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Between Liturgical Reform and Social Commitment: a Historiographic Profile of Policies for the Ecclesiastical Infrastructure of Italian Cities in the Post-War Period

INVITED

Church Architecture, Liturgical Architecture, Ecclesial Planning, Religious Heritage, Parish Churches

/Abstract

The essay explores the territorial policies implemented by ecclesiastical institutions in post-World War II Italy and in the season around the turn of the Second Vatican Council. Recent historiography on some methodological issues is reviewed, such as the definition of the actors engaged in ecclesiastical planning and the related working tools, and the identification of documentary sources that bear witness to the links between ecclesial scenarios and architectural imaginaries. In conclusion, a map of open questions and possible insights is drawn.

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Italian church architecture from the second half of the twentieth century has been the subject of growing historiographic interest over the last two decades, thanks to certain conditions that have favoured the promotion of research and debate, both in ecclesial milieus and in university contexts. The art and architecture offices set up within the Italian Episcopal Conference[1] have not only promoted competitions of national and international relevance (as well as a more widespread liturgical qualification of technical professionals)[2], but have also supported projects of historical knowledge and heritage conservation, through agreements with various Italian universities and partnerships at academic conferences.[3] The contribution of thought and action of Monsignor Giancarlo Santi (1944-2022)[4], to whose memory this contribution is dedicated with gratitude, was fundamental.

This positive climate of confidence in the value of research and design was all the more valuable as it took shape at a time of declining "political popularity" of scholarly activities and long-term planning. The flourishing of initiatives was also boosted by the gradual demise of decades-old prejudices regarding academic interest in the religious phenomenon and its spatial implications.

This paper intends to highlight certain issues that have emerged in recent historiography on the post-war years and the Second Vatican Council, with the aim of offering the scientific community some avenues for further study.

The Parish System as a Territorial System and as a Stakeholder in Territorial Policies

In post-war Italy, the parishized forms of religious community inherited from the modern age continued to constitute a founding territorial structure of social relations and belonging. The "parish package" was in fact created as a solid intertwining of "local solidarity, civilization identity, property relationship, political authority, and territorial divisions"[5] and this intertwining – which brings with it reproductive mechanisms – remained fundamental in the post-war processes of urban reorganisation. The parish institutions and the social practices they promoted were obviously the bedrock of the private spiritual life of worshippers,

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1 Davide Dimodugno, "L'Ufficio e i progetti: nota storico-giuridica," in Jacopo Benedetti, ed., *Comunità e progettazione* (Roma: Gangemi 2021), 17-36.

2 Giorgio Della Longa, "La arquitectura religiosa contemporánea en Italia y la experiencia de la Conferencia Episcopal Italiana en su promoción," in *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea* , no. 1 (2007): 106-129, https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2007.1.0.5020; Valerio Pennasso, "Nuove chiese: dai progetti pilota ai percorsi partecipativi. Nuove proposte," in Danilo Lisi, ed., *Lo spazio sacro e la città contemporanea* (Roma: Gangemi 2021), 93-97; Francesca Daprà and Giulia De Lucia, "Twenty years of clients for religious architectures: projects, processes and results of contemporary Italian churches," *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 10 (2023): 32-47, https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2023.10.0.10180 ; Valerio Pennasso, "Un ponte verso il futuro. La dimensione comunitaria, l'evoluzione dei concorsi banditi dalla Conferenza Episcopale Italiana nell'orizzonte del dialogo tra Chiesa e architettura nei nostri giorni," in *Architettura e liturgia. Intese, oltre i malintesi*, ed. Leonardo Servadio (Roma: Tab Edizioni, 2023), 177-186.

3 For example, the conferences on *Architettura e liturgia nel Novecento* held at the Venice Biennale (from 2003 to 2010, then subsequently in different institutional guises) and the *Congressi Liturgici Internazionali* at Bose Monastery (2003-2019), the proceedings of which are available in print.

4 https://www.themaprogetto.it/in-ricordo-di-mons-giancarlo-santi/ (last accessed December 2024).

5 Samuel Nelson and Philip S. Gorski, "Conditions of belonging: Confessionalization, de-parishization, and the Euro-American divergence," *International Sociology*, no. 29/1 (2014): 3-21, 7.

while also forming its institutional and public ecclesiastical framework, through the administration of the sacraments and the formal sharing of the fundamental social passages of life (initiation, marriage, death). However, the Catholic model of parish civilisation also offers a rich framework of non-religious social relations and rituals, frames participation in political competition, and provides educational, welfare, sports, recreational and cultural services.[6]

Parishes – both urban and rural – are, therefore, institutional systems of "construction" of the territory, the solidity of which is rooted in the post-Tridentine ecclesiastical reforms, revived and expanded in the early 20th century by the Magisterium of Pius X. The parish structure is an objective and shared fact, transcending the multiple possible relationships between individual beliefs and religious practices. The affiliation of every citizen to a parish territory is a formal biographical aspect, which transcends forms of affective or spiritual belonging.



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The local Churches – through parish structures and diocesan organisations – have therefore been able to develop real "territorial policies", with an ecclesiastical matrix but with contents that are more than just religious. The construction of the territory is therefore the phenomenon in which the different dimensions of the religious phenomenon take material form, the spatial value of which has become the subject of an extensive interdisciplinary literature.[7] The parish policies implemented in Reconstruction Italy also confirmed another well-known fact in literature, that political and ecclesiastical dimensions are inseparable in the interpretation of the architectural actions of religious communities.[8]

6 For a historiographic overview of the role of the parish and parish priests in Italy: Gabriele De Rosa, "La parrocchia nell'età contemporanea," in *La parrocchia in Italia nell'età contemporanea. Atti del II Incontro seminariale di Maratea (24-25 settembre 1979)*, eds. Gabriele De Rosa and Angelomichele De Spirito (Napoli: Dehoniane, 1982), 15-28; Pietro Borzomati, "La parrocchia," in *I luoghi della memoria. Strutture ed eventi dell'Italia unita*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1997), 67-91; Vittorio De Marco, "La parrocchia," in *La nazione cattolica. Chiesa e società in Italia dal 1958 a oggi*, ed. Marco Impagliazzo (Milano: Guerini, 2004), 181-203; Sergio Tanzarella, "La parrocchia: vita, morte, miracoli," in *Cristiani d'Italia. Chiese, società, Stato. 1861-2011*, 2 voll., ed. Alberto Melloni (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2011), 1, 259-276; Paolo Cozzo, *Andate in pace. Parroci e parrocchie in Italia dal Concilio di Trento a papa Francesco* (Roma: Carocci, 2014).

7 Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Space and Religion: new Approaches to Religious Spatiality in Modernity," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, no. 26.1 (2002): 99-105.

8 Oskar Verkaaik, "Religious Architecture. Anthropological Perspectives," in *Religious Architecture. Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Oskar Verkaaik (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 7-24.

Fig. 1
Gesù Agonizzante, Vitinia (Rome), arch. Ildo Avetta, 1955: the building sites of the parish church and the suburb. [ISACEM, Presidenza Generale Azione Cattolica, Archivio fotografico, 1]

The Establishment and Construction of Parishes within the Framework of Urban Transformation

As of the 1950s, the historical period we reflect upon here, we can recognise certain dynamics within the Italian parish system relating to the establishment of new parish bodies and the definition of their locations:

a) in the new metropolitan suburbs, the parish system was extended and re-organised in a capillary manner in line with urbanisation processes; however, the assumption of stability and rootedness of the population was undermined by the increase in local mobility (commuting, misalignment between places of residence and work by the various members of families, weekend and holiday mobility which uprooted families from their parishes during the holidays[9]), by migratory phenomena, by the breakdown into scattered nuclei of macro-family units and – in a broader sense – by the loss of the sense and nature of neighbourhood. In Italy too, there was a start to that apparently inseparable and irreversible nexus between urbanisation, secularisation and modernisation, described by Harvey Cox in *The Secular City*, the paradigm of which was only challenged at the turn of the new millennium.[10]

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b) in densely-populated old towns, the significance of the parish structure began to weaken; war damage to churches highlighted the need for a solid ecclesiastical building organisation[11] and a "theological thought" for reconstruction.[12] At the same time there was a growing awareness of the difficulties involved in fully restoring a redundant heritage of churches, belonging to different ecclesial subjects (not only parishes, but religious orders, confraternities, guilds, etc.), which had lost consistency and operational efficiency over time. Moreover, the dynamics of first immigration that were taking place in old towns challenged the traditional memberships of parish

9 On the relationship between mobility and religious life in 1960s France: Pierre Lebrun, *Le temps des églises mobiles. L'architecture religieuse des Trente Glorieuses* (Gollion: Infolio, 2011).

10 Arie L. Molendijk, Justin Beaumont and Christoph Jedan, eds., *Exploring the Postsecular. The Religious, the Political and the Urban* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010).

11 Francesco Marchisano, "Il ruolo della Pontificia Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra in Italia nella ricostruzione delle chiese nei decenni successivi alla guerra," in *Profezia di bellezza. Arte sacra tra memoria e progetto. Pittura-scultura-architettura 1945-1995* (Roma: Ciscra, 1996), 17-20; Daniele De Marchis, "Introduzione," in *L'Archivio della Commissione Centrale per l'Arte Sacra in Italia. Inventario*, ed. Daniele De Marchis (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2013), 1-88, 30-65; Michela Pirro, "The Post-War Reconstruction of the Ecclesiastical Building in Italy. The Role of the Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art," *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 6 (2019): 50-67, https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2019.6.0.6227. (last accessed December 2024).

12 Saverio Carillo, "Una pelle per la liturgia. Il restauro come 'pietas figurale'. Appunti per una riflessione sul problema dell'arte sacra e dell'intervento reintegrativo per i luoghi di culto a ridosso della Seconda guerra mondiale," *Arte Cristiana*, no. 850 (2009): 61-72.

Fig. 2
Pope Pius XII receives the design for the Prenestino parish church (Rome) from the presidency of the Unione Uomini di Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action Men's Union) and arch. Giuseppe Zander, 1951. [ISACEM, Presidenza Generale Azione Cattolica, Archivio fotografico, 1]

communities rooted in local devotions and relationships, and the weakness of communities generated phenomena of abandonment, poor maintenance and building decay in historical parish complexes.

c) in rural areas too, the strong and capillary web of the historicised relationship between the settlement structure and the parish system was being drained of meaning, due to depopulation and migration to the cities, and the ageing and dispersion of family units; at the same time, in rural areas affected by land reclamation processes, new rural villages were being created and, at least in the 1950s, a new parish complex remained at their heart.

The fragility of a rigid parish system is highlighted by one of the best-known speeches of Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro – one of the key players in the season of the Second Vatican Council –, a speech he gave in February 1968, shortly before the bitter epilogue of his episcopate and the escalation of the social protests of 1968. Faced with the speed of the processes of urban and social transformation, the cardinal hoped for the construction of churches which, while remaining recognisable by virtue of the sanctity of those who gathered there, would be modest, functional and easily transformed, with the freedom for future generations to rethink, abandon or transform them.[13] Lercaro's address was a vivid testimony of the ecclesial perception of the troubled relationship between sacred space and society, a theme that would be scientifically investigated in the decades that followed thanks to the spatial turn of the sciences of religion, which questioned the transformations of the "regimes of territoriality" and the "spatialization processes" of religious phenomena, investigating both the phenomenological relationship between spaces and poetics of the sacred, and the relationships between religions and politics.[14]

Elective and Mobile Communities

If the territorialised ecclesiastical system was beginning to manifest its structural weaknesses in the face of urban transformations, the principle of territoriality was also being challenged in the internal dynamics of ecclesial life. New types of community were becoming established – in fact and in principle – based on an "elective" model, in other words, communities not founded on territorial belonging (physical proximity, institutional ties, etc.), but on personal choices and willingness to be mobile.[15] In reality, in the history of Christian communities, the systematic coverage of the parish system has always been flanked by spiritual experiences with a supra-local vocation, linked to the different religious charismas (Dominican or Franciscan tertiaries, Salesian alumni, etc.), or to associative

13 Giacomo Lercaro, ed, "La chiesa nella città di domani. Messaggio al simposio annuale degli artisti a Colonia, 28 febbraio 1968," in *La chiesa nella città. Discorsi e interventi sull'architettura sacra* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1996), 139-151.

14 In short: Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion," *Religion Compass*, no. 2/6 (2008): 1102-1116; Kim Knott, "Religion, Space, and Place. The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion," *Religion and Society. Advances in Research*, no. 1 (2010): 29-43.

15 Daniele Campobenedetto, Matteo Robiglio and Isabelle Toussaint, "Costruzione ed esperienza contemporanea del sacro. Personalizzazione, comunità elettive e comunità territoriali," *Humanitas* n.s. LXVIII (6/2013): 957-965 (dossier *Spazi e luoghi sacri*, eds. Maria Chiara Giorda and Sara Hajazi).

experiences on a national scale (which remained nevertheless embedded in the parish system, such as Catholic Action, the scout movement, and also some confraternities). The tensions between territorialization, deterritorialization and extraterritorialization of religious groups are part and parcel of the history of Christianity.[16]

However, in the years between Reconstruction and the ferment of the Second Vatican Council, innovative models of lay spirituality and commitment to the apostolate, in which personal choices had a particular impact on how the sense of belonging manifested itself in de-territorialisation processes, emerged[17]. Such models of spirituality not only superseded the parish system, they went so far as to challenge the very role of ecclesiastical architecture, moving towards more fluid and informal forms of aggregation[18], postulating almost the indifference to spatial environment.

Ecclesiological aspects

Considering the relationship between ecclesiological thought and community spaces the hierarchical model in which the Church is seen as an organised and hierarchical "society" (known as *societal ecclesiology*) is called into question, while a model of an *ecclesiology of communion* is established.[19] This process – recognised and made irreversible by the event and the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) – also caused local communities to be understood primarily as a theological expression, rather than as an aggregation of an organisational or administrative nature. The "objective" scanning of the territory, linked to a spatial perimeter of parishes, lost its significance, and the parish community was interpreted above all as a community of people and as a crossroads of personal relationships. [20] Moreover, the explicit universalist openness of the Church placed involvement in a local community and the sense of belonging to a universal Church in open dialectic, also generating artistic and architectural short-circuits: in fact, the care of the specific *genius loci*[21] (sometimes declined in a vernacular way) and openness to globalised worldliness or third-world aesthetics emerged at the same time.

The dynamics synthetically evoked affected the methods of ecclesiastical infrastructuring and the processes of territorialization of Christian communities, manifesting a number of tensions. The parish centres were places of deep communion and spirituality, but also of social and cultural exchanges with a variety

16 Hervieu-Léger, "Space and religion," 102.

17 Lionel Obadia, "Spatial turn, beyond geography: a new Agenda for sciences of religion?," *International Review of Sociology*, no. 25/2 (2015): 200-217.

18 Marco Frati, "Chiese senza chiese. Spazio e liturgia dei gruppi ecclesiali dopo il Concilio." in *La chiesa nella città. A 50 anni dal Concilio Vaticano II*, ed. Claudia Manenti (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2017), 65-75.

19 In short Serena Noceti, "Ecclesiologia," in *Dizionario del sapere storico-religioso del Novecento*, ed. Alberto Melloni, 2 voll. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), I, 811-841.

20 Francesco Coccopalmerio, *La parrocchia. Tra Concilio Vaticano II e Codice di Diritto Canonico* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2000).

21 Frédéric Debuyst, *Le génie chrétien du lieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1997).



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of subjects outside the Christian community; intimate and protective contexts, but open to the challenges of a secularised and rapidly changing society; places of evangelisation (in the awareness that, at this point, Europe, having ended the "regime of Christendom", was a land of mission), but also of social service; places of institutionalised belonging, but also of spontaneous participation; spaces perceived as relics of a backward or obsolete social and political structure, while offering opportunities for social contestation, innovation, experimentation and spontaneous appropriation of spaces.

We can therefore identify an initial historiographical problem: to what extent are the parish centres of the post-war years still the product of institutionalised processes of territorialization, solid expressions of a *plantatio ecclesiae* firmly rooted in places and local identities? And to what extent, on the other hand, do the new ecclesial dynamics of communion, liturgical participation and dialogue with secularised and mobile societies imply a rethinking of those perimeters, boundaries and affiliations that were historically embodied by parish structures?

The Plurality of Ecclesial Sources

If the Church's territorial policies affect urban dynamics through the parishes, then it becomes a crucial research topic to identify the ecclesial sources that reveal which different ecclesial imaginaries feed new structures and new urban landscapes.

The formal models of each parish complex are necessarily, in some way, expressions of ecclesiological models (Chiesa *societas* or Chiesa *communio*?), of visions of the meaning of the liturgy and celebratory life (spectacle or participation?), of ideal relations between ecclesial life and society (is the Church part of

Fig. 3
The suburb of Vitinia and the construction sites by the parish church, 1955. [ISACEM, Presidenza Generale Azione Cattolica, Archivio fotografico, 6]

society or is it a counterpart? is it a participatory player or a political animator?). In short: was the Church part of the world in the years of the Reconstruction and did it share its fortunes, or was it – and did it present itself as – something apart from the world, a sort of autonomous society? Did it participate in its context or did it distance itself from life around it? The questions evoked here obviously have impacts that are not directly morphogenetic, except for very didactic approaches and allegorical and lyrical drifts (the boat-church, the tent-church, the factory-church, etc. [22]), but they offer a plurality of possible design interpretations, through the cultural mediations carried out by the various subjects.

The question of the Church/world relationship which ran through the Church in the post-war years, became the heart of the themes addressed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, convened in 1959 and held between 1963 and 1965. It was on the entire corpus of documents approved by the council that the theological and pastoral foundations of the renewal of parish complexes and their architecture were to be sought. This not only depended on the rules on the liturgy and the reform of its rites (initiated by the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* constitution of 1963 and developed in the 1970s), nor did it depend on the few passages on religious art. An adequate awareness of the meaning of liturgical rules[23] may allow the formulation of a functionally correct project, but the architecture of the parish complex – in its urban and landscape form – can only be a transversal expression of the ideas of the universal Church and the local Church community.

The sources that had an impact on ecclesial architecture however must be sought on a broad scale, and not only in the Vatican's indications, which are aimed at an audience specialised in the theological professions. It is perhaps more interesting to investigate the many forms of communication of faith and apostolate that animate the life of local communities: the historiographic dynamic of extending the sources considered in the history of Christianity[24] also concerns the historical-architectural sphere. The relationship between models of the Church and the world of built forms can be documented in parish bulletins, diocesan weeklies, local celebratory publications and the many village and neighbourhood chronicles, but also in the choices of parish cinema screenings, or the destinations of church outings.

If "popular" sources bear witness to the experience of communities – and the perception of the value of the space they inhabited – other types of scientific documentation represent an invaluable source for the reconstruction of the debate on and and ecclesial narration of the city. The 1950s and 60s witnessed the flourishing of numerous scientific investigations with a demographic and

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22 Birgit Kastner, "Ridefinire i segni sacri in contesti urbani e rurali: edifici religiosi simbolici e iconici nell'architettura contemporanea," *Area*, no. 147 (2016): 14-19; Andrea Longhi, "Church building beyond church architecture: evangelization and architecture," *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 3 (2013): 2-25, https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2013.3.0.5078 .

23 Andrea Longhi, ed., *Architettura e liturgia: autonomia e norma nel progetto* (Bologna: Bononia University Press – Fondazione Lercaro, 2017).

24 Alberto Melloni, "Cristiani d'Italia. Introduzione," Alberto Melloni, ed., *Cristiani d'Italia. Chiese, società, Stato. 1861-2011*, vol. 1, (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2011), XI-LVII.

sociological slant, bearing witness to a season of intense cultural and planning activity by the Church. Recent literature invites us to reflect on the value of this activity[25] and we will return to it later.

This variety of sources helps avoid the separation of the two themes on which literature has sometimes selectively focused, as evoked in the title of the contribution: research into a renewed *liturgical functionality* of the church and research into the *social functionality* of the rest of the parish complex.

The implementation of liturgical reform – developed along an articulate path with different levels of legislation and interpretation[26] – indeed it did not only have functional impacts on the relationship between rites and space (the church as *a machine à prier*) or spiritual outcomes (the church as a reservoir of the transcendent), which could be interpreted as a desire to isolate the faithful from social life.

On one hand, communities felt "summoned" by the liturgy and invited to live an intense sacramental life, sidelining political collateralism and forms of organised militancy against parties with a Marxist leaning.

On the other, communities developed a social commitment that went beyond the aspect of evangelisation alone, opening up to a vision of "mission" which also focused on the promotion of human dignity. Liturgical life and civil commitment were not, therefore, seen as contrasting, but as variations of the same reforming inspiration. This gave the liturgical *actuosa partecipatio* desired by the Council an intrinsically social dimension, *operating* (rather than *operational*) within society, as seen from the very beginnings of the Liturgical Movement.[27] It is not, therefore, correct to see the church hall as a space for a liturgy that has only religious purposes, and the "accessory" spaces as instruments of secular, profane assistance, used merely for sports, cinema, theatre, recreational activities, etc. The very concept of "ancillary space" debases the theological nature of the various non-liturgical activities and leads to their formal impoverishment and typological flattening (rooms used for catechism as school classrooms, parish halls as secular cinemas, oratories as sports facilities, etc.).

Indeed, it is interesting to search for sources that help us interpret the architecture of each parish complex as the expression of a dynamic in which the liturgy celebrated is the presupposition of social action, and reciprocally, social action is crowned by the liturgy (not coincidentally defined by Vatican II as *culmen et fons* of Christian life[28]). If the history of Christian architecture tells us how architecture and art have always been considered instruments not only for the liturgy, but also for catechesis and charity, the actual constructions themselves offer original insights into the self-perception of communities and the relationship

25 Sven Sterken and Eva Weyns, eds., *Territories of faith. Religion, urban planning and demographic change in Post-War Europe* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022).

26 Fernando López-Arias, *El Concilio Vaticano II y la arquitectura sagrada. Origen y evolución de uos principios programáticos (1947-1970)* (Roma: CLV Edizioni Liturgiche, 2021).

27 Maria Paiano, *Liturgia e società nel Novecento. Percorsi del movimento liturgico di fronte ai processi di secolarizzazione* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2000).

28 Concile du Vatican, *Constitutio de sacra liturgia "Sacrosanctum concilium"*, 10.

between different activities. So, by reversing the perspective of the source-architecture relationship, not only must the analysis of the architecture of parish complexes be supported by adequate ecclesiastical documentary sources, it can also be considered an original historical source for the history of the Church and theological thought.[29] The in-depth understanding of architecture, based on experience, can reveal how the wealth of literary sources has been translated into spaces in which life is lived – albeit usually in a segmented, fragmentary or subjective way – in which that "religious experience" made up of stories of "affections, habits, devotional sentiments" takes shape.[30]

Ecclesial Imageries and Parish Complexes

Starting from such scenarios, we can now ask ourselves about the relationship between ecclesiological models and models of parish structure conformation. In literature and in building processes we can identify at least two different models:

a) the "besieged citadel". The parish conceived as a self-sufficient nucleus of spiritual and material services, aimed at the individual and at families; a strongly recognisable and assertive complex, destined to be a reference and a destination in potentially conflicting social contexts, especially in the working-class suburbs.[31] However, the citadel is not seen merely as an instrument of war: on the contrary, it applies an interclass model of social cohabitation, aiming to avoid – or overcome – the class struggle. The parish (both as an institution and as a building) was experienced as a place where different social classes, obliged somehow to meet weekly around the altar or around the football pitch, learned to know and respect each other, to look each other in the eye and give each other a name, defusing violence and intolerance. Nevertheless, in a climate of class coexistence, the parish asserted itself as a protective and strongly recognisable "citadel" in the urban landscape. The parish complex was built as a territorial garrison to resist external political tensions (the Marxist class struggle), but also internal ecclesial drifts, which proposed a new "environmental pastoral", replacing parish territorial pastorals in favour of specific sectorial pastorals divided by social groups (the working class, students, rural people). However, although specialised pastoral forms were also cautiously spreading in Italy – inspired by transalpine ecclesial models – the parish and territorial model of the care of souls was not challenged.

b) The 'house among houses'. The parish was not built as a monument or fortified garrison, but as a domestic, welcoming, inclusive dwelling.[32] Parish

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29 Andrea Longhi and Carlo Tosco, "Per una storia sociale delle chiese contemporanee," in Andrea Longhi, Carlo Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società in Italia (1948-1978)* (Roma: Studium, 2010), XIII-XVII.

30 Gabriele De Rosa, *Tempo religioso e tempo storico. Saggi e note di storia sociale e religiosa dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea. III* (Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa, 1988), IX-X.

31 Massimo Moraglio, *La cittadella assediata. Parrocchie e nuove chiese a Torino (1945-1965)* (Torino: Trauben, 2008); Andrea Longhi, "Parrocchie e periferie nel Dopoguerra: laboratori di architettura per 'cittadelle cristiane'," *Thema_Rivista di architettura sacra e dei beni culturali ecclesiastici*, no. 1 (2012): 36-41.

32 Carla Zito, *Casa tra le case. Architettura di chiese a Torino durante l'episcopato del cardinale Michele Pellegrino*

complexes attempted to offer a daily experience of sobriety and proximity, seconding the very etymology of the word "parish" (from the Greek *paroikia* and latin *parochia* based on *para*-beside + *oikos*-dwelling) and rediscovering the history of early Christian architecture – the *domus ecclesiae* – in view of a built theology which optimises community domesticity[33] in consideration of reflection on the domestic origins of Christianity.[34] But whose "house"? The "House of God" – according to the medieval and modern tradition of "petrification" of the concept of *ecclesia*[35] – or the "house of the community", the "house of the People of God"[36]? The domestic metaphor is usually associated with other evangelical metaphors, such as yeast, which makes dough ferment without being recognisable, or salt, which can enhance many different flavours only when it does not impose its own flavour. However, does this reading of domesticity, associated with positive readings of the desacralisation of the liturgy and the secularisation of the Church, not present the risk of Christians becoming irrelevant in society, as well as unrecognisable in the landscape? Isn't there a risk that the theologies of secularisation and of *enfouissement*[37] might support the identity crisis of Christian communities in increasingly secular cities? A remonstrance on the relevance and impact of such domestic metaphors did in fact emerge in the 1980s and during the pontificate of John Paul II, when the so-called "return of the monumental",[38] associated with a pastoral of "presence" became established.

The two imageries schematised here are simply two extreme hypotheses, which can nourish a variety of architectural translations of ecclesial models: the intertwining of the different versions of the Liturgical Movement, ecclesiological interpretations and architectural cultures determine a plurality of experiences in the years straddling the Council.[39]

In the face of a number of possible approaches, a further historiographical dilemma emerges: who chooses and shapes the ecclesial model of reference and takes care of its formal translation? Do theologies, ecclesiologies and liturgical reforms indeed arrive in the different local contexts through very different "vectors" and "mediators"[40] (priests, theology teachers, scholars, committed lay

(1965-1977) (Cantalupa: Effatà, 2013).

33 Art critic and monk Frédéric Debuyst (1922-2017) was the leading exponent of this interpretative thread; in short: Frédéric Debuyst, *Chiese. Arte, architettura, liturgia dal 1920 al 2000* (Milano: Silvana, 2003); Frédéric Debuyst, *Elogio di nuove chiese. Una libera sequenza di incontri e di luoghi significativi rivisitati* (Magnano: Qiqajon, 2018).

34 Camille Focant, ed., *Quelle maison pour Dieu?* (Paris: Cerf, 2003), summarised in Camille Focant, "Dal tempio alla casa: lo spazio del culto in Spirito e Verità," in *Spazio liturgico e orientamento*, ed. Goffredo Boselli (Magnano: Qiqajon, 2007), 87-104.

35 Dominique Iogna-Prat, *La Maison-Dieu. Une histoire monumentale de l'Église au Moyen Âge (v. 800-v. 1200)* (Paris : Seuil, 2006); Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Cité de Dieu. Cité des hommes. L'église et l'architecture de la société* (Paris: PUF, 2016).

36 Cettina Militello, *La casa del popolo di Dio. Modelli ecclesiologici, modelli architettonici* (Bologna: EDB, 2006).

37 Christine Blanchet and Pierre Vérot, *Architecture et arts sacrés de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Archibooks, 2015), 219-310.

38 Longhi, "Church building".

39 Andrea Longhi, "The Second Vatican Council and Ecclesiastical Architecture: Liturgy, Modernity, Memory," in *The Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Where the Word Became Flesh*, ed. Einat Segal, Assaf Pinkus and Gil Fishhof (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 69-94.

40 The theme and lexicon are borrowed from the microhistorical methodological approach: Nicola Gallerano,



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people, leaders of movements, etc.)? What awareness – or explicit spatial intentionality – emerges among the increasingly choral and communal commissioners and those that formulate theological models? And what is the role of ecclesial metaphors in orienting the way ecclesial space is perceived and inhabited?

The Vectors of the Models and the Extended Timeframe of Architectural Action

The relationship between ecclesial and architectural models is always mediated by the "human factor", which translates written sources into social practices and in built environment. The circulation and architectural interpretation of encyclicals, council documents, liturgical norms, catechisms, pastoral letters – and institutional Church visions in general – runs through a range of local communication tools, but more decisive than written interpretations are the living mediations proposed by the players who lead in transformation processes. The ecclesial imageries and metaphors are implemented through the definition of architectural programmes, the negotiation of projects and their realisation,

Fig. 4
The mass celebration on the building site with workers, during the construction of the Prenestino parish church, 30 March 1952. [ISACEM, Presidenza Generale Azione Cattolica, Archivio fotografico, 8]

"Microstoria," in *Dizionario di Storiografia*, Alberto De Bernardi and Scipione Guarracino eds. (Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1996), 682-683; see Andrea Longhi, *Storie di chiese, storie di comunità. Progetti, cantieri, architetture* (Roma: Gangemi 2017), 22-26.

which – in most parish complexes – can never be considered completed (except for the institutional need to dedicate the liturgical hall at a certain point of the building site). The lengthy times required to comprehend the sources feed into the lengthy times of the building sites.

The local "vectors" of the transition from literature to architecture can have very different natures, which historiography is called upon to recognise and investigate across a wide spectrum. The principle of embodiment and territorialisation of Christianity passes through biographical interweavings and community experiences, everyday practices and event-driven decisions.

This plurality of actors and roles operates within the framework of two different but interrelated processes:

a) the interpretative process of ecclesial and ecclesiastical sources defines the inspirational criteria and operational methods of the presence of the local Christian community in society. How are are the ecclesiastical sources read? By whom? With what disciplinary, social ad contextual cultural mediations? Which player takes the initiative to translate the ecclesial imageries into architectural forms that specifically express an ecclesial vision?

b) The process of transforming places frames the tangible ways in which the ecclesial vision fits into a space and history. The lengthy construction times of parish complexes are influenced by urban dynamics (political, economic, social), while also altering and orienting them, generating hubs of urban vitality. How does the need for a "home" for the community enter into a broader process of dialogue with different subjects, active in the transformation of the city? How does the People of God "seeking a home" fit into the housing struggle of the working classes? How are ecclesiastical regulations interpreted according to a variety of building and town-planning regulations, through the actions of officials, technicians and consultants? How does the construction of a parish complex change the use of public spaces?

Commissioners and Professionals

Certainly in the 1950s and in the season of Vatican II, the bishops regained a central role as commissioners and "designers", renewing the Tridentine tradition of the bishop rooted in his own territory. Literature has thoroughly investigated the role of some bishops who were particularly sensitive to urban issues in the years straddling the Council.[41] A large field of investigation still open, however,

41 On cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, Bishop in Bologna [1952-1968]: Glauco Gresleri, Maria Beatrice Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri, eds., *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna* (Bologna: Compositori, 2004); Claudia Manenti, ed., *Il cardinale Lercaro e la città contemporanea* (Bologna: Compositori, 2010); Claudia Manenti, *La campagna nuove chiese del cardinale Lercaro* (Bologna: Minerva, 2023); on the Milanese episcopates, with particular reference to cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini [1954-1963]: Cecilia De Carli, ed., *Le nuove chiese della diocesi di Milano. 1945-1993* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1994); Maria Antonietta Crippa, "L'arcidiocesi di Milano campo sperimentale della pastorale di Giovanni Battista Montini. Il sistema di parrocchie e nuove chiese," *Annali della Pontificia Insigne Accademia di Belle Arti e Lettere dei Virtuosi al Pantheon*, no. XIV (2014): 49-75; ed. Laura Lazzaroni, *La diocesi di Milano e le nuove chiese. 1954-2014* (Milano: Centro Ambrosiano, 2016); Cecilia De Carli, "Le nuove chiese," in *Montini Arcivescovo di Milano*, ed. Luca Bressan and Angelo Maffeis, (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 2016), 295-329. On this season, see also, in short: Sandro Benedetti, *L'architettura delle chiese contemporanee. Il caso italiano* (Milano: Jaca Book, 2000), 15-49; Tommaso Scalesse, "Architettura," in *L'arte cristiana in Italia. Età Moderna e Contemporanea,* ed. Timothy Verdon, (Cinisello Balsamo:

concerns the activities of individual priests-builders and commissioners, and their relations with intellectuals and motivators of communities; the actual functioning of parish participatory bodies and local pressure groups, associations and ecclesial movements, or the innovative role of cultural centres sponsored by religious congregations is still little explored.[42] The role of entrepreneurs or enlightened private patrons (such as Enrico Mattei[43] or, on a local scale, the private promoters of churches in working-class villages or in corporate contexts) still requires investigation.

Lastly, a specific area of research is the role of professionals who devote special attention to the liturgical theme,[44] capable of proposing their own line of ecclesial thought and "built theology", sometimes in tune with priests who were the animators of their communities, sometimes in contrast with priests who were somewhat behind the times. Such professionals were sometimes trained within Catholic associations (generalist or art sector) and held positions in ecclesiastical bodies (diocesan commissions, technical offices, pontifical commissions). A separate issue concerns the choice of the designer, in relation to the timing of the decision-making process: in the 1950s and 1960s, direct appointments certainly prevailed due to familiarity with the priest or the bishop, or based on expertise in ecclesiastical construction, at times sanctioned by a habitual relationship with the diocesan offices, but there is no lack of significant cases of competitions (promoted by dioceses, or by different bodies[45]). Moreover, it is

San Paolo, 2008), 327- 381; "L'architettura sacra in Italia e in Abruzzo," in Raffaele Giannantonio, *Echi di Le Corbusier in Abruzzo. Vincenzo Monaco e la chiesa della Madonna della Neve a Roccaraso, ed.* Raffaele Giannantonio (Roma: Gangemi, 2014), 103-158.

42 Andrea Longhi, "Cultura architettonica, vita ecclesiale e associazionismo cattolico dal Dopoguerra al Concilio Vaticano II," in Longhi, Tosco, *Architettura, Chiesa e società*, 99-235; Maryvonne Prévot, *Catholicisme social et urbanisme* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015).

43 Umberto Bordoni, Maria Antonietta Crippa, Davide Fusari and Ferdinando Zanzottera, "A laboratory of pastoral modernity. Church building in Milan under Cardinal Montini and Enrico Mattei from 1955 to 1963," in *Territories of faith*, 251-279; Andrea Longhi, "Le architetture di Luigi Gedda: committenza e cantieri (1949-1959)," in *Luigi Gedda nella storia della Chiesa e del Paese*, ed. Ernesto Preziosi (Roma: Ave, 2013), 277-302.

44 Interesting cases that have recently been explored concern Gaetano Rapisardi [1893-1988] (Riccardo Serraglio, "Gaetano Rapisardi costruttore di chiese," *Palladio*, n.s. XXX, no. 59-60 (2017): 151-158), Marcello Canino [1895-1970] (Riccardo Serraglio, "Neighbourhood churches in the post-war reconstruction: projects and achievements by Marcello Canino," in *The Social City. Urban Development and Housing Projects in Berlin and Naples in the Post-War Era – A Comparison: Theoretical Models, Implemented Projects, Social and Political Impacts Today*, ed. Antonello Scopacasa (Berlin: Universitatätsverlag der TU Berlin, 2022), 307-313), Raffaello Fagnoni [1901-1966] (Saverio Carillo, "Costruire la chiesa. Raffaello Fagnoni: restauro e progetto del sacro," *Il Cristianesimo nella Storia*, no. 33 (2012): 89-115), Giacomo Della Mea [1908-1968] (Giorgio Della Longa and Barbara Fiorini, eds., *Giacomo Della Mea. Architettura sacra 1948-1968* (Pasian di Prato: Lithostampa, 2012)), Luigi Caccia Domioni [1913-2016] (Alberto Gavazzi and Marco Ghilotti, *Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Spazio sacro e architettura* (Bologna: BUP, 2015), Francesco Berarducci [1924-1992] (Giulia De Lucia, "Letters, sketches and drawings for the story of a negotiation: the architectural compromise in the Francesco Berarducci's S. Valentino church," *Actas de Arquitectura Religiosa Contemporánea*, no. 10 (2023): 16-31, https://doi.org/10.17979/aarc.2022.9.0.9348), Franco Maroni [1927-2016] (Mariano Apa, "Franco Maroni. Modernità dello spazio sacro," in *Franco Maroni. Architettura e pluralità dei linguaggi*, Mariano Apa, Domenico Cialfi and Fausto Dominici, eds. (Roma: Gangemi, 2016), 11-104), Franco Antonelli [1929-1994] (Carla Zito, "L'architettura religiosa," in *Franco Antonelli. 1929-1994*, Paolo Belardi and Marzia Marandola, eds. (Milano: Electa, 2023), 45-64), oltre ai più noti casi di Saverio Muratori [1910-1973] (Giancarlo Cataldi, "Il concetto di 'continuità ambientale' in architettura: i progetti di chiese di Saverio Muratori e di Luigi Vagnetti," in *L'architettura dell'"altra" modernità*, Marina Docci, Maria Grazia Turco, eds. (Roma: Gangemi, 2010), 97-109) e Giovanni Michelucci [1891-1990] (Amedeo Belluzzi, Claudia Conforti, *Lo spazio sacro nell'architettura di Giovanni Michelucci* (Torino: Allemandi, 1987); Claudia Conforti, Marzia Marandola, "Lo spazio sacro di Giovanni Michelucci. L'architetto e la committenza," in *L'edificio cristiano. Architettura e liturgia*, ed. Virginio Sanson (Padova: Messaggero, 2004), 71-81; Stefano Sodi, ed., *Giovanni Michelucci e la Chiesa in Italia* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2009).

45 Some competitions regarding church reconstruction in the immediate post-war period (Pisa and Milano QT8 1947, Francavilla a Mare 1948, Abano Terme 1949) and in the 1950s (Milano Baggio 1952, Roma Cinecittà and Montecatini Terme 1953, Bologna and Trieste 1955, as well as the famous Madonna delle Lacrime, in Syracuse, in 1955) are well known in literature; in short: Giorgio Della Longa, "L'architettura di chiese in Italia nel XX secolo,"

interesting to understand at what stage the designer intervenes, whether downstream of the discussion on the local ecclesial imagery, or whether he himself contributes to the decision-making process within the community.

The Timing of Architectural Action

In addition to the "human factor", the "time factor" is decisive in any process analysis. Every church and parish centre imagery is implemented by "doing", according to cultural negotiation and mediation. To say that parish complexes are an ongoing process – and not just an artefact – is by no means a rhetorical platitude.

Communities are, in fact, also built with their own "architectural agency", which is not just instrumental to building activity, but is a fundamental part of the Church's "communicative action".[46] Literature reveals how a community that finds itself with a house "already built" (or at least already planned) does not have the opportunity to build itself as a community in relational terms, does not identify with its living places, does not appropriate them except after the fact, and probably will not take care of them over time. In addition to the finite form of the church – which becomes "stone theology"[47] and image of the Church[48] – what matters is the process with which this form is pursued and achieved, with the succession of priests and generations of parishioners, and with the changing relationships of adaptation to and transformation of the context.

This 'action' is measured across different "timelines", experienced by different players. It is not only a matter of the lengthy times of financing, authorisation, planning and construction, but also of different conceptions of time which coexist: Christian time interweaves physical and objective time (*chronos*), cyclical time (liturgical year) and eschatological time, unfolding with the opportunities provided by each appropriate time (*kairos*), linked to local contingencies and personalities, as well as to specific places. For these reasons, investigations must be multiscalar, in space, time and in the recognition of players.

6. From ecclesial metaphors to architectural metaphors

Ecclesial imageries are theological and pastoral conceptual models expressed in publicity and propaganda, becoming instruments of militancy used in ecclesial and political communication. But, above all, imageries are called upon to as-

in *Architettura e Liturgia nel Novecento. Esperienze europee a confronto*, Giorgio Della Longa, Antonio Marchesi and Massimiliano Valdinoci, eds. (Rovereto: Nicolodi, 2005), 97-112; Giancarlo Santi, *Nuove chiese italiane (1861-2010). Sette lezioni* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2011), 56-61; for an overview of previous competition experiences: Giuseppe Meduri, *Quarant'anni di architettura sacra in Italia. 1900-1940. Le questioni, il dibattito, le polemiche* (Roma: Gangemi, 2016), 87-131.

46 Severino Dianich, "Immagine di chiesa: la percezione della *forma ecclesiae* nello spazio della città postmoderna," in *Il corpo del* logos. *Pensiero estetico e teologia cristiana*, Pierangelo Sequeri, ed. (Milano: Glossa, 2009), 125-178; Severino Dianich, "Linguaggi teologici e linguaggi architettonici," *Vivens Homo*, no. 21/2 (2010): 445-463.

47 Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in stone: church architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

48 Severino Dianich, *Spazi e immagini della fede* (Assisi: Cittadella, 2015).



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sume constructed, functional, recognisable and possibly economic forms. Their material translation within the urban fabric imposes the delicate passage from rhetoric to construction site, through mediation, negotiation and compromise with the different ideas of the "sacred" that each designer in charge wants to assert, prompted by personal poetics and convictions.[49]

Besides responding to an ecclesial imagery and a design imagery, the forms of parishism have to find an appropriate space in the most diverse contexts and landscapes. Commissioners and designers operate within ever-changing urban dynamics, seeking a balance between loyalty to an ideal model and coherence with a specific context.

Recent literature on the relationship between church and city[50] has still paid little attention to the co-evolutionary relationships between the dynamics of urban transformation and the ongoing transformation of the forms of parish complexes, except for a few in-depth studies.[51] In short, at least two urban layout strategies emerge,[52] but they do not correspond directly with the ecclesial models defined above, demonstrating the complexity of the factors at play:

49 Andrea Longhi, "Sacro, cultura architettonica e costruzione di chiese," in *La Liturgia alla prova del sacro*, Paolo Tomatis, ed. (Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2013), 159-214; Andrea Longhi, "Sacro, cultura architettonica e costruzione della città contemporanea: chiese nell'Italia del post-concilio," *Historia Religionum*, no. 8 (2016): 43-54.

50 Giuliana Quattrone, ed., *La chiesa nella città moderna. Architettura, arte e progetto urbano* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007); Goffredo Boselli, ed., *Chiesa e città* (Magnano: Qiqajon, 2010); Claudia Manenti, *Luoghi di identità e spazi del sacro nella città europea contemporanea* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012); Andrea Longhi, "La chiesa nella città: attualità di un dibattito e prospettive di ricerca internazionali," *Città e storia*, no. VIII/2 (2013): 477-482; Manenti, Claudia, ed., *La chiesa nella città a 50 anni dal Concilio Vaticano II* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016).

51 For example: Giovanni Berera, ed., *L'inno di cemento. Beata Vergine Immacolata. Longuelo* (Bergamo: Fondazione Bernareggi, 2016).

52 See Longhi, *Storie di chiese*, 75-88.

Fig. 5
The building site of *San Leone Magno* in the Prenestino neighbourhood, 1952. [ISACEM, Unione Uomini di Azione Cattolica, Archivio fotografico, 3]

a) the fenced-in complex, cut off from the expanding and transforming city, which identifies the community within its own security perimeter in which the "sacred" can find its own space, separated from the "profane" (heir to the Greek *temenos*). The materialisation of a perimeter is decisive both when a "militant" or "defensive" attitude is assumed and when a protective domestic attitude prevails. Obviously, the architectural nature of the perimeter changes according to the imagery behind it, but certain compositional elements that qualify the sense of separation emerge in practice: the affirmation of the role of the façade, the portal and the threshold with respect to the urban frontage; an attitude of identity in the landscape achieved using markers consolidated in historicist architecture (bell towers, cusped or domed shapes); the addition of closed and protected courtyards, possibly porticoed; the definition of a well-defined and tidy plot, within which – by envisaging subsequent construction phases in accordance with financial flows – the complex can grow, saturating or reforming the spaces available in response to external pressures.

b) the osmotic, permeable complex, which allows itself to be permeated by urban pathways and a variety of social links. The different buildings of the parish complex take on a disjointed form, standing on an open plot, aggregating various functions over time, with open and walkable spaces, and a churchyard, offered to the city and its dynamics.

Referring, on the other hand, to the effective and persistent metaphor of the "fabric", two further contrasts can be identified in literature:

(a) the church as a "tear"[53], as an exception, as a place that has been cut off, in which the faithful perceive a tear with respect to what is seen as ordinary, experiencing the sacred as heterotopic with respect to their way of experiencing the city on a daily basis;

(b) the church as a "mend", as an instrument aiming at the mending of paths, to restore wefts and warps, with which to lend continuity to the urban fabric. This way, Christian life is not alienated from people's daily experience and the parish centre is accessible without emphatic passages, with a variety of thresholds that make it possible to reconnect the flows of life in the neighbourhood, regardless of strict religious affiliation.

A third historiographical problem emerges from this synthesis. Recognition of models and sources of inspiration for church architecture often takes place with a critical eye *a posteriori*, according to criteria of formal or typological assessment, while it is important to highlight the direct and documented evidence of imagery, metaphors and architectural choices, made by the various players and mediators in the decision-making process. The interpretation of a wide range of sources makes it possible not to confuse the analysis of the space as conceived by commissioners and planners, the space perceived by citizens, and the space lived by communities, in the reading of the ecclesiastical built environment.

53 Paolo Portoghesi, "Lo spazio sacro," in *La chiesa nella città moderna,* 77-83 (ivi 78 e 79).

Scenarios of Formative Processes of the Parish Complex in the Urban Fabric

Irrespective of the choice and the laborious materialisation of the parish model, the rhythms of construction of the complexes intersect – at varying speeds due to economic, political, town-planning or even just strictly biographical reasons – with the phases of transformation of the cities. The study of these architectural and urbanistic interweavings can help give built form to the historiographic theme of "the location of religion in the fabric of the secular",[54] i.e.: to the impact of the religious phenomenon within the transformative dynamics of the city. To schematise the processes according to categories that can be shared, we can apply the concepts of "place seeking", "place making" and "place keeping" to the dynamics of post-war parish complexes, concepts that emerge from the sociological and anthropological reading of the spatialisation of worship[55] and to which some recent summaries can be retraced:[56]

a) Communities grouped together in newly urbanised neighbourhoods, with no established religious centre, seek space for their own place of worship and sociability (*place seeking*). They operate as a private (and weak) subject in architectural and town-planning dynamics, adapting to makeshift, provisional, profane spaces as a temporary place of community (garages, warehouses, flats, commercial premises, ground floors and the lobbies of multistorey houses, or purpose-built shacks). Usually, in the following decades, such communities have the opportunity to equip themselves with a new, permanent parish centre (*place making*), which – in the absence of prior planning – is nevertheless built in surplus space, in plots left vacant on the land market, purchasable at low prices because they are marginal. This scenario occurs in the absence of urban planning that recognises a barycentric and institutional role for the Christian community. Sometimes, when moving to more solid and "monumental" forms, there can be cultural resistance in the community, which experiences institutionalised architecture as a betrayal of the communitarian and spontaneous nature of fundamental Christianity.[57]

b) Pre-existing historic outlying churches, related to the structuring of the rural territory, are incorporated into the expansive urbanisation dynamics, being suited to becoming centres of pastoral aggregation. This occurs either passively (like splinters of history absorbed into the undifferentiated expansion, as waste or residue), or actively (directing the processes of the densification and aggregation of urbanisation). Likewise, pre-existing non-parish complexes (of religious congregations or Catholic educational institutions, or private chapels of aristocratic origin) are also absorbed by the peripheral expansion of cities, and are

54 Knott, "Religion, space," 35.

55 Irene Becci, Marian Burchardt and Mariachiara Giorda, "Religious super-diversity and spatial strategies in two European cities," *Current Sociology*, no. 65/I (2017): 73-91.

56 Longhi, *Storie di chiese*, 75-94.

57 Carla Zito, "'Architettura sacra e modernità': il parziale fallimento di un concorso, Torino 1967," *Arte Cristiana*, no. 867 (2011): 453-464.

rethought and re-functionalised (*place making*) as parish community centres, the activities of which are sometimes juxtaposed with previous religious activities, not without conflict. The obvious initial anachronism between architectural forms and social dynamics may be offset by ongoing processes of adaptation of the church and new articulation of the spaces of the parish complex (*place keeping*). Alternatively, also in this case, the scenario of the construction of a new complex may be determined in successive stages.

c) The parish complex is conceived as the "centre of the village", according to a design linked to housing and adjacent services: "religious services" are acknowledged a role of functional and physical centrality. This is the case of numerous first-generation INA-Casa neighbourhoods or, for example, the well-known rural village of La Martella (promoted by Unrra-casas), but also of private entrepreneurial initiatives. In the face of successive dynamics of expansion, construction of infrastructure, densification of the fabric or demographic and social transformations, etc., each parish complex then experiences situations that are always dynamic, both adaptive and transformative, redefining the values and perimeters of its community.

Tools and Subjects for Religious Infrastructures on an Urban Scale

Community house-building processes tend to take on mythical overtones, especially when local literature addresses particularly charismatic priest-builders, or architects who were very active in the public debate. The most astute historiography, however, questions not only the protagonism of individual players, but also the possible existence of planning instruments relating to a vision of churches as an overall infrastructure. While the mythology and mythography of individual churches are now extensively covered by literature, it is harder to verify the existence of assessment and planning scenarios on an urban scale. Where this is possible, what tools are envisaged, and which disciplines do they draw on?

Let's try to summarise some of the avenues explored by recent international historiography:[58]

a) pastoral planning tools, which draw on the scientific resources offered by the social sciences, such as religious sociology and demography (average sizing of the ideal parish, spacing between parish centres, regularity of distribution patterns, reading of urban society and neighbourhoods), the data from which are cross-referenced with the reflections of the pastoral sciences;

b) financial planning tools (collection of resources) and economic management tools (spending strategies for the construction of the different parts of the parish centres);

c) dynamics of interaction with town planning tools implemented by public bodies, on a general or partial scale (municipal master plans, service plans, INA-Casa plans, Italian Law 167 plans);

58 Sterken and Weyns, *Territories of faith*.



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d) building regulation documents, which regulate architectural features, but sometimes introduce guidelines for the inclusion of the building within the neighbourhood context.

In addition to the type of instrument, it is decisive to recognise the nature of the subjects who take charge of these plans, of what knowledge they hold, and what interests they interpret. Consequently, the matter of the relationship between the scientific expertise and the jurisdictional expertise of the respective bodies arises. As does the question of the institutional relationship between the various authorities in charge of negotiations. Certainly, the ecclesiastical organisational and legal structure continues to find its inescapable framework in the bishop and the diocese. However, beyond the inevitable protagonism of the bishop-patron (or bishop-planner), historiography brings out the role of three types of structure:

a) The curia offices, with their own legally competent structure, recruit the necessary experts for town planning negotiations, for relations with the ecclesiastical authorisation bodies (Pontifical Central Commission for Sacred Art, in the Vatican), for relations with priests and technicians. Architectural and juridical experts can be found among members of the clergy, or among professionals, teachers and intellectuals, more or less organic to the diocesan offices.

b) The liturgical, technical and scientific commissions of a consultative nature support the decisions of the bishop and the offices, in accordance with the procedures established by the regulations for the reception of Vatican II. The crite-

Fig. 6
San Leone Magno, Prenestino (Rome), arch. Giuseppe Zander, 12 October 1952.
[ISACEM, Unione Uomini di Azione Cattolica, Archivio fotografico, 3]

ria for recruitment to the commissions depend on the sensitivity and culture of the bishop and his closest collaborators, with a wide range of combinations of professional skills and client relationships.

c) Study and research centres and agencies are sometimes promoted by ecclesiastical institutions (diocesan or academic) or religious congregations. As these were initiatives without a direct negotiating relationship with the institutions and without administrative responsibilities, the best intellectual skills could be freely recruited from university centres or professional circles, with interesting openings for dialogue with Modernity:[59] according to Saverio Carillo, in the 1950s, architecture was "the territory to be recognised as a qualitative datum of the experience that the laity bestowed upon the public dimension of the Italian Church".[60] An international dimension of the debate, promoted in particular by the Bolognese experiences,[61] is definitely encouraged by the universalist climate of Vatican II, and it is interesting to assess the interactions between ecclesiastically inspired research centres and places of secular debate, especially when the latter are questioning the role of the sacred and the Church in the contemporary city.[62]

Some common themes emerge from these institutional, negotiational and biographical entanglements, such as the consonance between the parish's proximity and the neighbourhood, or between the geographical scale of the parish and the district. Additionally, the many social practices that intersect in parish centres undermine the functionalist approach to zoning: parish centres are certainly among the "services" of a religious nature, but functional hybridisations that challenge the urbanist paradigm of separating living, working, entertainment and commuting are established from the outset.

Research perspectives

In conclusion of this excursus of historiographical nodes of recent debate, I would like to suggest a list of questions that deserve targeted in-depth study:

a) The identification of the processes of formation of "regulatory instruments" of an ecclesiastical nature, combining scientific social, juridical and financial expertise, collaborations with research agencies and university bodies, according to specific paths of validation and approval, and using different methods of application and dissemination in the communities.

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59 Glauco Gresleri, "L'architettura del Centro studi e la radicalità del Moderno" and "Dopo il Concilio Vaticano II. Esperienze, speranze, sconfitte," in *Chiesa e Quartiere. Storia di una rivista e di un movimento per l'architettura a Bologna*, ed. Glauco Gresleri, Maria Beatrice Bettazzi and Giuliano Gresleri (Bologna: Compositori, 2004), 174-197, 226-239.

60 Saverio Carillo, "Moralità dell'architettura. Memoria e domanda di Modernità," *Città di vita*, no. 66/1 (2011): 51-68

61 Claudia Manenti, "Il laboratorio bolognese durante l'episcopato del cardinale Lercaro: i rapporti con Colonia e la Germania," in *Arte Architettura Liturgia. Da Colonia a Rothenfels. Alle radici del Movimento Liturgico*, ed. Katherin Bollenbeck, Giorgio Della Longa and Antonio Marchesi (Trento: Efferre, 2018), 23-39; Esteban Fernández-Cobián, "La arquitectura religiosa española y las revistas extranjeras: el caso de Chiesa e quartiere," in *Escritos sobre arquitectura religiosa contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Diseño, 2013), 190-211.

62 Cecilia De Carli, "La Triennale di Milano del 1954, laboratorio sperimentale della città. Il contesto culturale e i suoi soggetti," in *Costantino Ruggeri. L'architettura di Dio*, ed. Antonio Sabatucci (Milano: Skira, 2005), 47-55.

b) The analysis of the "vectors" of interpretation of ecclesiastical sources (council and synodic norms, liturgical norms) and the dissemination of practices for the application of the meaning and dictate of the sources, within the tangibility of local contexts and the richness of biographical interweavings.

c) The role of community subjects in the definition of programmes and projects (choice of the designer, financing on a parish scale, relations with public opinion, etc.), and, above all, in the practices that make it possible to "inhabit" and mantain parish centres, during decades characterised by extremely rapid social and ecclesial transformations.

d) In the background, the methodological question of the periodisation of historical phenomena. Certainly the event of the Second Vatican Council is nodal, a place and time in which the research promoted by ecclesial reform movements and architectural experiences already experimented (the conciliar fathers had "already seen" what they established[63]), intersect, but also a place in which new paths open up. The Council does not therefore represent the end of one architectural season, nor the beginning of another, but a barycentric moment, a catalyst and accelerator of complex and multi-scalar phenomena. Moreover, in keeping with what the Council itself recognised, ecclesiastical periodisation cannot disregard the periodisation of other phenomena: regulations on the financing of parish complexes, laws on housing plans and general town planning regulations, which were then implemented by individual town and local planning instruments. It is therefore decisive that the different geographies and temporalities of reception and implementation of the Council movement find more and more space in literature: local periodisations help us understand how the universalistic phenomenon of the Council was interpreted and embodied by specific personalities and in specific places, as a community and spatial experience.

63 Roberto Gabetti, *Chiese per il nostro tempo. Come costruirle, come rinnovarle* (Leumann: Elledici, 2000), 39.

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