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Twenty years of clients for religious architectures: projects, processes and results of contemporary Italian churches

Veinte años de clientes para la arquitectura religiosa: proyectos, procesos y resultados de las iglesias italianas contemporáneas

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ABSTRACT

The contribution proposes a reflection on the relationship between the client, the architect and the various actors involved in the planning, design and construction of new churches, focusing on the Italian context in the last twenty years, and asking who can be considered the actual *client* for religious buildings. The selected time frame underlines a season characterised by different experimentation approaches for architectural competitions promoted, facilitated or supported by the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI), starting from the experience of the *Pilot Projects*, passing through the *Diocesan Paths*, up to the most recent *Participatory Processes*, aimed at reducing the gap between Church *client*, user's requests, and architectural projects. Such processes involve a large panel of actors, including the National and Diocesan bodies, local interlocutors, and the design teams, made up of various professionals. The study aims to investigate such recent procedures, to provide an analytical look at the maturing of the processes and to the identification of the *collective client*.

KEYWORDS

Religious architecture; architectural competitions; contemporary churches; ecclesiastical client; community engagement.

RESUMEN

La contribución propone una reflexión sobre la relación entre el cliente, el arquitecto y los diversos actores involucrados en la planificación, diseño y construcción de nuevas iglesias, centrándose en el contexto italiano de los últimos veinte años, y preguntando quién puede ser considerado el verdadero *cliente* para los edificios religiosos. El marco temporal considerado subraya una temporada caracterizada por diferentes enfoques de experimentación para los concursos de arquitectura promovidos, facilitados o apoyados por la Conferencia Episcopal Italiana (CEI), a partir de la experiencia de los *Progetti Pilota*, pasando por los *Percorsi Diocesani*, hasta los más recientes *Concorsi Diocesani*, destinados a reducir la brecha entre el cliente de la Iglesia, las solicitudes de los usuarios y los proyectos arquitectónicos. Dichos procesos involucran a un amplio panel de actores, entre ellos los organismos nacionales y diocesanos, los interlocutores locales y el equipo de diseño, compuesto por diversos profesionales. El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar procedimientos muy recientes, proporcionando una mirada analítica a la maduración de los procesos y a la identificación del cliente colectivo.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Arquitectura religiosa; concursos de arquitectura; iglesias contemporáneas; cliente eclesiástico; participación de la comunidad.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious heritage in Italy is the result of a variety of clients (religious, lay, political, private bodies and institutions, etc.) who, over time, promoted or commissioned religious architectures, often characterised by artistic relevance, designed, and adapted to satisfy different kinds of needs of the client: liturgical, pastoral, social or celebratory, etc. In this frame, the relationship between the client and the designer in the processes largely influences the results in terms of formal shape, liturgical setting, and functional distribution. In recent times, the crisis in presbyteral and religious vocations, the closure of confraternities and lay associations, and the changes in society in terms of increasing secularisation, gradually led to a decrease in the commissioning of catholic new churches, together with the recent phenomena of under-use and abandonment of existing ones (Capanni 2020). In this context, among the newly built churches, parish centres continue to provide religious and social services, and they are planned in the new urban settlements as well as in the peripheries of cities (Longhi 2012; Daprà et al. 2022).

However, the issue of new church construction after the Second Vatican Council is still very controversial. This is especially due to the questionable results of the research of a post-conciliar religious architecture —able to consider the liturgical and pastoral prescriptions of the Council, as well as post-modern architectural concepts (Benedetti 2000; Sanson 2008; Scalesse 2008; Santi 2011 and 2019)— and to a progressive vagueness in the definition of the real ecclesiastical client.

To limit this crisis, during the last twenty years, the Italian Episcopal Conference (hereafter referred to as CEI) took an increasing role in the management of the processes for the construction of new churches and parish complexes in Italy. Starting from the 1990s, the official bodies of the CEI were asked to promote a reflection on the construction of new churches. Thus, the Commission for the Worship Buildings (*Commissione per l'edilizia di culto*) was set up in 1990, followed, in 1995, by the *National Office for the Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage* (*Ufficio Nazionale per i Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici*).[1] In this way the CEI became, for all purposes, the funding body of the new Italian churches, replacing the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art in Italy and the Ministero degli Interni.

The CEI's involvement was not only concerned with the administrative aspects of the construction of new churches, but it also conducted a strong theoretical effort to establish a new relationship between contemporary architecture and religious building rules, both liturgical and pastoral. In 1993, after a period of reflection, meetings and national seminaries, the Pastoral Note *La progettazione delle nuove chiese* (The Design of New Churches) was approved and published by CEI (Commissione Episcopale per la Liturgia 1993). The Note included both binding and arbitrary architectural rules to be considered for an adequate and appropriate post-conciliar architecture. The reflection was extended and detailed with another Pastoral Note in 1996 *L'adeguamento delle chiese secondo la riforma liturgica* (The Adaptation of Churches based on of the Liturgical Reform) (Commissione Episcopale per la Liturgia 1996). Even today, these two documents —even though they don't have a legislative effect, but only a pastoral one— are still the main reference points for church construction and the liturgical adaptation (Marchesi 2017; Sanson 2017).

However, since the achievement of the desired results was difficult even after the 1993 Pastoral Note, Mons. Giancarlo Santi,[2] then Director of the National Office of Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage, established that the procedures for the construction of new churches co-financed by the CEI should be carried out through real architectural competitions, in agreement with the CEI Secretary General, Mons. Ennio Antonelli. This change of approach marks the beginning of a period of several initiatives and experimentations promoted by the CEI aimed at defining religious places according to the liturgical prescriptions and the contemporary social and cultural context and at qualifying processual tools for achieving better architectural results.

This contribution proposes a reflection on the definition of the *real* client of the contemporary parish complexes in Italy by analysing the architectural

Ed	Comp. year	Diocese	Parish name	City	Designer	Status
I	1998	Lecce	S. Giovanni Battista	Lecce	Franco Purini e Laura Thermes	Realized
		Perugia	S. Sisto	Città della Pieve	Glauco e Roberto Gresleri	Realized
		Milano	S. Maria in Zivido	San Giuliano Milanese	Gabetti & Isola	Realized
II	1999	Potenza-Muro Lucano-Marsico Nuovo	Gesù Maestro	Potenza	Vincenzo Melluso	Realized
		Porto-Santa Rufina	SS. Patroni Martiri	Roma	Studio Passarelli	Realized
		Bergamo	Beata Vergine di Loreto	Bergamo	Gregotti Associati International	Realized
III	2000	Catanzaro-Squillace	S. Maria Roccella	Squillace	Alessandro Pizzolato e Giorgio Mingardi	Realized
		Foligno	S.Giacomo Apostolo	Foligno	Massimiliano e Doriana Fuksas	Realized
		Modena-Nonantola	Gesù Redentore	Modena	Mauro Galantino	Realized
IV	2006	Avellino	S. Maria del Carmine	Atripalda	Giovanni Ascarelli	n.d.
		Ascoli Piceno	Santa Maria	Castel di Lama	Marco Contini	Realized (2018)
		Reggio Emilia-Guastalla	Sacro Cuore	Baragalla	Davide Raffin	Realized (2012)
V	2008	Agrigento	Gesù Maestro	Racalmuto	Riccarda Rigamonti	Realized (2020)
		Macerata-Recanati-Tolentino-Cingoli-Treia	Stella Maris	Porto Recanati	Corrado Scagliarini	n.d.
		Lodi	Madonna delle Grazie	Dresano	Corvino + Multari	Realized (2017)
VI	2011	Cassano allo Jonio	S. Maria Goretti	Mormanno	Mario Cucinella	Realized (2021)
		Tempio-Ampurias	S.Ignazio da Laconi	Olbia	Francesca Leto	Realized (2022)
		Ferrara-Comacchio	San Giacomo Apostolo	Modena	Benedetta Tagliabue	Realized (2021)

Table 01. Main information about the Pilot Projects.

processes promoted by CEI in the last twenty years where a gradual emergence of a *plural client* represented by a proper *organisation of clients* involved in the architectural processes of new churches can be observed (Fiorini 2017). Three main periods of the experimental procedures can be described —from *Pilot Projects* (1998-2012), through the period of *Diocesan Paths* (2013-2015) and the current *Participation Paths* (ongoing)— underlining a process of change in the figure of the collective client and the relationship between the various parties involved: a plurality of actors and actions revolve around the instrument of the competition, the issuing body (CEI), the recipient of the building (parish priest/parish), the diocesan referent (bishop), the jury commissions, the designers (invited or selected), the beneficiaries of the project (parish community).

By following and analysing the competition procedures over time, the role of contemporary Italian clients will become clearer and more defined, in line with the words of Mons. Giuseppe Russo «every commissioner has by nature a responsibility towards others. Every person who has accepted to represent a community has a responsibility to ensure the best quality of life, according to the global needs of the community» (Russo 2014a, 11).

A PROCESS OF EXPERIMENTATION: A COLLECTIVE CLIENT IN ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS

The season of Pilot Projects

The introduction of Pilot Projects —the first CEI experimentation through architectural competitions started in 1998— was often called a *cultural operation*», promoted by Mons. Giancarlo Santi while attempting to counter the practice of direct entrustment of projects —often unsuccessful concerning quality and innovation issues—. The main aim of this initiative was providing to the dioceses both an operational tool to guarantee an adequate architectural quality, and a more articulated evaluation body to safeguard liturgical and pastoral issues.

The non-secondary objective of the process was to train clients, recipients, and designers, while also promoting a debate on functionality that was previously completely absent, on the quality of the churches, the theological and ecclesiological significance of the works, and the value of the liturgical system (Della Longa 2007; Cavallini and Daprà 2017). From the first edition, the competitions involved more than 120 design teams through 6 biennial competitions with invited professionals of national or international fame, involving, each time, three dioceses in the north, centre and south of Italy (CEI 2003) (Table 01).

The competition had a national breath, hoping, in this way, to increase the quality and variety of project proposals and to overcome the first difficulties manifested by the dioceses. The choice for the Pilot Projects therefore fell on the invitation procedure with two conditions: the invitation would be extended to a limited number of designers, seven in total, to train them and guide them in the development of the design; the professionals would preferably be chosen between teachers of the Faculties of Architecture of the Italian universities, to guarantee a good quality of architectural projects.

In that period, the CEI Office played an important role in quality control and opening a new dialogue with contemporary architecture, showing how «the quality of a building work, and of the processes that characterise it during its entire life cycle, depends to a great extent on the ability of the client to develop orientation and control actions» (Talamo 2014, 112). The origin of the CEI initiative is not the search for a new *type* for the church of contemporaneity, but the construction of a laboratory of thought and dialogue between clients and designers, to elaborate works that are more responsive to the needs of the communities, and to bring architects closer to the theme of sacred space.

The path of Pilot Projects through the six editions has been in progressive refinement: the invitation competition has thus allowed projects to become educational opportunities, spreading among the participants not only the main information on the project areas and functional requirements but also the cultural and normative framework of the church project, with hints on the most recent reflections on art and

Competition year	City	District	Diocese	Winner Design Team	Status
2013-2015	Viareggio	Varignano	Arcidiocesi di Lucca	TAMassociati	Realized (2019)
2013-2015	Forlì	Romiti	Diocesi di Forlì-Bertinoro	Romano Pretolani (capofila)	Under construction
2013-2015	Palermo	Cinisi	Arcidiocesdi di Monreale	studio Kuadra	Realized (2023)

Table 02. Main information about the Diocesan Paths.

architecture for the liturgy (the results have been published also on the Italian architectural magazine *Casabella*).

During the first five editions (until 2011) Pilot Projects were evaluated by juries composed mainly of national and non-local members (just two professionals indicated by the bishop of the interested diocese,[3] without strong local participation, and some of them resulted too far from community sensibility, provoking problems during the design and construction process, or after during appropriation phases: the quality of building was higher, but the recognition and affection of local communities much less.

The Pilot competitions showed other critical aspects: the diocesan bodies often were not able to control the aspects of the building process after the competition, starting from modification issues, until the difficulties with clients and parish communities, and problems deriving from the execution by local construction companies, sometimes not able to reach the desired quality, and with higher costs.

For these reasons, in 2011 —the last edition— a local jury was integrated into the second evaluation phase, together with a deeper local administration involvement during the design process: the National jury selected the three best proposals, while a diocesan jury defined the winner. It was also the first time the CEI asked from the beginning the mandatory constitution of a design team composed of architects, artists and liturgists (Santinoro 2021).

From 2005 Monsignor Santi was followed by Monsignor Giuseppe Russo, head of the Office until 2015, who guided that transition from late Pilot Projects to Diocesan Paths, convinced about the importance of the *responsible client*.

The Diocesan Paths for the involvement of local communities

In 2013, a new season opened, with the beginning of the *Diocesan Paths*», an experience that reflected on the past ones trying to solve the problems related to the low involvement of parish communities and the results obtained concerning the architectural, artistic, liturgical, and maintenance issues.

The process involves three dioceses, again distributed in the north, centre and south of the country, to be more effective in the proposal of a methodological path valid for the entire country: Diocese of Forlì-Bertinoro (Emilia Romagna), Lucca (Tuscany) and Monreale (Sicily) (Table 02). Also in this case, the competition was opened to invited groups (40 groups with different territorial backgrounds, local, regional or national) who were asked to present, after a first site visit, a *methodological approach* for the project. After the first selection, which lasted a lot because of the huge number of proposals to evaluate, ten groups per diocese were asked to design a preliminary project (Benedetti 2021a).

In that period, the two main processual tools became clearer and more effective: the *Documento Preliminare alla Progettazione* (hereafter DPP)[4] and the institution of the figure of the *Responsabile del Procedimento* (hereafter RdP).[5] We are witnessing an expansion of the role of the *client*, which increasingly uses figures and tools capable of managing the building process and governing the complexity of the building work and its entire life cycle: Monsignor

Russo expresses himself when he defines the role of the RdP as technical support to the ecclesiastical commission necessary to govern the complexity of the building work (Russo 2014b).

The DPP became, from now on, the principal document to which the design team refers, with several crucial tasks: describing the territory and its constraints; reporting the community needs and desires; reminding the main liturgical and pastoral issues around the construction of a new church; containing all the operative information that the design groups need.[6] Such a document —appearing in a definitive form for the first time in this experimentation— was written by the RdP but derives from a profound path and community involvement, held autonomously by each community between 2013 and 2014. The results of the participatory activities were exposed first at the CEI National Conference in San Giovanni Rotondo in 2014, and then in each city involved in the projects, generating a deep interest in the scientific, ecclesial and civic community.

The final projects were evaluated by a double path: a parish jury was in charge of verifying the coherence of the proposals with the DPP; such considerations were then delivered to a highly qualified technical-institutional jury, composed both of local and national components: in the three cases, the judgments of the two commissions were extremely convergent.

Compared to the previous competitions, the careful selection of the jury members certainly brought an increase in quality in the final design.[7]

Despite the success of the experience (the three churches are now already built or under construction) the experimentation closed after the first edition, mainly because of the un-sustainability of the entire management —human, economic— of such a complexity of phases and actors involved.

Anyway, that season helped to define much more in deep the tools of the *clients* that can determine a good result in terms of architecture and pastoral satisfaction: the quality assurance instrument of the competition; the real control of the process (through the establishment of the RdP); the definition of the preliminary documents among which the DPP; the participation process as a tool; the evaluation and advice tools for the projects; the collaboration with local bodies and administrations (Paganin 2014). Such tools were then discussed again in the following competition, maintaining some aspects and upgrading some others, such as the insertion of formal participation of the community in the processes.

THE CHURCH OF RESURREZIONE DI NOSTRO SIGNORE (VIAREGGIO): A TALE OF A COMMUNITY CLIENT-ARCHITECT RELATIONSHIP

Among the churches designed in the last twenty years in Italy, the parish complex *Resurrezione di Nostro Signore* in Viareggio —a result of the Diocesan Paths of 2013— was selected as a case study (Fig. 01). It has been chosen because it has already been built and inhabited for some years, and it is the subject of journalism and criticism, allowing a more complete reading of the relationships between actors involved in the process and of the client's role.

What emerges from the documentation and the written and verbal testimonies about the process of Varignano shows how the dialogue between the pastor, the parish community, the diocese, the National Offices and the local context was the key to the success of a delicate operation from the pastoral, social and urban point of view. A peculiar element of the path —common to others of the same period— is the wide participation of the parish community at different stages as a new element in the process, and, in general, the plurality of actors involved in the competition procedure (Brunini 2021).[8]

The parish of Varignano, a peripheral district at the limit of the seaside Viareggio city in Tuscany was selected for the Diocesan Paths because of the need for a new church to replace the existing one built in 1985 in a spirit of industrial and poor architecture by Pierludovico Rupi and Franco Anichini. During recent years, the so-called *chiesa verde* demonstrated several problems of habitability and maintenance, leading the parish to think of demolition and reconstruction. The process was long and suffered, because of the affective feelings of the population for the old church, and the difficulty to imagine a new building (Brunini 2021).

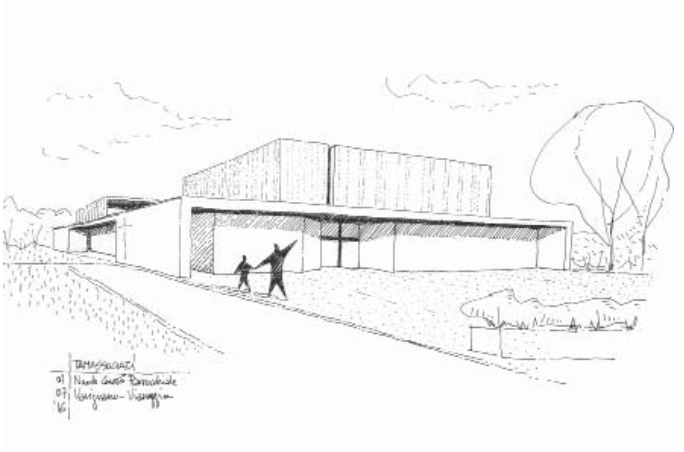


Fig. 01. Parish complex of Resurrezione di Nostro Signore in Viareggio (Italy), 2019; sketch by the architects.
Fig. 02. External view.
Fig. 03. Liturgical hall.

With the other two selected Dioceses (Forlì-Bertinoro and Monreale), the Viareggio process was articulated in different phases guided by the UNBCE. The community was immediately involved in the preliminary stages (preparing the DPP to be delivered to the designers and meeting with the design teams during inspections) and in the evaluation phases too, as determined by the procedure. The fact that the outcome of the evaluations of the two juries (the parish and technical-institutional one) was coincidental —collocating in the first place the firm of TAMassociati of Venice— has been a symptom of the success of the participating path.

The design by TAMassociati (Serrazanetti 2022) had to deal with profound issues about memory and mourning, including such concepts in the new church —also realized in the recovery of some elements from the old one—, sobriety, dignity and beauty, as well as an openness to the district and a welcoming spirit.[9] The complex includes the liturgy hall and the parish complex on the backside, both included in a rectangular and white perimeter and organized around an inner courtyard that makes the element dialoguing (Fig. 02-03).

From the outside, the white and pure main volume is topped by a higher volume, which emphasizes the presence of the liturgical hall and becomes a zenith lighting device for the interior. The interior is characterized by a diffused light and white impression, heated by the presence of the furniture and the coating of the wooden walls. The main nave, linear, is flanked by the side nave and a small daily chapel (Fig. 04). In such a sober atmosphere, a few golden elements define some art pieces and details (Fig. 05). The main element of the interior is a large blue glass window, which serves as a backdrop and contemporary altarpiece, while also being a distinctive element for the interior courtyard behind. The structure of the church was conceived in a wood technology (X-LAM), to answer the sustainability, seismic and construction time requirements, as well as to the sense of welcome provided by the material itself. The result is a simple building, with linear forms and surfaces, guided by conceptual and constructive sobriety and by a real dialogue with the clients and the community that led to a new building open for the community and working as an engine of social and urban regeneration for the district (Lepore and Sfriso 2021). We witness in this sense a kind of *expansion* of the client from *single* to a *community* (the narrative always addressed to the plural of the accounts is emblematic), we can say that the *patron* of the church was the Varignano district itself, wisely guided by a pastoral figure (parish priest) and a *technical* manager (RdP), but always at the centre and heart of the process.

In this case, the client —in itself *not competent*— used all possible tools for the technical quality control of the project: the establishment of technical-institutional juries involved in the competition with the presence of experienced members of architecture —also academics, competent in the field of sacred architecture—, as well as specific advice asked on certain phases of the project: in this case, the executive project was scrutinised, as well as by the Committee for Worship Buildings and Public Bodies for the necessary authorizations, also by the Politecnico di Milano for quality control of the project evaluated up to the technological, plant and maintenance and durability (Fig. 06).

THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS: INVOLVEMENT, RESPONSIBILITY AND CARE OF THE COMMUNITY CLIENT

The awareness about the role of communities in the architectural process rapidly became a certainty: the positive experience of the Diocesan Paths was quickly implemented in the following *Participatory Paths*. Starting from 2017, a new period of architectural procedure management by CEI was opened. The central point was no longer just the involvement of communities, but the change of paradigm: the community is considered the real client of a new church. For this reason, the community must be aware of itself, its identity, and its pastoral personality, but at the same time, it has to be sufficiently competent also in the matters of architecture, art and liturgical issues, to better formulate requirements for designers. Moreover, the community must be able to personify a client, not only in the requests but also in the assumption of the care and conservation

Fig. 04. Parish complex of Resurrezione di Nostro Signore in Viareggio (Italy), 2019; inner courtyard.
Fig. 05. Side nave.
Fig. 06. Detail of the baptismal font.

responsibility of the building, because the church will become its *common home*, a *common heritage* to be protected and maintained.

The formulation of this new approach, with a brand new role of community and a longer perspective of interest, was carried out by the UNBCE —at the time managed by Don Valerio Pennasso— with the theoretical and critical support of university professors and researchers. The first experimentations in this field took place in a scientific and academic contest: from 2017, two research laboratories (CLI/LAB 1 and CLI/LAB2) for young professionals (architects, engineers, liturgists, artists, art historians, anthropologists) were organized and conducted during the activities of the International Liturgical Conference of Monastero di Bose (Boselli 2021).[10] These experimentations involved four Italian dioceses which requested a new parish complex (Gravina in Puglia in Altamura-Gravina-Acquaviva delle Fonti Diocese; Rizziconi in Oppido Mamertina-Palmi Diocese; Simeri Crichi in Catanzaro-Squillace Diocese and Terrasini in Monreale Diocese) (Table 03) (Longhi 2021a).

After the CLI-LAB laboratories, the procedures for the *Participatory Paths"* were improved and systematized, and many of the young professionals and researchers involved (mostly architects) were officially engaged by the UNBCE as *Animator of the Participatory Activities* (herein after referred AAP), and since then worked in a lot of Dioceses from the north to the south of Italy, each time a new church has to be built.

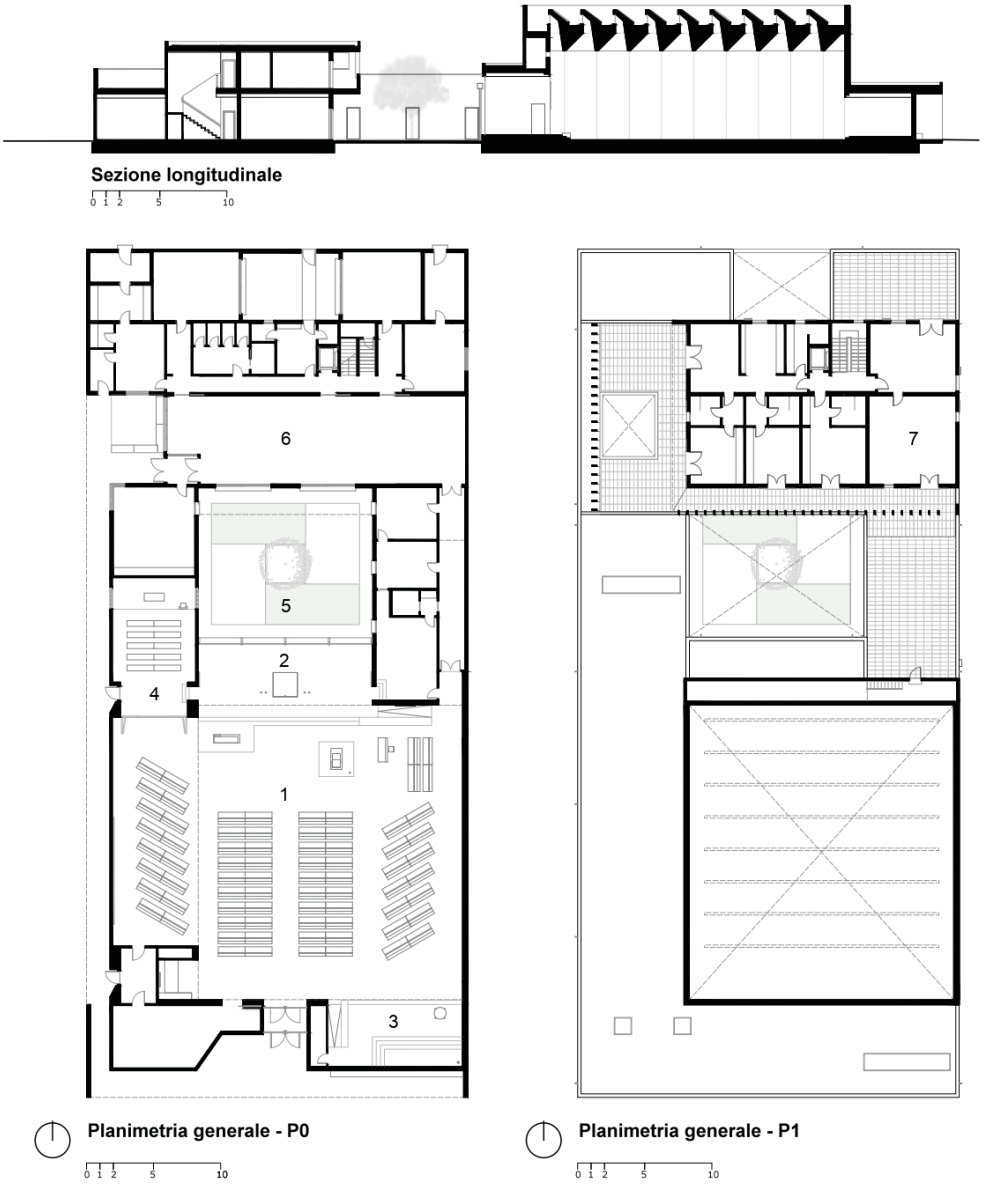
The process includes a path of accompaniment and participation with the community aimed at formulating their instances and requests about the new church and its empowerment. Several activities compose each path, aiming to stimulate, involve and educate community members on the topics of religious architecture and art, and liturgical and pastoral issues. Seminars with lecturers, meetings, kid's activities, site visits, experimental celebrations, and public assemblies are only a few of the activities usually organized in Participatory Paths, often accompanied by questionnaires, interviews and surveys conducted by the AAP to translate the instances of communities in technical requests. Even if the activities are chosen and managed independently by each professional leading them, some periodical meetings with the Offices and dialogues help in maintaining the same direction (Longhi 2021b; Bartolomei 2021; Cavallini et al. 2019).

At the end of the path, activities data and information are collected and included in the DPP written by the RdP: in this way, there can be direct communication between a collective client as the community and the designers that formulate their project based on the DPP instructions. After the publication of the DPP, the architectural competition announcement is published, and groups composed of architects, an artist and a liturgist can express interest in participating in it. A commission composed of both National Office members and diocesan referents selects a certain number of groups (usually between 13 and 15) based on the compositions of professionalities and curricula, and then the diocese publishes.

After the design submissions, a jury is chosen by dioceses, usually composed of the Bishop and referents of the diocese, the RdP, the president of the UNBCE and some office referents. Technical and other experts can be invited to be members of the commission, while the AAP cannot be invited to be a member of the jury, nor as a commission works listener.

The Participatory Paths, so organized, are directed not only to the parish communities but also to the more extended community to be aware of the architectural process: the district or the town (depending on the scale), the local administration and the other local bodies and associations. It is always clearer that the church in the urban context has a social, and not only a pastoral or religious role. Moreover, based on CEI indications, activities of the participatory paths have to take into account some reference themes: the sustainability, the accessibility, the management and the hospitality that must be represented in a project of the new church, considered as a community responsibility.

Substantially, the process is very different from the *participatory architecture*, focused on formalizing the architectural artifact; instead, the Participatory



Legenda:

1 aula sacra
2 presbiterio
3 battistero
4 cappella feriale
5 patio
6 locali ministero pastorale
7 casa canonica

Fig. 07. Parish complex of Resurrezione di Nostro Signore in Viareggio (Italy), 2019; plans.

Paths are aimed to delineate an architectural client able to formulate the right requests for the suitable architectural artefact.

The following Table 04 illustrates the large quantity of Participatory Paths conducted during the last years. Unfortunately, this recent procedure has not yet resulted in realized projects, therefore a critical evaluation of the efficacy of this approach will be successively carried out, and the preliminary investigations register enthusiastically involved communities and positive feedback from the dioceses.

What is important, in the field of our discussion, is the relevant change of the role of the client: starting from the Participatory Paths, the client is a plural body, with a specific education and empowerment that leads him to be more aware about its requests and its responsibilities. We could almost say it is an attempt to have an *illuminate common client* at the basis of a new church project.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through the procedural reading of the dynamics of the construction of new churches in Italy in the last twenty years, the proposed reflection focused on the role and *weight* of the collective client in the process of conception and realization of new churches. Even if the chronological cross-section examined limits critical synthesis readings —because of the recent and innovative experiences not yet materialized in built projects— the contribution, however, highlights some insights useful for future critical-scientific debates.

First of all, it is useful to point out the issue of the scale of the process. Since the nineties, the National Office of CEI, to limit excessive localism in new achievements, promotes new initiatives and competitions through the figure of Giancarlo Santi. In the following twenty years, a progressive return to the local reality as a true patron of the church is reached, intending the community as the main connoisseur of history, identity, and the reality of the place. Although the National Office is always present in the promotion and evaluation of paths and projects, there is a return to the local scale for the definition of requests.

Secondly, the theme of the *collective client*: the paper shows how the client is articulated into different figures and institutions, and how the concept of client expanded, indicating no longer a unique relationship between two people or entities (a designer and a bishop, for example). The traditional idea of client is dissolving and leading to an articulation around a plurality of subjects such as a promoter (CEI), an accompanist (bishop) and technical figures (RdP), up to the parish community and then extend to the urban community. The effort that the CEI is making in the preparation and training of this *collective client* is a completely innovative experimentation in the Italian context, and that demonstrates a careful sensitivity to the topic.

However, some questions remain open, especially due to the extreme contemporaneity of the topics dealt with. A growing role of the community in the architectural process is perhaps in danger of being an attitude too limited in time: the community is a changing subject by its nature, and with a time of use of the church decidedly insignificant compared to the forecasts of use of the building. Some questions emerge: will the processes promoted by the CEI be able to guarantee adequate adaptability of the new buildings over time for the future communities that will come? On which *community* is actually judged an index of approval and recognition of the church? And will the process so custom-made cause limited results in terms of architectural quality and universal significance?

In conclusion, it is therefore necessary to treasure the virtuous experiences, finding a mediation where alongside the satisfaction of the needs of the community, there is an impeccable quality control of the project. The conception of a building as a church —intended to last for decades and centuries— involves the design of the ability to adapt and modify and versatility of the building: the good designer is the one who designs time in architecture, and surely a competent and responsible client can help him in this path.

Year	City	Province	Diocese	Research Team	Status
2017-2018	Gravina in Puglia	Bari	Diocese of Altamura – Gravina-Acquaviva delle Fonti	Enrica Asselle, Emanuele Cavallini, Giulia De Lucia, Maurizio di Rienzo, Serena Laborante, Marco Riso	Not continued
2017-2018	Terrasini	Palermo	Diocese of Monreale	Luca Chiappetta, Vittorio Incampo, Bartomeu Janè, Sofia Novelli, Rocco Rosi, Giovanni Zaccaria	Competition executed (winned by arch. Davide Olivieri). Work in progress
2017-2018	Rizziconi	Reggio-Calabria	Diocese of Oppido Mamertina- Palmi	Jacopo Benedetti, Francesca Daprà, Giacomo Fuk, Davide Fusari, Luca Girello, Elisabetta Tagliabue	Competition executed (winned by arch. Maria Teresa Morano). Work in progress
2017-2018	Simeri Mare	Catanzaro	Diocese of Catanzaro-Squillace	Jonnabel Asis, Alessandro Bellini, Luca Corona, Alberto Gianfreda, Francesca Iovane	Competition executed (winned by ing. Massimo Conte). Work in progress

City	Province	Diocese	Status
Oppido Lucano	Potenza	Diocese of Acerenza	Concluded participatory path. Competition executed (winned by Isolarchitetti). Work in progress
Settingiano	Catanzaro	Diocese of Catanzaro-Squillace	In progress
Bagheria	Palermo	Diocese of Palermo	Concluded participatory path. Competition executed (winned by arch. Domenico Tripodi). Work in progress
Pietramelara	Caserta	Diocese of Teano-Calvi	Concluded participatory path
Morloquio	Reggio Calabria	Diocese of Reggio Calabria-Bova	Concluded participatory path
Floridia	Siracusa	Diocese of Siracusa	Concluded participatory path
Tribiano	Lodi	Diocese of Lodi	Concluded participatory path. Competition in progress
Giavera del Montello	Treviso	Diocese of Treviso	Concluded participatory path. Competition executed (winned by Ing. Adrea Tellini). Work in progress
Benevento	Benevento	Diocese of Benevento	Concluded participatory path. Competition executed (winned by arch. Marco Castelletti). Work in progress
Firenze	Firenze	Diocese of Firenze	Concluded participatory path.
Castiglione della Pescaia	Grosseto	Diocese of Grosseto	Concluded participatory path
San Nicolò d'Arcidano	Oristano	Diocese of Ales- Terralba	Concluded participatory path
Campofelice di Roccella	Palermo	Diocese of Cefalù	In progress
Giardini di Naxos	Messina	Diocese of Messina-Lipari-S. Maria del Mela	Concluded participatory path. Competition executed (winned by arch. Alberto Cusumano). Work in progress
Anagni	Frosinone	Diocese of Anagni	Concluded participatory path

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Table 03. Main information about the Experimental Partecipatory Paths from CLI/LAB activities.
Table 04. List and information about the Participatory Paths conducted between 2019-2023.

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NOTES

1. The creation of these two institutional bodies was mainly due to the approval in 1985 of Law No. 222, which regulated the system of financing religious confessions and provided for the allocation of State resources to the activities of the CEI (Dimodugno 2021). Nowadays, the two offices are unified and the responsible body for the construction of new churches is the National Office for the ecclesiastical cultural heritage and worship buildings (*Ufficio Nazionale per i beni culturali ecclesiastici e l'edilizia di culto-UNBCE*).

2. Giancarlo Santi (1944-2022) presbyter of the Diocese of Milan has been the manager the Office for Cultural Heritage of Diocese of Milan (*Ufficio beni culturali della Diocesi di Milano*), manager of the Pontifical Commission for ecclesiastical cultural heritage (*Pontificia Commissione per i beni culturali della Chiesa*) and, from 1996 to 2006, manager of National Office for cultural heritage of General Secretariat of Italian Episcopal Conference (*Ufficio Nazionale per i beni culturali della Segreteria Generale della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana*). Due to his foresight and trust in young architects and researcher, authors dedicate him this contribution.

3. The evaluation of the projects participating in each of the competitions is carried out, under the presidency of the CEI General Secretary or his delegate, by a jury made up of eleven effective jurors and three alternates, listed below. Full members: a) the General Secretary of the CEI, President, or his delegate; b) the President of the Committee for worship buildings; c) the Head of the National Service for worship buildings; d) the Director of the National Liturgical Office; e) a member of the Committee for worship buildings representing the geographical area concerned referred to in the art. 2 of this Regulation; f) two jurors, one of whom has a degree in architecture and one in engineering, designated by the Bishop of the diocese where the project is carried out; g) an architect designated by the National Council of Architects; h) an engineer designated by the National Council of Engineers; i) two experts in sacred art (artists). See CEI 2003.

4. The *Documento Prelimare alla Progettazione* (Preliminary Design Document) is defined as the planning document that allows to proper management of the dialogue between the client and the project group, outlining the strategic guidelines and the project reference perimeter (Talamo 2014). Such a document is used in the field of public works and defined by technical legislation that identifies its characteristics and role (UNI 10722-1:2007; ISO 9699).

5. The *Responsabile del Procedimento* (Project Manager) in the Italian legislation is mainly defined as who creates the conditions for the implementation of the inter-

vention to be carried out in a unified manner in relation to time, cost, quality, maintenance (DPR 207/2010 art.9 c.2). Extended definitions also about the specific ecclesiastical sphere are contained in Paganin 2014, 35-56.

6. The common structure of the DPP provided to the Dioceses was as follows. 1.General objectives of the intervention; 2. Information on the context; 3. Information on the inclusion of the facility in the context; 4. Context constraints (supplemented by regulatory references); 5. Technical elements; 6. Information on specific liturgical needs; 7. Information on specific pastoral and social needs; 8. Information on the artistic project and the iconographic programme; 9. Size of the parish complex (Benedetti 2021a).

7. The second phase jury was composed of the diocesan Responsible for worship buildings, or his delegate; the parish priest, or his delegate; two architectural experts; an architect indicated by the local Council of Architects; an art expert and a liturgy expert.

8. The report of the activities of the path of Varignano signed by the parish priest in the volume Comunità e Progettazione highlights the different subjects involved in the process since the drafting of the DPP: the parish community, the RdP, the diocese, the National Service for worship building (now the National Office for the Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage and the Building of Worship) of the Italian Episcopal Conference, some professors of Politecnico di Milano and other architects and university professors with different skills (Brunini 2021). Testimonies about the process can also be found in the video Missione Varignano 2014.

9. Referring to TAM Associati, principal architects, we also want to include all the experts and collaborators in the design team, so composed: TAMassociati (Architectural project) with Susanna Campeotto, Milena D'Acunto and Annamaria Draghetti (Collaborators); Alessandro Toniolo (Liturgy); maestro Marcello Chiarenza (Artworks); Andrea Avezzù (Photographic works); Agrisophia Projects (Landscape); Milan Ingegneria (Structures); K&G projects (Mechanic); Ghetti & Formignani Associati (Electrical); prof. Barbaresi, prof. D'Orazio - UniBO (Acoustics); studio Forghieri (Calculations); studio Marino (DL Facilities and Security); arch Marco Bettini (RdP); Ing Raffaelli (Test driver).

10. The International Liturgical Conferences of Monastero di Bose have been for years (1994-2019) a central point for the debate about religious buildings and churches. The Conferences were organized in collaboration with the National CEI Offices about different topics related to liturgy and architecture. For a general overview about the Bose Liturgical Conferences see Monastero di Bose 2023.

SOURCE OF IMAGES

Table 01-04. Table edited by the authors.
Fig. 01-07. Courtesy of TAMassociati.
Fig. 02-06. Photo by Andrea Azzevù, courtesy of TAMassociati.