2001.¹⁵² Eventually, the university managed to regain the previous student population level and even to continue its growth path, but it took a lot of joint efforts between the City and the University to make Innsbruck a university city, as Tilman Märk, rector of that university, maintained in 2015.¹⁵³

There is a growing literature on the relationship between universities and host cities as a key factor of ongoing global competition.¹⁵⁴ I do not want to add here a single word to the fairytale of so-called *smart cities*, a very ambiguous concept, often referenced in many contradictory ways to justify vague urban policies dealing with unspecified *advanced technologies*. It seems to me more interesting to note that most urban planning researchers agree that a major competitive advantage between cities and territories is the availability of a young and trained population, who are more apt than others to embrace change. And cities need constant change to retain their character and live on; otherwise, cities are ready for the sunset boulevard. Under this respect, the issue of competition between nations and urban areas can be unpacked into a number of individual problems, the most relevant of which deal with the ability of a given area to attract the youth as well as public and private enterprises, investments, institutions, and large-scale events (most of the latter ones, by the way, need the presence of a resident young population to be successful).

The European Union (EU) has made many efforts to reinforce cohesion and spread the ideal of a comprehensive European Community since the early 1990s. For example, a report in 1990 entitled *Green Paper on the Urban Environment* emphasized the role of mixed-use areas in building urban environments without barriers between *bedroom communities* and high-street neighborhoods. The EU has been constantly emphasizing the positive role of spatial strategic planning to set the right frame in which various kinds of developments projects could produce the expected positive results for local communities. More recently, the EU has launched a strategy to address the fact that “Europe’s future depends on its youth. Yet, life chances of

152 Universität Innsbruck, *International Students Guide* (Innsbruck, Austria: University of Innsbruck, International Relations Office, 2004), 11.

153 See the contribution by Märk and Baumgartner in this volume.

154 See among others: Leo van den Berg and Antonio Russo, eds., *The Student City: Strategic Planning for Student Communities in EU Cities* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004).

many young people are blighted.” The quote comes from the conclusion of the Commission Communication on the *Renewed Social Agenda* of 2008. A specific policy process for youth was developed with the *2001 White Paper* around three main areas of intervention:

- Active citizenship of young people through a new Open Method of Coordination (OMC) directed toward participation, information, volunteering, and better knowledge of young people;
- Social and occupational integration, with special attention to employment / social inclusion, education / training, and reconciliation of work and private life;
- Youth mainstreaming in other policies such as anti-discrimination and health.

The EU document states clearly that “Youth are a priority of the European Union’s social vision, and the current crisis compounds the need to nurture young human capital.”¹⁵⁵ The proposed strategy would help the youth to develop their skills and contribute to the growth of local communities. The EU action towards youth is based on a dual approach:

- “Investing in Youth: putting in place greater resources to develop policy areas that affect young people in their daily life and improve their wellbeing.
- Empowering Youth: promoting the potential of young people for the renewal of society and to contribute to EU values and goals.”¹⁵⁶

Both investing and empowering young people lead to rethinking the decision-making processes that are currently followed to build our cities and to allocate public resources in our communities. We can truly invest and empower youth if we rediscover the original sense of participation which entails open access to relevant information, some sort of redistribution of decision-making powers, and accountability as a standard check of all kinds of public administrations. In this scenario, universities and host cities can set up a joint program of projects designed to meet the real needs of students.

155 “Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21st Century Europe,” COM (2008), 412 final, last updated June 3, 2009, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:em0010>.

156 “EU Strategy for Youth—Investing and Empowering: A Renewed Open Method of Coordination to Address Youth Challenges and Opportunities,” COM (2009), 200 final, 27.4.2009, 4, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0200&from=EN>.

To this end, granting students some sort of participatory rights to enter city decision-making processes is not enough to make a university city attractive for them. We need to go beyond ritual participation and put in practice empowered participation and accountability. Participation has been a recurrent requirement of most EU programs in the last decades. Yet, it still seems an overall goal rather than an achievement, especially where the youth are concerned. To foster European cohesion and the very future of the EU, it seems essential to involve youth in decision-making processes at all levels. Young people could play a leading role shifting the trend of misuse of participation discourses. Empowerment should be linked to participation, and the youth attracted to decision-making processes should be rewarded with a real say in the making of alternative solutions before decisions are made involving public issues of direct concern to university life.

Student participatory processes in ordinary city life cannot be successful without some delegation of powers and accountability. To succeed in making a university city, we should not restrain our efforts to invoke more participation, but we should ask ourselves if we, as city and university institutions, are ready to delegate and who should account for what. Benefits and sanctions go along with it. Participation may sometimes become a closed circle game with no real winners apart from the professionals who have been paid to attend endless participatory meetings. If cities want to integrate university students in proactive participation which may lead them to have a stronger sense of citizenship, they have to inject strong decision powers in the participatory processes, coupled with a pinpoint use of accountability procedures and techniques. Both lines of action (more decision powers and accountability) seem feasible if there are two elements in place. The first one is an international network of students with high motivations and willpower to affirm their role in their own countries and in the broader European scenario. The second element is a network of small and medium-sized cities with a strong student population compared to permanent residents, where key decision-making actors, both public and private, recognize the mutual advantages of a closer cooperation between institutions. Both these elements should be part of a fully-fledged network of universities and host cities of small and medium sizes.

The EU Youth Strategy (2010–2018) encourages young people to be active citizens and participate in society in order to ensure that they have a say in the democratic processes that shape Europe's future. There is evidence of a strong renewed effort of the EU to bring together central and peripheral ar-

eas of the community, as well as young and adult citizens, around the idea of a common future and of shared opportunities embedded in EU institutions. In this context, universities and cities together can play many significant roles together. For instance, the *Young 5* program within the EU Horizon 2020 initiative is dedicated to the “young generation in an innovative, inclusive and sustainable Europe.”¹⁵⁷ University students can play a major role as future decision-makers. In addition, various editions of the EU Erasmus program have allowed many European university students to spend time abroad as part of their regular course of studies. This has yielded the so-called *Erasmus generation*, probably the first peer group of European citizens who are ready for a continent without barriers. In fact, the great majority of UK students voted against Brexit in June 2016.

Universities: A Strategic Resource for Small and Medium-Sized Cities

Since the 1970s there has been a gradual shift in the major European countries (UK, France, West Germany, Italy) from industrial-led economies to service-based economies. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, this shift has matured in most western countries. While industry is still an important source of the GDP, there is a new transition towards a knowledge-based economy. New relevant sources of urban growth have become entertainment, business and personal services, education, research, and development activities, plus the tourism industry, in all its various clusters. In this fast-changing scenario, small and medium-sized cities where fully fledged universities are located can have a comparative advantage over competitor cities in building new cultural and economic landscapes, provided that they implement, step-by-step, a long-term urban strategic plan to become university cities. As mentioned earlier, a university city is not simply any city where a university is located. It is a long-term goal rather than a stable condition attained once and forever.

Cities and universities have had complex relations since the early days, as some authors have well explained.¹⁵⁸ Roger L. Kemp has made clear that in order to create a real university city, both municipality and university of-

157 See the *Young 5* program, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/calls/h2020-young-society-2014.html>.

158 See for example: Bender, *The University and the City*.

ficials must pay attention to lessons learned from the past and develop best practices in policy areas of common interest.¹⁵⁹ This strict cooperation may lead to a win-win environment where all stakeholders benefit, citizens and students alike. To be put in practice, any city-university cooperation needs a legal framework to regulate who does what.¹⁶⁰ In the initial phase of any city-university cooperation, however, what is more important is personal trust between people who may feel united by a common cause: building the university city here and now. To kick off along the right track, city and university officials have to share the same vision of a university city.

Small and medium-sized cities have more than large cities to gain from a healthy relationship with a local university. Usually universities do not relocate. This may lead some cities to downplay the need to establish sound relations with local universities. This would be a mistake. For example, universities can play an essential role in the environment area through research, education, and civic engagement.¹⁶¹ But this role may be successful only if university research on sustainable development takes into account communication networks and city relations that have impact beyond the campus.

As John Goddard and Paul Vallance have recently maintained, universities may now be seen as global players with significant local direct and indirect impacts on the economy of the host city, especially on its employment, as well as on the built environment and wider society.¹⁶² Their research on the role of universities in some cities in the UK shows the need to build a wider bridge between policy and practice in the fields of local urban development and higher education.

The university city must be seen by the city administration as a new economic engine and a unique cultural and social driver for the urban community and its region. The university city is a concept that must be translated in ordinary urban policies in several areas including, for example, housing, transport, and culture. For example, these areas of concern have all been addressed with some degrees of success by the city of Turin (Italy) which has become a university city after a century and a half of growth based primar-

159 Kemp, *Town and Gown Relations: A Handbook of Best Practices*.

160 Cynthia A. Baker and Patricia E. Salkin, eds., *Town and Gown: Legal Strategies for Effective Collaboration* (Chicago: ABA Book Publishing, 2013).

161 Ariane Konig, ed., *Regenerative Sustainable Development of Universities and Cities: The Role of Living Laboratories* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

162 John Goddard and Paul Vallance, *The University and the City* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2014).

ily on industry. Once just a company town, Turin approved its first strategic plan (*Torino Internazionale*) on 29 February 2000. It was the start of a joint work between city and the two local universities (Università and Politecnico) towards the university city. At present, the city indicates as a vital target the construction of new student housing to double current capacity in the next five years. In the north of France, the city of Lille would have never become a viable place as it is now without the expansion of its university in the last decades. In Italy, the city of Potenza (Italy), hit by the earthquake in 1980, has managed to attain new life thanks primarily to the University of Basilicata which was established there in 1981, just one year after the natural disaster. The University of Basilicata opened its Department of Archeology and other courses in the city of Matera in 1992. This contributed to the rebirth of the city of Matera and led to its nomination as European Capital of Culture 2019. Conversely, the University of Ferrara has played a leading role for the growth of the city since the decline of the local oil refinery industry in the 1980s. In Germany, several cities (for example Freiburg, Giessen, and Regensburg) depend more and more from their universities. These are just a few examples of how cities and universities can perform better when their actions are coordinated.

Conclusion: Towards a University City

Small and medium-sized cities attain an advantage in national and global competitions between territories if they manage to become university cities. To build a university city, we need to move from the idea of a self-reliant university campus to a university institution interconnected with the surrounding city and region. A university city can be a powerful engine for new cultural and economic landscapes, with a clear spillover effect beyond the host city boundaries.

To reap in full all the beneficial effects of its university, a university city requires the following four conditions:

- A constant or growing student enrollment and a synchronized action of all university institutions located within the city;
- Active roles of local universities in international networks, to behave as a world gateway to access international know-how, exchange of ideas, and culture;

- Cooperation between university and city within formal agreements and day-by-day joint work for a strategic urban plan for the whole urban metropolitan area;
- An open government method based on participation and accountability. In a university city, local decision-makers can jointly address innovative projects in a number of areas including the following:
 - Affordable housing for students and university researchers and staff;
 - Public / public and public / private partnerships in technology fields as well as in planning and management of city services;
 - Transport systems and services for the youth;
 - Entertainment and leisure integrated with university life, preferably within the city core and not in a separated campus;
 - Participation projects to integrate students in city and university decision-making processes;
 - Design and implementation of strategic planning at the city-metropolitan area level.

The relationship between city and university in medium-sized cities needs to be kept alive over time. Universities and cities have to design, through a joint work and peer comparisons—better if in a network—a set of best practices that need to be implemented and updated over time in order to make real, here and now, the concept of university city. A university city is capable of retaining at least a share of its students after graduation. University students and new graduates are a strategic resource of fresh skills and talents that may become valuable assets for a new round of social and economic development of small and medium-sized cities.